

## EXODUS

### Lesson 31 - Chapters 33 and 34

Let's be very clear where Israel stands with God at this moment in Exodus: the Mosaic Covenant has been broken and is not in operation and therefore Israel's relationship with God is broken; all the result of idol worship of the Golden Calf.

The result of Israel breaking some of the terms of the Mosaic Covenant will not be the END, or abolishment, of Israel as God's chosen people because the Lord re-established the SAME covenant with Moses when Moses trekked back up the mountain with a fresh set of stone tablets. We don't see this explained until Deuteronomy.

#### READ CHAPTER 33 all

Yehoveh, in vs. 1, gives Moses orders for Israel to strike camp and move on. They're still at the base of Mt. Sinai and have been there for about a year. The Law has been given, the instructions for God's Tabernacle has been given, and now its time to move on towards their goal: the land of promise, Canaan. That's the good news. The bad news is that the punishment for Israel's breaking of the covenant is that God will not dwell among them. However, in His great mercy, He WILL send an angel ahead of Israel, who will drive out the Canaanites, the Emorites, the Hittites, the Perrizites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites ahead of Israel's arrival.

God tells the people they are to remove their ornaments. That is, they are not to wear any of their jewelry. This signifies a couple of things to the Hebrews: 1) jewelry goes hand in hand with joyousness, and that is NOT called for, considering what has transpired. They **should be** in a state of mourning for losing the presence and covenant of God because of their actions. 2) The jewelry was what had been used for making the Golden Calf in the first place. That was NOT what it was supposed to have been used for.....the jewelry was the result of a kind of God-ordained retribution upon the Egyptians, when Yehoveh instructed Israel to "strip Egypt" as they were leaving. And, the precious metals were, in part, going to be needed for God's dwelling place.

In vs. 7, we're told that whenever Moses would pitch the tent, he did it OUTSIDE THE CAMP of Israel. Now, let's think about that for a minute; there are some interesting aspects, here, that I would like to point out to you. First of all, most commentators make this tent out to be the God-ordained Tabernacle. And even though the word "Tabernacle" doesn't exist in these verses, many translators have decided that that is what is meant, here, so they insert the word.

I have a problem with the notion that the Tabernacle even existed at that moment.

First, the timing doesn't seem to be right. Up to now, all that's been given is the instructions on how to build the Tabernacle. There is no evidence that the Tabernacle has actually been constructed. The Golden Calf incident has interrupted everything. It won't be until after Moses goes back up the mountain to receive a 2<sup>nd</sup> set of tablets that the Tabernacle is built, and therefore God has separated Himself from Israel because the covenant doesn't actually exist that MAKES them His people.

Second, the word used throughout these verses to describe what Moses erected was, in Hebrew, ohel.....this means, "tent". And, this word is used in several places in this chapter, and it is the ONLY word used to refer to whatever it was that Moses erected outside the camp. It is also used when we're told that whenever the Israelites saw Moses heading toward his ohel, they would stand outside their own ohel.

Third is the indication that it was Moses who actually erected the tent. We know that it would have taken hundreds and hundreds of people to erect the Tabernacle, and the verse simply doesn't give us the impression that anymore than Moses, and perhaps his most immediate family, were involved in erecting the tent.

Finally, we know from Numbers and Deuteronomy that when the Tabernacle was erected, the tribes surrounded it in a very specific order that we've already discussed. In that arrangement, the Tabernacle is not only INSIDE THE CAMP it is the center and focus of the camp.

I think that the tent used here was temporary. It was probably just an ordinary tent. In fact it was probably simply Moses' personal tent. We're told in vs. 9-10 that the cloud would station itself at the **entrance** to the tent, whereas later, when we know for sure that we're speaking of God's ordained model of the heavenly Tabernacle, that is, the Wilderness Tabernacle, the cloud hovered OVER the tent. So, something is different here.

We also see that Joshua never left the inside of the tent. That was certainly not the case with the Wilderness Tabernacle; for only priests, Levites, could enter the Tabernacle, and Joshua was not a Levite.....he was from the tribe of Ephraim. In fact, later we'll be told that **anyone** other than priests from Levi would be killed if they had anything to do with the Tabernacle. How was Moses allowed in? He was a Levite.

What we have a picture of is that when Moses needed to meet with Yehoveh he actually did so OUTSIDE the tent, while Joshua stayed separated from Moses and God by staying hidden away INSIDE the tent.

Now, a reasonable question is, so how is it that God told Moses up on Mt. Sinai that He required the construction of this elaborate and detailed Tabernacle for His presence if He was going to dwell with man, but then turned around and met with Moses in front of an ordinary tent? My contention is that there was nothing intrinsically holy about the Wilderness Tabernacle, nor any other created thing. God simply declared it was holy. The Tabernacle was not for the sake of God, it was for the sake of the people; so that they could be assured, visibly,

of His presence; so they could be reminded of His Law and His Holiness, so they wouldn't sin; and it was an important teaching tool....perhaps more for us, today, than even for the Israelites back then.

God could up and declare the room we're all present in to be holy, and that is that. I guess God declared the plain old tent He was currently meeting with Moses in, holy. Remember, for a time now in Exodus everything is topsy-turvy as a result of Israel breaking the covenant. Israel has severed their relationship with God; and so God has removed His presence from Israel, and His presence with them was all that distinguished Israel from anybody else. Whereas "INSIDE THE CAMP" of Israel was supposed to be the **clean** area, and "OUTSIDE THE CAMP" the unclean area, there is no "INSIDE THE CAMP" being clean right now. The only clean area is that tiny little spot, away from where Israel was camped, that Moses erected that temporary tent and went to meet God. The idea of being inside or outside the camp really only has meaning in the current context in the sense of the Lord either being in Israel's midst, or not. And for now the Lord is not in Israel's midst so therefore He's not INSIDE THE CAMP.

OK. Another little conundrum: vs. 11 says Moses and God spoke face to face as friends. But later, in vs. 20 God says that no one, including Moses, can see God's face. How do we deal with this seeming contradiction? I'm going to go into some depth about this, because we will get this little phrase "face to face" many times in the Torah.....and several of those times its referring to God speaking to Moses.

There is a Hebrew word used, here, that can mean presence, or face.....and it is *paniyim*. It can mean a face, just as we think of it....human or animal.....or it can indicate a "presence". Personally, although not every Biblical translator nor scholar would agree with me, I think that what we're being told here is that Moses spoke to God "face to presence".....Moses' face, God's presence. That is God's spirit was present, it was near.....versus far away. Moses' conversation with Yehoveh was not like prayer was back then, that allowed man to communicate with God from **afar**.....that is, man on earth, God in Heaven....separated. Really Moses "face to presence" communication with God is almost indistinguishable from a Believer's modern-day prayer life, since the day of Pentecost when His Spirit came to dwell in us. Because God's presence is ALWAYS present in us.....we don't speak to Him from afar.....we speak to him "face to face like a friend" because He is near. We have a very similar privilege to what Moses experienced.

There is also another consideration: face-to-face was, in that day, used as a Hebrew expression. And it could mean a couple of things: first, it could speak of an intense conversation..... perhaps akin to heated debate.....or even better, hard bargaining. If you've ever been to the Middle East, or seen a travelogue on TV of an Oriental market, you'll see people loudly arguing, hands flailing around, scowling, seemingly angry at each other. This is purely cultural and the way they conduct business and negotiation; and anger is in no way being displayed. Jews will do the same thing when discussing Jewish religious doctrines and laws. A second meaning is that indeed ONE of the parties IS displaying anger. It is VERY difficult to know in the scriptures whether face-to-face is simply indicating presence, or hard bargaining, or anger. It's all in the context, and its also cultural.

However, in vs. 20, the general belief among Hebrew scholars is that when God tells Moses that he cannot see His face, it's a more along the lines of face as we think of a human face, than it is a general **presence**. So, verse 11 is about God's presence, in the way we think of the Holy Spirit's invisible presence in our day; and verse 20 is about God's face that apparently could be visible to human eyes.

Yet.....there is a strong hint that **face-to-face** in vs. 11 also incorporates the idea of a heated debate. Because beginning in vs. 12, we get this typical Middle Eastern style interplay between God and Moses. Moses questions, God says what He's going to do. Moses disagrees and offers a suggestion. God says no. Moses tries to get God to see it his way. Eventually God agrees.

Now, in vs. 19 God says He is going to show Moses His goodness, and that He is going to proclaim the name of the Lord before Moses. Just so we're on the same page: what is actually said is " I will proclaim the name of Yehoveh".....not Lord. God is saying He is going to speak His own name, which is Yehoveh.

God is revealing his nature to Moses; in Middle Eastern culture to reveal one's name is to reveal one's character because name and character are organically connected. God is too holy even for Moses to look upon His face. God is merciful and gracious. But, He will choose who He is merciful and gracious to..... man does not decide such matters.

Chapter 33 ends with Yehoveh directing Moses to stand in a crevice, a cleft in a rock, and with God Himself covering Moses' eyes so that he does not see God's face. BUT, after God passes, Moses can see God's back. What does this mean? I don't know.....everything I've ever read, Jewish or Christian, is quite unsatisfactory, and amounts to allegory. So, let's just leave it there.

Let's move on to chapter 34.

### **READ CHAPTER 34 all**

If chapter 32 was about the **breaking** of the covenant relationship between God and man, and chapter 33 shows what happens when the covenant is invalidated, then chapter 34 is about its reinstatement; or as Everett Fox calls this, the 5<sup>th</sup> division of the 6 divisions of Exodus, ***Infidelity and Restoration***.

Yehoveh directs Moses to cut two stone tablets and bring them to the summit of Mt.Sinai. Since a little time has passed since we have talked about the location of where all this was taking place, this might be a good time to remind you that this mountain of God goes by another name; as well as Sinai it's called Mt. Horeb..... they are one in the same. I'd also like you to recall that it is unimaginable that the location of Mt.Sinai was in the Sinai Peninsula. The traditional location of Mt.Sinai, where St. Katherine's Monastery is built and thousands of Christian pilgrims come year after to year to imagine Moses and the 10 Commandments, defies both Scriptural description and geographical possibilities. Let us remember how this site,

near the southern end of the Sinai, was declared to be the Mountain of God: Constantine, Emperor of Rome in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, had become a Christian and declared Christianity as a government authorized and therefore legal religion within the Roman Empire. His mother, Helena, was also a convert and both mother and son were prone to visions. Almost every biblical site in Israel that has a monastery or Catholic Church built upon it was ordered by Helena to commemorate some event concerning Christ. And, almost universally, these specific sites bore no known historical reality; these sites did **not** agree with the early Church Fathers or the Jewish Rabbis. Rather these choices that are now so cemented into Christian tradition were the results of her dreams and visions. Mt.Sinai is one such site. One would think that if the site of the true Mt.Sinai was the one chosen by Helena, that the Jews would have greatly revered it for centuries before she was even around. The Jews knew nothing of this location as THE Mt.Sinai.

Interestingly in Galatians 4:25 St. Paul states that Mt.Sinai is in Arabia. Josephus also states that Mt.Sinai is in Arabia, as does Philo. Let's also remember that before Moses went to Egypt to free the people, when he was still a shepherd in Midian, he was attracted to a bush that was burning on a mountain in Midian. The Bible states unequivocally that the same mountain at which Moses first encountered God, at the burning bush, was the one that Israel was brought to when they left Egypt; Midian in on the Arabian Peninsula. Now some traditionalist Christian scholars have fought this saying that the Sinai was considered part of Arabia at that time. That is just plain inaccurate and speculation without a hint of proof to that effect. Not one piece of evidence has ever been found or documented to indicate such a thing. That is pure fantasy. But it is well documented that Egypt controlled the Sinai at the time of Moses and that Midian was on the Arabian Peninsula. A few scholars also try to explain Paul and Josephus away by stating that this mention of Arabia must have been allegorical or metaphorical. Of course allegory and metaphor are at the heart of why the Church has wandered so far off course over the past 2 centuries, and how it could be that literally thousands of Christian denominations have been formed all basing themselves on supposedly the same common document....the Bible....but often holding such widely disparate beliefs and views. That is, since taking the Bible at its word (taking it literally) usually blew away Western gentile church doctrines that sought to rid Christianity of anything Jewish, making the Scriptures allegorical and metaphorical became their solution. Up became allegorical for down, Israel became allegorical for the Church, east became metaphorical for evil, and Western Arabia became allegorical for the Sinai. Nonsense. We looked sometime back at the route of the Exodus, and the area where Paul and Josephus say Mt. Sinai is located, and found a place that not only matched the Biblical description, but even archeological evidence was found of the Israelites stay there. And, that place was in Arabia. BTW: this is nothing to get very upset over. That Mt.Sinai was actually in Arabia changes nothing about God's laws and ways, about Christ, or about our faith: its just interesting to know how certain traditions got started and we can wonder at why millions of people would choose to accept myths over truth.

Back to the stone tablets; God says He is going to write (or better rewrite) on these new tablets the 10 Commandments, in order to replace the tablets that Moses had smashed upon seeing the people's grievous rebellion against Yehoveh when they built that Golden Calf. Recall that Moses shattering of those tablets was Middle Eastern custom for indicating that an agreement, a covenant, between two parties had been violated and therefore the tablet that the terms of

the covenant had been recorded on were ceremonially literally broken.

Yehoveh descended in a cloud to where Moses had come. As this shows us once again, whether it be on the Mountain, or soon in the Tabernacle, God's presence was **not** there at all times; He came and went.

Now, at the end of the previous chapter, chapter 33, Moses had asked to see God's glory and God was willing to grant Moses' request.....to a degree. The answer to the question of just WHERE Moses would stand and behold God's glory pass by is now answered: the summit of Mt.Sinai. The rock whose cleft Moses would hide in while God's visible essence passed was at the top of the HolyMountain. Let's take a look at that for a minute.

What is happening in verses 6 and 7 is that Yehoveh is proclaiming His character to Moses. Today, we take this for granted..... if we've ever attended a Church or Synagogue we've been taught about Yehoveh's love, mercy, and so on. But these few verses are so important and so central to the Hebrew religion that they became part of future Jewish liturgy, and are known as "the 13 Attributes of God". Yehoveh tells Moses that His very essence is mercy, love, patience, and faithfulness; that He is loyal to those whom He sets apart. Keeping loyalty to the 1000<sup>th</sup> generation, in vs. 6, is a Hebrew idiom that simply means **forever**. Yet, Yehoveh says that His justice demands that He cannot call the guilty, innocent. In fact, the sins of the fathers **will** affect their offspring to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generations. Even more God will CAUSE it to effect the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generations. Now, why the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> generations? Because, in that day of extended families living together from birth to death, the typical family unit contained 3 and 4 generations..... so it is referring to the entire household. In other words, it was typical that the great grandparents, grandparents, parents, and children all remained in one family unit...living and working together. So, when the sins of the great grandfather, for instance, were punished, naturally it affected the rest of the household. In our culture, in the age of what demographers call the Nuclear family, that is, it's only the parents and their immediate children forming a household, a 2 generation family unit, it works the same way.....and sadly most of us are old enough to know that when we sin, and are disciplined for it, or God allows the natural consequences of our sin to be played out, it will often damage the whole family.

It is this fully understood reality of 3 and 4 generations living together that allowed the phrase "to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation" to become a Hebrew expression that basically meant "short term". So these verses contrast that the Lord will show kindness forever to those who love and obey Him, but will cause consequences for a person's sin to be relatively short lived.

I have mentioned on a number of occasions a Biblical principle that has always been important, but really hadn't been front and center for the Church, or our nation for that matter, until the last 5 or 6 years. And the principle is this: there are only two ways we can know who our invisible God is: His name and His characteristics. We've just been given several characteristics, attributes, of God and His name has been carefully and firmly associated with those attributes..... in fact it was God Himself who pronounced His own name Yud-hey-vav-heh, Yehoveh, and revealed His own characteristics to Moses. Obviously this was not intended as an exhaustive list of **all** that God is..... but really, how much more do we need?

Today, there is an ongoing debate within the Church as to whether or not the Muslims' claim that their god Allah is simply the same god as the God of the Christians and the Jews, Yehoveh. I gave a talk on that subject quite some time ago. The bottom line is that, after studying the Koran and doing some extensive research, I am convinced that Allah cannot possibly be Yehoveh. Why? First, they don't have the same name. The Bible puts great importance on names....especially the name of God and the name of Christ. The church has tended to regard names as having a rather unimportant place in our doctrine.....and it is coming back to haunt us. No, Allah is NOT an Arabic translation of Yehoveh. Allah is a nearly 4000-year-old name for the Arabian moon-god. That of itself disqualifies any relationship between Yehoveh and Allah.

Second, Allah and Yehoveh don't have the same characteristics. Take every one of the 13 attributes Yehoveh pronounces of Himself here in Exodus 34, and you will find the nearly, if not precisely, opposite of those characteristics ascribed to Allah in the Koran, the Muslim equivalent of the Bible. If they don't have either the same name or the same attributes, it's ludicrous to think they're the same god. We need to pay more attention to Biblical names, festivals, appointed times and Sabbaths; and when we do we'll understand far more thoroughly who God is, what He's about, and avoid the consequences of mixing truth with men's philosophies and false religions particularly in our day when the call is for tolerance and peace at any price.

Let's go back to those two verses again, verses 6 and 7. When we look at some key words in the original Hebrew we can acquire some deeper understanding. I want to substitute some Hebrew words that most of you are now familiar with for their English translations in verse 6; this is how LITERALLY this verse reads: ***“Yehoveh passed before him and proclaimed: ‘Yehoveh, Yehoveh, El is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness.....’*** and so forth. What I'm trying to demonstrate to you is that for several traditional reasons the English translations do NOT actually SAY the name of God. Rather when God's name (YHWH, Yehoveh) is actually written in the original, the translator's write God, or Lord. God and Lord are not names. In our society we also deal with titles and names as separate things: Mister or Missus is NOT a name, is it? Neither is Doctor, or Congressman. Becky is a name; Jerry is a name; king and president are not names they are but impersonal titles.

Therefore when God pronounces His name, it is a very personal thing. So it should not be surprising that in verse 5 when it says that God pronounced His name, that we get this phrase that I just gave to you whereby He actually uses His formal name: “Yehoveh, Yehoveh, El is compassionate....”

Notice also the use of the Hebrew word “El”. El is a title for the highest god in any pantheon of gods. El is not a word used only for Yehoveh. El was a title that various of the pagan religions would bestow on whichever of their many gods they thought stood above all the others. So the concept is “God above the other gods”. Therefore in the Bible we will regularly see the expressions “God of gods”, “Lord of lords”, or “King of kings”. These are all expressions of the concept of the term “El”.

Let me also remind you that while most Bible versions (translations) will occasionally use

Jehovah as God's name (a reasonably acceptable attempt to pronounce his name in my book), those same versions will employ that name anywhere from 4 or 5, to perhaps 15 or 20 times TOTAL in the entire OT. But in the original Hebrew God's name, YHWH, is written more than 6000 times!

Now, did God just do all this out of the blue? No, this was in response to Moses' request from the previous chapter (33) where he said in verse 13, "...now please show me your ways...", and then in verse 18, "I beg that you show me Your glory".

Moving on: Upon God pronouncing His name and attributes to Moses, and passing before him, Moses uses this moment to appeal to God to restore the broken relationship with Israel. He falls on his face before Yehoveh, agrees with Yehoveh's assessment of the situation, and pleads for restoration. ***There, right there, is the model for us to approach God when we know we have committed an offense against Him.*** First, we realize the sin that was committed, second, we confess that sin to God and agree with Him on it that it IS sin, and third, we ask for restoration...for forgiveness. Now the fact that our sins have already all been forgiven and paid for due to the finished work of Christ doesn't change what we're to do. We're still to go before Yehoveh every day, confess our sins to Him (because we STILL do sin, don't we?), and ask for forgiveness. But unlike Moses who had to wait for an answer.....yes I will forgive, no I won't..... we are assured that we **are** forgiven when we confess with contrite hearts. Now understand how radical that is. People in Moses' day, right on up to Christ's day and beyond, were often worried and anxious over whether or not God would forgive a sin they had committed. When someone sinned it required a sacrificial ritual to atone. If their sacrifice was not done properly, or accomplished within a certain amount of time.....or if the priest that assisted them was not ritually clean, or one on a long list of other possible procedural errors occurred.....the sacrifice MIGHT not be accepted by Yehoveh, and therefore forgiveness NOT granted. The people were not at all sure, many times, whether they had been forgiven or not; and so they carried a dreadful burden. Believers don't have that problem..... thanks to Yeshua.

Now we must note with the greatest sobriety, that while God forgives Israel in Exodus 34, and restores the relationship, He does not yet agree to dwell among them, nor does He start again calling Israel "My People". Some of the privilege so freely given to Israel, and the intimacy between God and the Hebrews, is going to be missing for a while. This is God's discipline at work and it is a necessary consequence for their sin even though they are, or will be, forgiven. This modern evangelical doctrine among some denominations that Christians can sin without consequence (without discipline or punishment) is wrong-minded and without Scriptural back, OT or NT. Forgiveness is forgiveness, consequence is consequence. One does not terminate the other.

In vs. 10, God reinstates the covenant with Israel that they had broken by means of the apostasy of the Golden Calf. But Yehoveh makes it clear that there are two conditions for Israel to obey if God's promises to Israel within that covenant would come about; first, as told in vss. 11-16, Israel must not mix themselves with the Canaanites and involve themselves in their idolatry. Second, there are several God-ordained observances, appointed times, (as outlined in vss. 17-26) that they are ALWAYS to keep.



And, in the same format as the covenant was first given, God says, IF you'll do this, THEN I'll drive out the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perrizites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites from the land I'm going to give to you. However, says Yehoveh, don't you DARE make another covenant, a peace treaty, with any of these people.....nor any other tribe that is settled in the land of Canaan, the land that God is giving to Israel. Israel is to make covenant ONLY with Yehoveh. Rather Israel is to destroy Canaan's sacrificial altars; smash their standing stones.....standing stones were memorials to a god.....and cut down their tree-poles (something akin to Totem Poles, which were idols). Interestingly the word used here that is often translated as tree-poles, or sacred poles, and in some versions "groves" (the most literal translation), is in Hebrew "Asherah", or more literally "asherim", which is the plural form. Asherah is where the name Ashtoreth comes from; this goddess Ashtoreth is also called Astarte, and in yet other cultures called Ishtar. Asherah, Ashtoreth, Astarte, and Ishtar are all referring to the same thing: fertility goddess cult worship.

Whenever Israel fell into idolatry it was either the moon-god or the fertility goddess that they began to involve in their worship because this god and goddess were so universally honored. The Hebrews generally didn't STOP worshipping Yehoveh; they just added another god or two to the mix. Isn't it interesting that as much as the Church just can't resist shaming ancient Israel for their idol worship that we Christians have adopted the identical name used in the Bible for this pagan fertility goddess (that God calls an abomination) to use as the name for perhaps our most sacred Holy Day: Easter. That's right; Easter is just Anglo-Saxon for Ishtar; Easter was the Anglo-Saxon fertility goddess (this is why our modern Easter celebration employs rabbits and Easter eggs because a rabbit was often the symbol for the fertility goddess and eggs, ovum, were the symbols of fertility itself). We should think long and hard about this and how many of our other traditions came about that we hold so dear and above reproach.

Now in verse 14 with the Golden Calf incident so very fresh in the people's minds, God repeats His command that the Hebrews are to bow down to NO other god. In vs. 15 Yehoveh says to Israel that if you DO make a covenant.....that is make a treaty.....with any of these various tribes living in the land of Canaan, it will start you down a very slippery slope. Of course, in the books immediately following the Torah, we'll see Joshua and others doing exactly what God prohibited here; they make peace treaties with several of these Canaanite tribes. You see what Israel did was to disregard God's instructions in favor of what their natural minds thought was a better course of action. In some instances they made treaties that allowed Canaanite Kings to continue in power if they paid tribute, taxes, to Israel in return. Who doesn't want free money, and little extra income? Besides that is how the whole world operated since time immemorial. A conqueror often chose to keep a king in power if it was profitable. In other cases Israel thought they were showing love and mercy by not removing people from the land that God said were to be removed. Certainly God would understand and honor their decision in their *sincere* desire to be nice and loving, right? The results of that mindset proved disastrous and the consequences continue to this day this disobedience to God's explicit commands dating to the days of Moses and Joshua is largely responsible for the mess that is the Middle East.

I don't want to get too preach, but if ever there was a call to the God's church to be

uncompromising, this section of Exodus is it. Yehoveh is NOT a god of religious tolerance. Yehoveh is NOT a god of compromise and consensus. Yehoveh does not honor our sincerity or our earthly definition of love above His commands. We're told in vs. 14 (and this is not the first time we've encountered this statement) that He is a jealous god and will not tolerate the worship of a false god. He just told His people not to mix themselves with pagans because it is inevitable that they will want good relationships with those people and that will necessarily involve compromise. And the Lord uses VERY strong language that is usually diluted by the genteel people who have translated the Bible for us, and don't wish to offend its readers. For instance, god calls the act of accepting pagan gods into your midst "whoring". We all know what that means.

The modern world now says that in the perilous times facing humanity, every person on the planet falls into one of two categories: tolerant or hate filled; if you're not one, you're the other. Listen to me carefully: that is a satanic principle, not a Godly principle. God's people are NOT to be at all tolerant of false gods, such as Allah; or is it to declare what God calls evil to be good, such as homosexuality or abortion; or are we to bow down to the wishes and customs of pagans, such as joining them in their holy days like Halloween, all for the sake of getting along. On the other hand our response is not to be hatred or violence; nor to go out of our way to create strife and upheaval. We're to be light, not a sword. Gentle, not mean spirited. But the only light we have is the light of our Savior; and if we tolerate, accept, respect, or join in the ways of His adversary, can we really expect God to be glorified in this? When Israel did this very thing, out in the Wilderness, God removed His presence from them, and stopped dwelling among them and even stopped leading them. Do we honestly believe that God's character has changed and will now tolerate His very own modern day Tabernacles where His Holy Spirit resides (us!) chasing after (or as it says in these verses, whoring after) the ways of the world?

We are going to have to learn to stand firm and realize that peace with God is not the same thing as peace with the world. In fact, in our age, they are opposites; and like Israel had to do in their settling of the Promised Land they had to choose one or the other, not a compromise between the two. We'll continue with chapter 34 next week.