

Ex 13:17-15:19 14:11 has the Israelites yelling at Moses, insisting that he has led them to their deaths. These are the same people who, just a mere chapter ago, saw God end 430 years of slavery (12:40) and have been led by a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire by night, are now confident that their demise is at hand.



Instead, God defeats Israel's enemies in a magnificent display of His Power as the waters of the Red Sea are allowed to return to their place and drowning the Egyptian army right there on the spot. Today you can see gilded chariot wheels at the bottom of the Red Sea along with a number of other artifacts

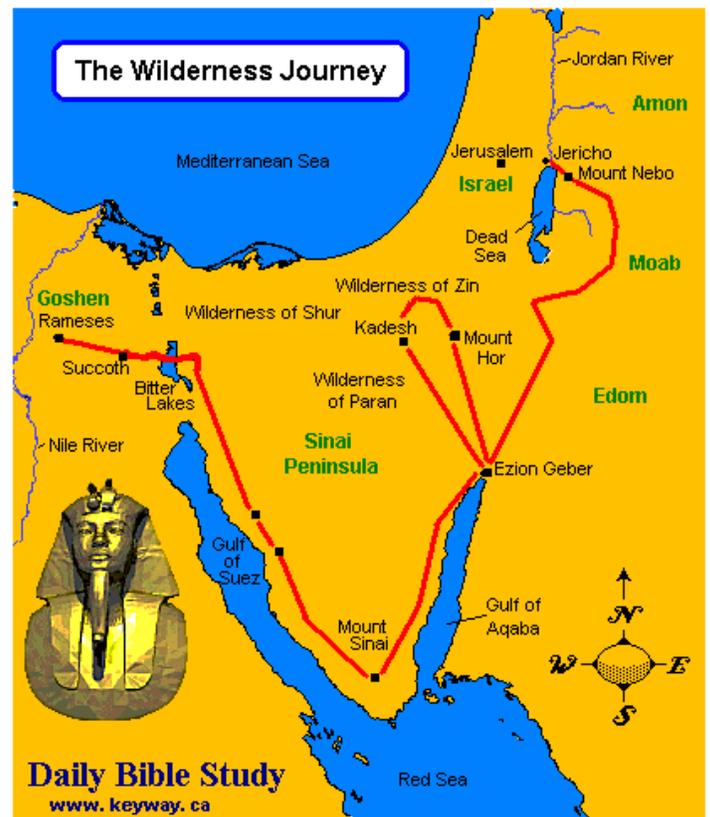
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The take away for me is to not let a circumstance dilute my reliance upon God, or my confidence in Him.

Exodus 15:20-17:7 – Just three days after the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, we've got trouble. The Israelites are out of water.

This doesn't seem to be a matter of poor planning. They're in the Desert of Shur. This isn't the first time an Israelite has found himself here. Hagar ran away from Sarah and wandered in the wilderness of Shur (Gen 16:6-11). Abraham lived in the region as well (Gen21:1).

The thing is, God knew they would need water. Was there not some practical tactic that could've been dispatched before they set out? Perhaps something



as easy as rationing the water? I don't know, but for whatever reason God leads them to a place where they're so thirsty, they've apparently forgotten the Power of their God and are complaining to Moses. God not only provides the water through a tree that's thrown into a body of water located at Marah, which means "bitter," He also guides them to an oasis where they camp.

God uses this as an opportunity to test the Israelites loyalty by saying,

26 He said, "If you will carefully obey the LORD your God, do what is right in His eyes, pay attention to His commands, and keep all His statutes, I will not inflict any illness on you I inflicted on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you." (Ex 15:26 [HCSB])

"The Lord Heals" is one of God's Names (Jehovah Rapha [see http://www.preceptaustin.org/jehovah_ropi_-_god_who_heals.htm]). God uses hardship to drive us to Him and in that moment is able to reveal Himself as not only the solution to the problem at hand, but also an aspect of Who He is which carries over to things beyond our immediate dilemma.

And it seems that this is a constant process. It's not that God delights in allowing us to go through problems, that's just a part of the world we live in (Jn 16:33). Rather, it's a part of a refinement that pays big dividends in the form of an ever-increasing ability to trust and obey.

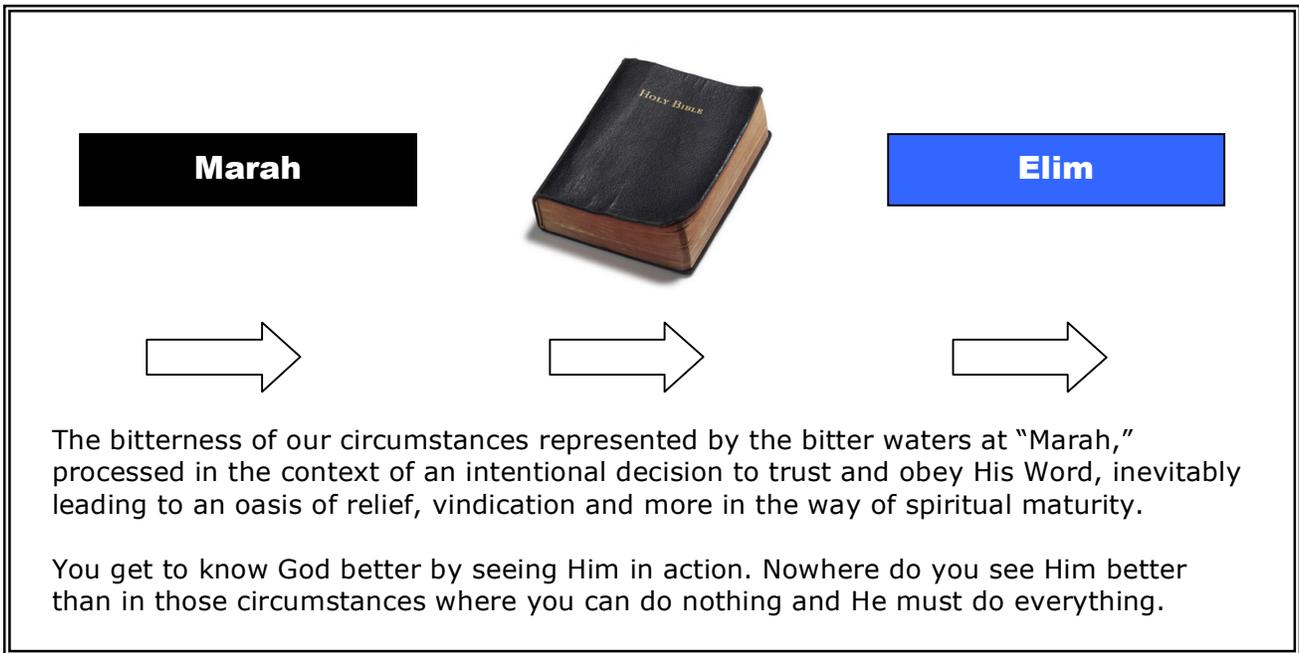
Shur, meaning an enclosure, or a wall, was located in the northern Sinai Peninsula, on the north-eastern border of Egypt (see map below). As the name implies, the Wilderness of Shur was named after Shur, which was part of the fortified Egyptian defensive line to protect Egypt (see [The Ancient Egyptians](#)) from the at-times hostile desert people, as well the greater nations of the east as they rose to power (until they fell into relative insignificance again, as has been the case with all great "world ruling" human kingdoms and empires, without exception, throughout human history e.g. [Babylon](#), [Assyria](#), [Persia](#), [Greece](#) and [Rome](#) - although "Rome" has one more comeback before [The Return Of Jesus Christ](#) i.e. see [Daniel's Statue](#) and [Gone With The Wind](#)).

"Shur", by Wayne Blank, www.keyway.ca/htm2002/20021125.htm (accessed March 10, 2009)



<http://www.totheends.com/imgc6.jpg>

7The LORD is (A) good, A stronghold in the day of trouble. And (B) He knows those who take refuge in Him. (Nahum 1:7 [NASB])



After leaving the oasis at Elim, they head to the Desert of Sin (between Elim and Sinai). It's now 75 days after leaving Egypt. They've run out of food, just like they ran out of water. Again, they forget that the Bread of Life and the Source of Living Water is up ahead of them in the form of a cloud and a pillar of fire by night.

God provides manna and quail. He demonstrates that He is sufficient, yet, even though He tells the Hebrews not to gather more than they need, some refuse to listen and gather more than what they require and when they try to save it overnite, it becomes rotten and is filled with maggots.

I'm thinking about the way in which I work. It's hard for me to put things down sometimes, especially on Sunday when I'm supposed to be honoring the Lord by not working.

I know that there are exceptions. Serving others, for example, is good "work" on Sunday. But I think this scenario of people being "practical" is nothing more than a good sounding mask for being disobedient.

Chapter seventeen, we're out of water again. But still, these guys refuse to trust in God. They've been delivered from Egypt, they're being fed with manna and quail – how can a people be so obtuse?

Yet, how many times has God delivered me? How many times has He provided for me? And still I always sweat and will dig myself into an emotional and physical hole when confronted with difficult situations.

Ex 17:8-19:15 I'm liking the fact that the Israelites are fighting and not just praying that God would somehow deliver them from their enemies. A great passage to support the fact that:

- God works through the actions of His people, including their own deliverance
- Being able to fight is a good skill to have
- There are enemies and there are criminals. Criminals are brought before a judge and a jury, enemies are slain.
- While it was Israel fighting, it was God fighting for them and through them. The battle is the Lord's! The Lord is my Banner (Jehovah-Nissi [Ex 17:15]).



All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands." (1 Sam 17:47)

So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. (Zec 4:6)

The second thought is the Divinely endorsed practice of delegation. In chapter 18, Jethro recommends to his son-in-law that he delegate his authority among capable men in order to be more efficiently handle the disagreements that surfaced from time to time in the Israelite community.

I think it shows how one man, however anointed, is not expected to handle everything himself. And while God didn't ask Moses to do this, I think the

fact that Moses heeded the advice of his father-in-law is indicative of the fact that what Jethro was saying was wise.

Matthew Henry:

There may be over-doing even in well-doing, and therefore our zeal must always be governed by discretion, that our good may not be evil spoken of. Wisdom is profitable to direct, that we may neither content ourselves with less than our duty nor over-task ourselves with that which is beyond our strength. (commentary on Ex 18)

Consider though, that Jethro articulates some qualifications that are worth examining:

- Capable
- Respect God
- Can be trusted, not influenced by money and bribes

Again, Matthew Henry:

It was requisite that they should be men of the very best character, [1.] For judgment and resolution—*able men*, men of good sense, that understood business, and bold men, that would not be daunted by frowns or clamours. Clear heads and stout hearts make good judges. [2.]

[2] For piety and religion—*such as fear God*, as believe there is a God above them, whose eye is upon them, to whom they are accountable, and of whose judgment they stand in awe. Conscientious men, that dare not do a base thing, though they could do it ever so secretly and securely. The fear of God is that principle which will best fortify a man against all temptations to injustice, Neh. 5:15; Gen. 42:18.

[3.] For integrity and honesty—*men of truth*, whose word one may take, and whose fidelity one may rely upon, who would not for a world tell a lie, betray a trust, or act an insidious part. [

4.] For noble and generous contempt of worldly wealth—*hating covetousness*, not only not seeking bribes nor aiming to enrich themselves, but abhorring the thought of it; he is fit to be a magistrate, and he alone, who *despiseth the gain of oppressions, and shaketh his hands from the holding of bribes*, Isa. 33:15. (2.) That he should attend God's direction in the case (v. 23):

Here's one thing that I didn't see until just now. Jethro doesn't simply tell Moses how to do things. His idea was a good one and had wisdom written all over it. But he defaults to God's Wisdom and highlights that as the final authority that Moses needs to consider before making a decision. In other words, here's my idea, but run it past the Almighty to make sure we're all on the same page.

If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so. Jethro knew that Moses had a better counsellor than he was, and to his counsel he refers him.

Note, Advice must be given with a humble submission to the word and providence of God, which must always overrule.

Now Moses did not despise this advice because it came from one not acquainted, as he was, with the words of God and the visions of the Almighty; but he *hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law*, v. 24. When he came to consider the thing, he saw the reasonableness of what his father-in-law proposed and resolved to put it in practice, which he did soon afterwards, when he had received directions from God in the matter.

Note, Those are not so wise as they would be thought to be who think themselves too wise to be counselled; for *a wise man* (one who is truly so) *will hear, and will increase learning*, and not slight good counsel, though given by an inferior.

Finally, Moses didn't leave this up to a democratic process. He chose the people he knew would be best suited for the positions. There may have been some who felt a little jilted by his decision, but that's part of being a leader: Making the right decision, even when it means having to hurt the feelings and sensibility of others.

Mr Henry:

Moses did not leave the election of the magistrates to the people, who had already done enough to prove themselves unfit for such a trust; but he chose them, and appointed them, some for greater, others for less division, the less probably subordinate to the greater. We have reason to value government as a very great mercy, and to thank God for laws and magistrates, so that we are not like *the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the less*.

Ex 19:16-21:21 It's interesting to see the chronology of Moses' conversations with God.

Ex 19:3 – Israelites arrive at Mt Sinai. Moses goes to the top of the mountain and God tells him to tell the Israelites that they will be His kingdom of priests – a holy nation in exchange for obeying the Book of the Covenant (the Decalogue and chapters 21-23). God delivered the 10 Commandments and the Covenant on this first visit. Moses wrote everything down (24:4) and God would later put it in stone (24:12).



Ex 19:8 – Moses tells the Israelites what God has said and they respond by saying that they will do what God has commanded in exchange for Him establishing them as His holy people. A more elaborate description of their response is in 24:3-8.



Ex 19:9-15 – Moses goes back up to the mountain to deliver the people's response back to the Lord. The Lord tells Moses that He will be speaking to him in a way that will compel the Israelites to trust him as their leader. He also tells Moses to instruct the people to spend the next two days preparing themselves for His arrival on the mountain in a way where they will be able to see Him.¹



Ex 19:20-25 – On the third day, God descends on Mount Sinai with an overwhelming display of His Power. The "whole mountain shook violently (verse 18). Moses goes to the top of the mountain and sent back down by God to remind the Israelites not to try and force their way up to the mountain. The priests are allowed, but must first prepare themselves.² He then tells Moses to bring Aaron up with him. Moses goes down to the people to tell them what God has said.

- 1**
- Wash your clothes
 - Don't go on the mountain, don't touch the foot of it. The penalty will be death for man or beast.
 - Only after the trumpet has sounded may people go on the mountain.
 - Don't have sex during the three days of preparation

As far as abstaining from sex, consider Lev 15:18 and 1 Cor 7:2-6:

²⁻⁶Certainly—but only within a certain context. It's good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to have a husband. Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual disorder. The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. Marriage is not a place to "stand up for your rights." Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out. Abstaining from sex is permissible for a period of time if you both agree to it, and if it's for the purposes of prayer and fasting—but only for such times. Then come back together again. Satan has an ingenious way of tempting us when we least expect it. I'm not, understand, commanding these periods of abstinence—only providing my best counsel if you should choose them. (The Message)

Ex 20:18 – Moses tells the people what God has said and they respond by asking him to serve as their mediator, being that they're scared out of their minds. Moses then heads back up to the mountain with Aaron, his two sons, Nadab and Abihu, along with seventy of the elders (24:1).



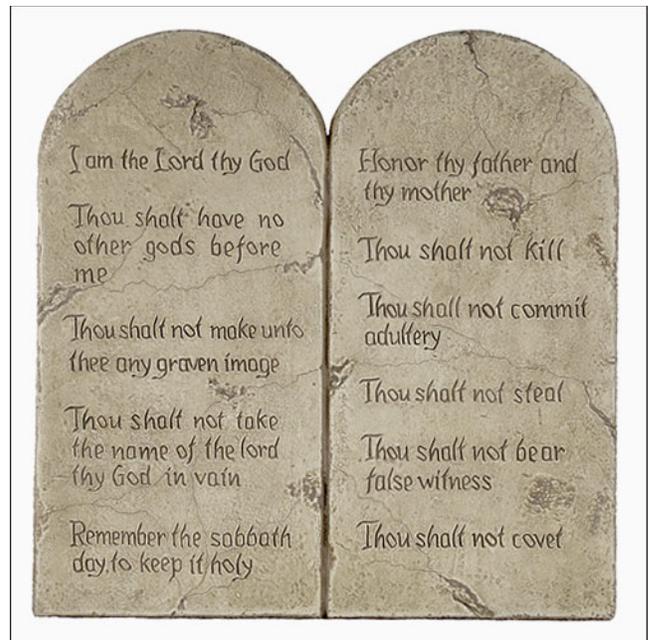
Ex 24:9-12 – Moses, Aaron and his two sons along with the seventy elders ate and drank in the Lord's presence. After they were done, Moses and Joshua went up to the top of the mountain while everyone else went back down to the camp (see chapter 32:1; 17-18).

2 Before the Aaronic priesthood was established, priestly duties were carried out by the elders or by designated young men (see Ex 24:5).

To prepare themselves was to wash and ensure they were ceremonially clean (see 1 Sam 16:5).

When looking at the Ten Commandments, one commandment in particular stands out.

⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Ex 20:8-11)



The Sabbath was mentioned for the first time in Exodus, chapter 16 when God told the Israelites not to worry about having to gather manna on Sunday. Instead, he would provide double the necessary amount on Saturday so they wouldn't have to work on Sunday.

This was huge because if you tried to gather more than what you needed on any other day of the week, by morning it would be full of maggots. But

something was different about the manna on Saturday because it kept until the following morning. The Sabbath is a big deal to God and you want to appreciate that.

It's mentioned again as part of the Ten Commandments. It's based on the template God initiated in the context of creation. He worked for six days and then rested on the seventh. Consider the commentary of Matthew Henry:

By the sanctification of the sabbath, the Jews declared that they worshipped the God that made the world, and so distinguished themselves from all other nations, who worshipped gods which they themselves made.

The Sabbath is ultimately a form of worship, as is the case with all acts of obedience. But breaking the Sabbath carried with it some pretty stiff penalties:

For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death. (Ex 31:15)

The penalty is reiterated in Ex 35:2 and you see the penalty put in practice in the book of Numbers:

³² While the Israelites were in the desert, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. ³³ Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly, ³⁴ and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. ³⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp." ³⁶ So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the LORD commanded Moses. (Num 15:32)

Overtime, the Jews added a ridiculous amount of regulations to the keeping of the Sabbath that made it nothing short of laborious. Jesus cleared all that up in the New Testament by first establishing Himself (God) as the Authority on the Sabbath and not the Pharisees (Luke 6:5). He also used the example of David eating the consecrated bread in the tabernacle to illustrate that it is always lawful to do good. And when you're trying to determine what represents the option that will most please God in the matter of following His Word, always default to the "good."

The relationship between the OT incident and the apparent infringement of the Sabbath by the disciples lies in the fact that on both occasions godly men did something forbidden. Since, however, it is always "lawful" to do good

and to save life (even on the Sabbath), both David and the disciples were within the spirit of the law (see Is 58:6-7; Lk 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6) (NIV Text Note on Mark 2:25)

In the same context of doing "good," Jesus said this:

Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. (Mark 2:27)

Jewish tradition had so multiplied the requirements and restrictions for keeping the Sabbath that the burden had become intolerable. Jesus cut across these traditions and emphasized the God-given purpose of the Sabbath - a day intended for man (for spiritual, mental and physical restoration; see Ex 20:8-11) (NIV Text Note)

And again, the commentary of Matthew Henry:

The sabbath is a sacred and divine institution; but we must receive and embrace it as a privilege and a benefit, not as a task and a drudgery. *First*, God never designed it to be an *imposition* upon us, and therefore we must not make it so to ourselves. *Man was not made for the sabbath*, for he was made a day before the sabbath was instituted. Man was made *for God*, and for his honour and service, and he just rather die than deny him; but he was not *made for the sabbath*, so as to be tied up by the law of it, from that which is necessary to the support of his life. *Secondly*, God did design it to be an *advantage* to us, and so we must make it, and improve it. He made it *for man*. 1. He had *some* regard to our *bodies* in the institution, that they might rest, and not be tired out with the constant business of this world (Deu. 5:14); *that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest*. Now he that intended the *sabbath-rest* for the *repose* of our bodies, certainly never intended it should restrain us, in a case of necessity, from fetching in the necessary *supports* of the body; it must be construed so as not to contradict itself—for *edification*, and not for *destruction*. 2. He had *much more* regard to our *souls*. **The sabbath was made a day of rest, only in order to its being a day of holy work, a day of communion with God, a day of praise and thanksgiving; and the rest from worldly business is therefore necessary, that we may closely apply ourselves to this work, and spend the whole time in it, in public and in private; but then time is allowed us for that which is necessary to the fitting of our bodies for the service of our souls in God's service, and the enabling of them to keep pace with them in that work.** See here, (1.) What a *good Master* we serve, all whose institutions are for our own benefit, and if we be so wise as to observe them, we are *wise for ourselves*; it is not he, but we, that are gainers by our

service. (2.) What we should aim at in our *sabbath work*, even the good of our own souls. If the sabbath was made for man, we should then ask ourselves at night, "What am I the better for this sabbath day?" (3.) What care we ought to take not to make those exercises of religion burthens to ourselves or others, which God ordained to be blessings; neither adding to the command by unreasonable strictness, nor indulging those corruptions which are adverse to the command, for thereby we make those devout exercises a penance to ourselves, which otherwise would be a pleasure.

So, here then is the bottom line:

Keep the Sabbath. It is a command given by God designed to:

- Keep your focus on Him
- Provide the necessary rest for your body, your mind and your spirit
- It's OK to do "good" on the Sabbath

As with all commands, God expects you to obey it. The fact that the penalty for breaking the Sabbath was death, this should be taken as proof that working on the Sabbath is an affront to God.

It's alright to do "good" on the Sabbath and if that involves "work," that's OK. In Matthew, Jesus used David's taking the consecrated bread to illustrate that point:

⁴He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. (Matt 12:4 [see also Ex 25:30])

...as well as the whole scenario of lifting your ox out of the ditch...

⁵And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? (Lk 14:5 [KJV])

You see Jesus saying the same thing in Matthew 12...

¹¹ But He said to them, "What man among you, if he had a sheep ^[a] that fell into a pit on the Sabbath, wouldn't take hold of it and lift it out? ^(A) ¹² A man is worth far more than a sheep, ^(B) so it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." (Matt 12:11-12 [HCSB])

In both instances, these comments were made to show how what He was about to do – the healing of someone - was lawful. So all that to say, it's OK to do "good" on the Sabbath. That may mean replacing the doorbell on the house for your wife, it may mean doing "GROW" ministry at church. It could be any one of a number of things. To say, "No," to someone who needs help just because it's Sunday is not an accurate interpretation of Scripture.

Doing "good" on the Sabbath is not the same thing as doing "business" on the Sabbath. The man gathering wood on the Sabbath was put to death, not because of Moses' interpretation of the Law, but because God Himself dictated the penalty.

Matthew Henry...

The offence was the gathering of sticks on the sabbath day (v. 32), which, it is probable, were designed to make a fire of, whereas they were commanded to bake and seeth what they had occasion for the day before, Ex. 16:23.

This seemed but a small offence, but it was a violation of the law of the sabbath, and so was a tacit contempt of the Creator, to whose honour the sabbath was dedicated, and an incursion upon the whole law, which the sabbath was intended as a hedge about... One would think there could be no great harm in gathering a few sticks, on what day soever it was, but God intended the exemplary punishment of him that did so for a standing warning to us all, to make conscience of keeping holy the sabbath.

In short, God has given you the day off, but it's more than just a "vacation," it is an act of worship / obedience that God expects to be acknowledged. To work on Sunday, then, is to drive outside the lines and there are always consequences when you get beyond the shoulder of the road.

Verse 14 mentions adultery and simply says, "Don't!" But there are several proverbs that elaborate on it as being positively lethal. Don't mess with another's wife or anyone other than your wife. The bond of marriage is to be celebrated and cultivated, not violated.

Ex 21:22-23:13 An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was originally designed to help ensure that the punishment fit the crime. By the time of the New Testament, the Pharisees had corrupted this in a way that allowed for harsh treatment and excessive punishment with no real room for restitution let alone justice. Jesus qualified things by saying that you must be willing to forgive the wrongs that are done to you (i.e. "...turn the other cheek.")

It's important to understand the context of Jesus' words in Matthew 5:38-42 because otherwise it becomes all the more easy to go to the other extreme where there is no justice or anything in the way of self-defense.

Here are the words of Jesus as recorded by Matthew:

³⁸"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'^[a] ³⁹But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. (Matt 5:38-42)

I'll use the commentary of Matthew Henry as a "study guide" and include additional notes after each "installment."

What the New-Testament precept is, as to the complainant himself, his duty is, to forgive the injury as done to himself, and no further to insist upon the punishment of it than is necessary to the public good: and this precept is consonant to the meekness of Christ, and the gentleness of his yoke.

The Law handed down to Moses was not flawed and Jesus' Words in the NT does not indicate God having changed His mind about things (Num 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29). Jesus wasn't revoking the Law, He was repairing the damage that had been done to the way it was applied as a result of the Pharisees having distorted it with their harsh interpretation. **The bottom line is to make sure that the punishment fits the crime.**

Another way to look at it is that while we do have a Biblical and altogether appropriate recourse to dispatch as far as "demanding justice" is concerned, Jesus is saying that you're doing well to extend grace to the person who would seek to wrong you.

Being "nice" is a good thing, but it's important to not confuse grace and a Christlike response to an affront with an unhealthy resolve to not protect yourself from injury and / or a refusal to seek justice.

Two things Christ teaches us here: 1. We must not be revengeful (v. 39); *I say unto you, that ye resist not evil*; —the evil person that is injurious to you. The resisting of any ill attempt upon us, is here as generally and expressly forbidden, as *the resisting of the higher powers* is (Rom. 13:2); and yet this does not repeal the law of self-preservation, and the care we

are to take of our families; we may *avoid evil*, and may *resist* it, so far as is necessary to our own security; but we must not *render evil for evil*, must not bear a grudge, nor avenge ourselves, nor study to be even with those that have treated us unkindly, but we must go beyond them by forgiving them, Prov. 20:22; 24:29; 25:21, 22; Rom. 12:7.

Protection, yes. Retaliation, no!

Justice and vengeance will be better dispatched by the Lord than it will by any human agency, including myself. That doesn't mean that I shouldn't seek justice. What it does mean is that I need to go about it in the proper way (Dt 19:15; Matt 18:15-17).

The commentary provided by the Intervarsity Press has some quality thoughts to share on this subject (emphasis added).

As in much of Jesus' teaching, pressing his illustration the wrong way may obscure his point. In fact, this would read Scripture the very way he was warning against: if someone hits us in the nose, or has already struck us on both cheeks, are we finally free to hit back? Jesus gives us a radical example so we will avoid retaliation, not so we will explore the limits of his example (see Tannehill 1975:73). **A backhanded blow to the right cheek did not imply shattered teeth (tooth for tooth was a separate statement); it was an insult, the severest public affront to a person's dignity (Lam 3:30; Jeremias 1963:28 and 1971:239).** God's prophets sometimes suffered such ill-treatment (1 Kings 22:24; Is 50:6). Yet though this was more an affront to honor, a challenge, than a physical injury, ancient societies typically provided legal recourse for this offense within the *lex talionis* regulations (Pritchard 1955:163, 175; see also Gaius *Inst.* 3.220).

("Avoid Retribution and Resistance", IVP Commentary,

<http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/?action=getCommentaryText&cid=1&source=1&seq=i.47.5.12>, accessed April, 2 2009)

While the majority of inaccurate interpretations lean more towards passivity, it's possible to go the other way too and view Jesus' comments as something that encourages vengeance after being hit twice. Either extreme is an "extreme" and thus flawed (see Ecc 7:16-18).

In the instance of an overly passive interpretation of this text, the first thing to consider is the cultural context of being struck on the cheek. It was not a "blow" like you would envision in a fistfight, it was an insult.

²⁴ Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. "Which way did the spirit from ^[a] the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?" he asked. (1 Kings 22:24)

Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. (Lam 3:30)

In the case of an offense to our personal dignity, Jesus not only warns us not to avenge our honor by retaliating but suggests that we indulge the offender further. By freely offering our other cheek, we show that those who are secure in their status before God do not value human honor. Indeed, in some sense we practice resistance by showing our contempt for the value of our insulter's (and perhaps the onlookers') opinions! Because we value God's honor rather than our own (Mt 5:16; 6:1-18), because our very lives become forfeit to us when we begin to follow Jesus Christ (16:24-27), we have no honor of our own to lose. In this way we testify to those who insult us of a higher allegiance of which they should take notice. ("Avoid Retribution and Resistance", IVP Commentary, <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/?action=getCommentaryText&cid=1&source=1&seq=i.47.5.12>, accessed April, 2 2009)

So when someone cuts you off in traffic or flips you off, let it go. But when someone threatens to beat you to a pulp, as in the instance of a fistfight, there is Biblical provision for standing up for what's right and defending yourself.

Throughout the Old Testament, you see God endorsing what some would perceive as "violence" in the name of exacting justice and setting things right.

When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan. ¹⁵ During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶ He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people. (Gen 14:14-16)

The Hebrew word for "trained men" in this passage is used only once in the Bible. A related word used elsewhere in ancient texts means "armed retainers." These men knew how to fight.

In verse 18 of the same chapter, Abram is met by Melchizedek and he blessed Abram by saying:

¹⁹ and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator ^[a] of heaven and earth. ²⁰ And blessed be ^[b] God Most

High, who delivered your enemies into your hand."Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything. (Gen 14:19-20 [emphasis added])

This text represents one of the first times the word, "war" is used in the Bible. One of the first times the word, "fight" is used is found in the book of Exodus.

**⁸ The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. ⁹ Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands." ¹⁰ So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. ¹¹ As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. ¹² When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. ¹³ So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.
(Ex 17:8-13)**

In both instances, you see God working through the hands and weapons of those who were considered blessed and obedient for making war against their enemies.

Military prowess was considered a noble characteristic; the ability to fight well was applauded as a godly attribute.

The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name. (Ex 15:3)

**¹⁰ "You who ride on white donkeys, sitting on your saddle blankets, and you who walk along the road, consider ¹¹ the voice of the singers ^[a] at the watering places. They recite the righteous acts of the LORD, the righteous acts of his warriors ^[b] in Israel. "Then the people of the LORD went down to the city gates.
(Judges 5:10-11 [emphasis added])**

¹² When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." (Judges 6:12)

One of the servants answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the harp. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the LORD is with him." (1 Sam 16:18)

Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. (Psalm 144:1)

The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD. (Prov 21:31)

³⁵Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered. ³⁶He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one* . ³⁷It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'^[b]; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment." (Luke 22:35-37)

*This is an extreme figure of speech, according to the NIV Text note that goes along with this passage. Jesus uses this phraseology to warn the disciples that perilous times were coming.

They would need defense and protection, as Paul did when he appealed to Caesar as the one who "bears the sword." (NIV Text Note on Luke 22:36)

You can see an example of that in the way Paul had a military escort from Jerusalem to Caesarea (see Acts 23:31-33).

In the book of Romans, you see what represents the Biblical endorsement of using force to maintain order:

²Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. (Rom 13:2)

⁴For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

⁵Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

⁶This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. (Rom 13:4-5)

The phrase, "bear the sword for nothing" refers to the fact that those authorities that God had established were equipped to exact punishment and they were encouraged to do so when it was appropriate.

the sword The symbol of Roman authority on both the national and international levels. Here we find the Biblical principle of using force for the maintenance of good order. (NIV Text Note on Rom 13:4)

Some will say that Jesus was referring to the Sword of the Spirit in Luke 22. If that were true, then He was saying that they needed to go and buy themselves a pocket New Testament...

That doesn't make sense. Rather, it makes far more sense when you acknowledge that the same Person Who worked through the hands and weapons of the Israelites in their conquest of the Promised Land, Who encouraged David to go and fight the Philistines (1 Sam 23:4), Who worked through Abram to liberate Lot, was now telling the disciples to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors who were referred to as "his warriors" and who fought the "Lord's battles (1 Sam 25:28)."

The battle is the Lord's (1 Sam 17:47; Zec 4:6), but He works through the arms of men and they are responsible for being capable to fight and to fight well (Psalm 144:1). To remove any semblance of being "combat ready" from the expected capability of a fruit-bearing believer is to assert that the Promised Land was conquered by a series of prayer meetings rather than a series of battles. Both were necessary.

Bottom line:

- Ensure the punishment fits the crime
- Be willing to overlook offenses and personal indignities
- Be able to protect for yourself and those who can't protect themselves in a manner that's consistent with a warrior who belongs and answers to the Lord

Ex 23:14-25:40

Three yearly feasts:

The Feast of Unleavened Bread – for seven days, eat unleavened bread to commemorate the exodus. It was done from the 15th – 21st days of the month (Abib), usually mid-March to mid-April.

The Feast of Harvest – Also called the "Feast of Weeks" (34:22) because it was held seven weeks after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was celebrated on the sixth day of the third month (between mid-May and mid-June) during the wheat harvest. In later Judaism, it

came to commemorate the giving of the law to Moses on Mt Sinai, though there's not specific OT reference to that association.

In the New Testament, it was referred to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1; 20:16; 1 Cor 16:8) which means "50" (Lev 23:16).

The Feast of Ingathering – Also called the "Feast of Tabernacles" (Lev 23:43) or "Booths" because the Hebrews lived in temporary shelters during the exodus (Lev 23:43). It was celebrated to commemorate the desert wanderings after the exodus and occurred from the 15th-22nd days of the seventh month (mid-September thru mid-October) after the produce of the orchards and vines had been harvested.



There are four things the Lord adds to the way in which a man was to appear before the Lord in the context of these festivals:

- **Don't offer the blood of a sacrifice to God along with anything containing yeast.** The presence of yeast was outside the box as far as the way in which God wanted the Israelites to honor Him. The absence of yeast was to remind them how God had escorted them out of Egypt in a hurry...

Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste—so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt. (Dt 16:3)

- **Nothing was to remain until morning** – This was another dynamic that pointed to God's deliverance of His people the night He "passed over" (Passover) them and then brought them out of Egypt. Everything about that ceremony was designed to remind the Israelites of the sense of urgency and haste that characterized that time.

That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. (Ex 12:8 [see also verse 10])

You must bring the best of your firstfruits – The offering you make to God needs to be your best.

If an animal has a defect, is lame or blind, or has any serious flaw, you must not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. (Dt 15:21)

Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;

¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. (Prov 3:9-10)

When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the LORD Almighty. (Mal 1:8)

The whole thing about cooking a young goat in its mother's milk was referring to a custom where people believed there was some magical benefit in sprinkling your crops with the "pottage" that was produced as a result.

Matthew Henry:

...they must give God thanks for the harvest-mercies they had received, and must depend upon him for the next harvest, and must not think to receive benefit by that superstitious usage of some of the Gentiles, who, it is said, at the end of their harvest, *seethed a kid in its dam's milk*, and sprinkled that milk-pottage, in a magical way, upon their gardens and fields, to make them more fruitful next year. But Israel must abhor such foolish customs.

(commentary on Ex 23:19)

Verse 20 - I think it's significant that God says He will wipe out the inhabitants of the Promised Land (verse 23), but then in verse 24 God says that "...you must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces." (verse 24). In other words, you're going to have to pick up a sword and do some business. It will be God working in and through you, but it is nevertheless a human hand that is grasping a weapon and getting things done.

I also like verse 25:

Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. (Ex 23:25)

I hear that as a promise that God will keep you healthy by watching over your diet.

Something else that I noticed: The conquest of Canaan was to be a gradual process and not something that would be accomplished overnight. There were practical reasons for that:

But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. ³⁰ Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land. (Ex 23:29-30)

I think God does the same thing sometimes in life. Rather than blessing you in a way that could potentially overwhelm you and lead to impulses and temptations that would lead to some unhealthy compromises, instead He grows you and teaches you so that you're able to enjoy and appreciate His best for your life.

Isaac wasn't born to Abraham until Abraham was 100 (Gen 17:17). Would he have been able to obey God's instructions to sacrifice his son prior to that stage in his life where he had come to know and trust God as intimately as He did by that point? Probably not.

Joseph spent time in prison before he became governor of Egypt. Moses had lost all of the prestige that comes from being a member of Pharaoh's court before he was approached by God to be his representative. Peter's bravado was crushed beneath the weight of his shame when he denied Christ three times. Only after that experience was he able to go forward in God's Strength to be a truly bold witness (Matt 26:75; Acts 2:14; 4:8-22).

"With every privilege comes responsibility."
(David Gust)

Blessings must be accepted in the context of a holy character that, first of all, acknowledges the Source of the blessing (Jas 1:17) and then enjoys it as a gift and not as an entitlement.

But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today. (Dt 8:18)

The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her...(Judges 7:2)

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. (Jas 1:17)

Everything that I'm given short of salvation is temporary. That's what's being hinted at in the last part of James 1:17. The "heavenly lights" are not permanent, but God is. That one bit of Truth serves as a great reminder that whatever I'm given in this life must be processed in the context of what awaits in the next.



The "love of money" is the root of all evil:

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:10)

It makes sense because a person can become so preoccupied with "providing" and "prospering" that they fail to "produce" the kind of fruit that we're appointed to bear...

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Eph 2:10)

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (Jn 15:8)

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. (Jn 15:16)

So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. (Rom 7:4)

¹⁰And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹²giving thanks to the Father,

who has qualified you^[d] to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. (Col 1:10-12)

So it follows then if what I'm given, while some may of it may be for my pleasure and enjoyment...

He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: ¹⁵ wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart. (Ps 104: 14-15)

Much of what He gives, He expects me to turn around and use for the sake of building His Kingdom.

¹⁰Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

In order to dispatch what He's given appropriately, there needs to be a measure of godly character in place, and that's where the whole railroad comes to a screeching halt...

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (Jas 4:3)

And that is why there is often a process in place, designed by God, that produces godly character...

³Not only so, but we^[c] also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that **suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. (Rom 5:3-5)**

And that process takes time. So while things don't always look rosy, be encouraged by knowing that God is in control and perhaps the reason you don't have all that think you need and / or want, is because He's grooming you so that you're able to handle the prosperity that can only be enjoyed provided you have the necessary character to use it rather than abuse it.

**⁹"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!
(Matt 7:11)**

Chapter 24:10 gives a picture of God, as far as the way He appeared to Moses and company on the top of the mountain:

...and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was a surface that looked as if it were paved with blue sapphire stones, and it was as clear as the sky! (Ex 24:10 [NCV])

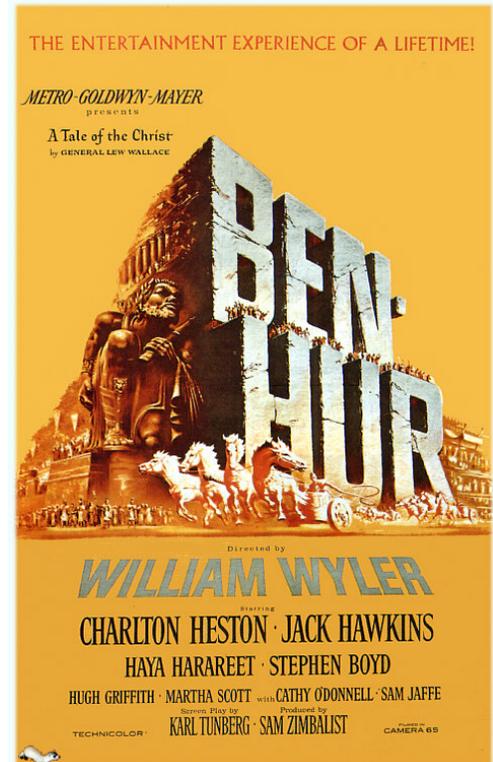
I think it's healthy to reflect on the fact that while God has chosen to allow Himself to be approached as a loving Heavenly Father, He's still the God of the universe and needs to be maintained as such in one's mind.

"Hur" was an important figure in Israel's history in that he served alongside Aaron and was mentioned specifically by Moses when he was getting ready to head up to the mountain.

In chapter 25, God begins the list representing the materials and resources that Moses would collect from the people that would be used to build the ark, the tabernacle and all its furnishings.

The Ark of the Covenant is described as something that can be interpreted today in the light of modern science as an exceptionally powerful capacitor. This makes sense in that, should a person touch it, they would be electrocuted and die which is what happened when Uzzah, one of David's men touched it in an attempt to prevent it from toppling and died on the spot (2 Sam 6:6-8).

As one goes through some of the commentary about the Ark, it's important to realize that while today we can break it down and be able to understand

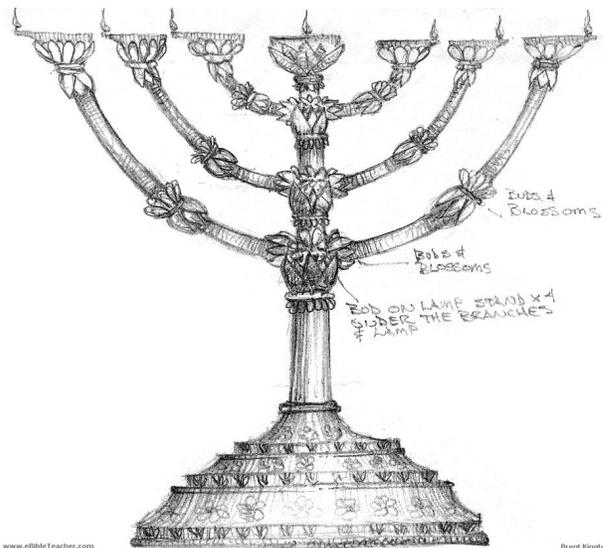


it, it was still God Who initiated it. What makes it Divine is not its composition, but the Author of the composition.

In this chapter, you also see the specs for the Table of the Shewbread and the lampstand (75 pounds of gold were used to make it).

Ex 26:1-27:21 The tent is nothing short of amazing when you consider the artistry and the design that went into it.

Ten curtains of fine line and blue, purple and red thread. Each having designs of creatures with wings on the pieces of cloth. This was the first layer.



Menorah