

CENTRAL POSITION OF THE LAW WITHIN THE PENTATEUCH (GENESIS 1:1-JOSHUA 24:33)

- 1 **Primeval history; the nations settling in their lands** (Gen 1-11)
 - The nations receive their allotted territories
 - The nations' territories (גְבוּלָם, *gebûl*) are according to their families (לְמִשְׁפְּחוֹתָם, *lemišpehōtām*)
 - Introduction of Israel's forefathers in Mesopotamia: Terah, Nahor, Abraham (Gen 11)
- 2 **Abraham:** God's promise to give (נָתַן, *nātan*) Canaan to Abraham's descendants made (Gen 12:1-21:7)
 - Land of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, etc., promised (Gen 15:20-21)
 - Abraham builds altar in Shechem; lives in area between Bethel and Ai; Hebron
 - Military victory against enemy from north; sudden attack, pursuit past Dan
- 3 **Isaac** and the death of Israel's founding father, Abraham (Gen 21:8-28:4)
 - Theme of death: Sarah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac (almost)
 - Theme of blessing: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Esau
 - Abraham ascends Moriah; promise threatened but sees God's provision for Isaac; God swears to bless descendants
- 4 **Jacob:** A story illustrating the evils of social and family discord (Gen 28:5-37:1)
 - Story of social and family strife, murder, lying, theft, abuse of aliens, etc.
 - Plight of unloved wife, hired man; younger and older siblings; birthright
- 5 **Joseph:** A story of how God rewards faithful obedience (Gen 37:2-50:26)
 - Theme of faithfulness rewarded
 - Theme of disobedience punished
- 6 **Exodus from Egypt:** God saves Israel in a foreign land (Exod 1:1-13:16)
 - Host king fears Israel is too numerous
 - Calls magicians to oppose, but fails
- 7 **Failure and divine grace in the wilderness** (Exod 13:17-19:2)
 - Nation in migration; journey halted; arrival at Sinai; meeting Jethro
 - Israel complains (לִי, *lûn*); provision of water from the rock; manna; quail

CENTER: THE GIVING OF THE LAW AT SINAI (Exod 19:3-Num 10:10)
- 7' **Failure and divine grace in the wilderness** (Num 10:11-21:20)
 - Nation in migration; journey begins; departure from Sinai; meeting Jethro
 - Israel complains (לִי, *lûn*); provision of water from the rock; manna; quail
- 6' **Victory in Moab:** God saves Israel in a foreign land (Num 21:21-Deut 3:29)
 - Host king fears Israel is too numerous
 - Calls magicians to oppose, but fails
- 5' **Call to obedience** based on lessons from history (Deut 4-11)
 - History teaches that faithfulness is rewarded
 - History teaches that disobedience is punished
- 4' **Laws for stability and justice in society and family** (Deut 12-26)
 - Laws to counter social and family strife, murder, lying, theft, abuse of aliens, etc.
 - Laws for unloved wife, hired man; younger and older siblings; birthright
- 3' **Moses' final words** and the death of Israel's other founding father, Moses (Deut 27-34)
 - Theme of death: Curses for violating the covenant
 - Theme of blessing: Blessings for keeping the covenant
 - Moses ascends Nebo; promise unrealized but sees God's provision for Israel; God recalls oath to bless descendants
- 2' **Conquest of Canaan:** God's promise to give (נָתַן, *nātan*) Canaan to Abraham's descendants fulfilled (Josh 1-12)
 - Land of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites distributed (Josh 12:8)
 - Shechem altar; battle in area between Bethel and Ai; Hebron conquered
 - Military victory against enemy from north; sudden attack, pursuit past Dan area
- 1' **The nation of Israel settling in her land** (Josh 13-24)
 - The Israelites receive their allotted territories
 - Israel's tribal territories (גְבוּלָם, *gebûl*) are according to their families (לְמִשְׁפְּחוֹתָם, *lemišpehōtām*)
 - References to Israel's forefathers in Mesopotamia: Terah, Nahor, Abraham (Josh 24)¹

¹ Adapted and slightly expanded with permission from David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 101. Dorsey sees an overarching structure for the Hexateuch, in which the promises made to Abraham in Genesis are realized in Joshua (cf. Josh 21:45, 23:14).

THE GIVING OF THE LAW AT SINAI (EXODUS 19:3-NUMBERS 10:10)

A The Ten Commandments—and holiness on Mount Sinai (Exod 19:3-20:21)

- Opens with Israel's arrival at Mount Sinai; date specified (19:1-2)
- God's glory on Sinai like cloud (19:9) and fire (19:18)
- Begins with God's presence on Sinai sounding like trumpets (19:16-19)
- Theme of holiness (19:3-25, 20:18-21)
- Commandments about idolatry, misusing the Lord's name, Sabbath, honoring parents, murder, stealing, adultery, perjury, etc.

B The Civil-Judicial Laws—emphasizing moral, ethical purity (Exod 20:22-24:11)

- Focus on moral, ethical behavior; some cultic regulations (21:1-23:19)
- Prohibition against bestiality, "following the practices" of Canaanites
- Prohibition against eating meat of an animal torn by wild beasts
- Use of blood, fat in sacrifices; sprinkling blood for ritual cleansing

C The Tabernacle Instructions—sacrificial altar (Exod 24:12-34:28)

- Instructions for altar, for all sacrifices
- Climax: Priests' ordination prescribed (28:1-29:46)
- Closing narrative: Sin of Aaron and the golden calf (32:1-33:23)
- Israel's idolatrous, debauched sacrificing, with drunkenness

D CLIMAX: TABERNACLE BUILT AND FILLED WITH GOD'S GLORY! (Exod 34:29-40:38; summary in Exod 40:36-38)

"Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exod 40:34-35).

C' The Sacrificial Instructions—for sacrificial altar (Lev 1:1-10:20)

- Instructions for sacrifices to be offered on altar
- Climax: Priests' ordination described (8:1-9:24)
- Closing narrative: Sin of Aaron's son's, Nadab and Abihu (10:1-20)
- Israel's sacrifices to be dignified, monotheistic, no drunkenness

B' The Purity Laws—emphasizing ritual, moral purity (Lev 11:1-18:30)

- Focus on moral, ethical behavior; some cultic regulations (17:1-18:30)
- Prohibition against bestiality, following the practices of the Canaanites
- Prohibition against eating meat of an animal torn by wild beasts
- Use of blood, fat in sacrifices; sprinkling blood for ritual cleansing

A' The Holiness Laws—most of the Ten Commandments repeated (Lev 19:1-Num 10:10)

- Closes with Israel's departure from Mount Sinai; date specified (Num 19:1-2)
- God's glory on Sinai like cloud (Num 9:15-22) and fire (Num 9:15-16)
- Ends with silver trumpets sounding orders from God's tabernacle (Num 10:1-10)
- Theme of holiness throughout
- Commandments about idolatry, misusing the Lord's name, Sabbath, honoring parents, murder, stealing, adultery, perjury, etc.²

² Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 81.

TABERNACLE BUILT AND FILLED WITH GOD’S GLORY
‘THE CENTER OF THE CENTER OF THE CENTER’ AND THE CLIMAX
(EXOD 34:29-40:38)

A INTRODUCTION: Moses’ Face Shines from God’s Glory on Mount Sinai (Exod 34:29-35)

- Glory so intense, people cannot approach Moses unless he veils himself

B Opening Convocation (Exod 35:1-36:7)

- Moses assembles people and instructs them about properly making tabernacle and priestly garments; people bring to Moses all the materials for tabernacle and priests’ garments

C People Carry Out the Work (Exod 36:8-38:20)

- Seven parts of the tabernacle, perhaps arranged from most holy to least holy:
 - (1) Tabernacle
 - (2) Ark
 - (3) Table
 - (4) Lampstand
 - (5) Altar of incense
 - (6) Bronze altar and basin
 - (7) Courtyard

D CENTER: Materials Used for Making the Tabernacle & Priestly Garments (Exod 38:21-31)

My Observations: Featured in this section are *materials*—various amounts of gold, silver, and bronze collected for the project, as well as the blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen. Various parts of the tabernacle complex are also referenced, including the entrance, the courtyard, the bronze altar with its grating and utensils, the Tent of Meeting, the curtain, and the hooks, posts, bands, bases, and tent pegs. The theological emphasis here is that this space is *sacred space*.

Also featured in this section are *people*—the names of the various leaders and their families who led the sanctuary project (Moses, Aaron, Ithamar, Bezalel, Uri, Hur, Oholiab, and Ahisamach) and the tribes from which they came (Levi, Judah, and Dan). Highlighted also are the 603,550 men who gave to the project. The theological emphasis here is that these people are *sacred people*.

Finally featured in this section is *Yahweh*—the LORD himself who commanded Moses to build the sanctuary after the pattern shown to him. As Dorsey notes, what is conspicuously missing in this centermost unit of the Hexateuch is any description of idol in the throne room, a feature totally out of sync with the rest of the ancient Near East. The theological emphasis here is that this God is a *sacred God*.

C’ People Carry Out the Work (Exod 39:1-31)

- Seven parts of the priestly garments, perhaps moving from most holy to least holy:
 - (1) Ephod
 - (2) Breastpiece
 - (3) Gold chains and rings
 - (4) Robe
 - (5) Tunic
 - (6) Undergarments
 - (7) Diadem

B’ Closing Convocation (Exod 39:32-40:33)

- People bring to Moses all the completed work; Moses inspects and approves their work, and he sets up the tabernacle and dresses Aaron in priestly garments

A’ CLIMAX: TABERNACLE FILLED WITH GOD’S GLORY! (Exod 40:34-38)

- Glory so intense, even Moses cannot approach it (supersedes glory on Sinai) ³

³ Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 77; with my observations on the contents of the centermost unit.