A Very Simple Survey of the Old Testament

Block #4 — Lessons 25–32

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Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Block

Block #4 (Lessons 25–32) continues to follow without alteration the next 8 lessons in the Bible in Felt outline, covering Exodus 11 to Numbers 25 — doctrinally speaking, from Israel's physical 'exodus' from Egypt to their encampment at the borders of the promised land. In Lesson 28 the emphasis shifts to the contracted blessings and cursings of Leviticus 26; a basic grasp of the 5 courses of contracted curses goes a long way toward understanding the record of Israel's history. Israel came out of Egypt 'great' in number, but not 'great' in the LORD. Having entered the Law contract, she must learn the 'hard way' that her only hope is in God Himself being loving, merciful, and outright gracious to her. Lesson 32 shows that Satan, though not 'seen' for several lessons, had not disappeared, and maneuvered once again to try and prevent God's plan with Israel from being accomplished.

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Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
L25	Through the Red Sea — Exodus 11–15
L26	Food from Heaven — Exodus 16
L27	When Water Flowed from a Rock — Exodus 17
L28	God's Ten Rules — Exodus 19–20
L29	The Golden Calf — Exodus 32–34
L30	Building God's House — Exodus 25–40
L31	Moses Makes a Mistake — Numbers 20
L32	The Story of Balaam — Numbers 22–24

Lesson Summaries

L25

Through the Red Sea *Exodus 11–15 • The special and climactic tenth plague, and Israel's actual 'exodus' from Egypt*

The 'One Plague More' (11:1–7)

- God told Moses He would bring "one plague *more* upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt" (11:1) — like the straw that broke the camel's back. With it Pharaoh "shall surely thrust you out hence altogether."
- This last plague would entail the slaying of Egypt's firstborn; but against Israel "shall not a dog move his tongue", "that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel" (11:7).

Egypt's Firstborn and Egypt's 'Gods'

- As with all the previous plagues, this one was directed against "all the gods of Egypt" (12:12). To the Egyptians their firstborn were "the chief of *their* strength" (Ps. 78:51) — supposed to be specially conceived, blessed and empowered of their 'gods.'
- Genesis 46:34 helps: "every shepherd *is* an abomination unto the Egyptians." A 'super-race' was being bred in Egypt, and 'bad blood' was an abomination. So the slaying of the firstborn was truly the crushing blow to their 'gods.'

The Exodus (12:29–36; 13:17–22)

- The "great cry" in Egypt was also the realization that their 'chief strength' had been destroyed. Israel made their 'exodus' just as and when God had said, and God led them Himself by "the way of the wilderness of the Red sea" (13:17-22).

The Red Sea (Exodus 14)

- God had one more mighty work, which would defeat the Egyptian army and impress upon Israel the greatness of the Lord's capacity to deliver them from any and all of their enemies: the crossing of the Red Sea.
- At the Red Sea, Israel cried out with complaints and fleshly mockery, not for deliverance; they had not learned from God's judgments in Egypt. Moses said, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD" (14:13).
- Had they appreciated their God for "the LORD" that He was, they would have understood that He would be their Deliverer and their Avenger. He shielded Israel, parted the waters, and destroyed the Egyptians (vv. 15-30).

What God Said to Abraham, Now Fulfilled

- The things God had said unto Abraham were now fulfilled: He had 'judged that nation' and brought His people out "with great substance." Their victory song (15:1-19) declared they were going to 'the LORD's land' to provide for His kingdom on the earth.
- Israel perceived herself to be in the position to be the "great nation" of the Abrahamic Covenant, but she had a lot more to learn; the next two lessons look at Exodus 15:22-17:16 and the lessons God taught her.

L26

Food from Heaven *Exodus 16 • God's special schooling of Israel: the first two of 4 trying situations*

'Great' Numerically, Not Yet 'Great with God'

- To be a "great nation" meant not only greatness in number, but especially being 'great with God.' Israel needed to realize she was not by nature 'fit to be utilized by God', and could only be fit if God graciously dealt with her.

Special Schooling: 4 Trials (15:22–17)

- The 4 trying situations of Exodus 15:22-17 are the 4 lessons: 'no water'; then 'no satisfactory food'; then 'no water' again; and finally an enemy attack. The two lesson titles mention only two of the four trials, but all four will be looked at.
- This lesson covers Exodus 15:22-16: the 'no water' situation at Marah and the 'unsatisfactory food' situation in the wilderness of Sin.

Marah: The 'Proving Test' Instituted (15:22–26)

- At Marah the waters were "bitter", and "the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" (15:24). In a matter of a few days they acted as if the LORD didn't even exist.
- Moses "cried unto the LORD", and a tree cast into the waters made them sweet. "There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them" (15:25): God made this the initial part of a test.
- The LORD set before Israel meriting His favor by their own ability: "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God" (15:26). Israel thought she actually did merit God's goodness and blessing.

The Wilderness of Sin: The Test Failed (Exodus 16)

- In the wilderness of Sin Israel met an 'inadequate food' situation, and once again began to murmur and complain. God provided quails and the 'manna' He 'rained from heaven'; yet their 'fear and belief' of the LORD was a shallow thing.
- First simple command: leave none of the manna till the morning. "Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank" (16:20). They couldn't even keep one command perfectly.
- Second: no gathering on the seventh day, "the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD"; yet some went out. "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?" (16:28). God's education of Israel is now half over.

L27

When Water Flowed from a Rock *Exodus 17 • The final two trials of Israel's special schooling*

More Than a Good Story

- The purpose of these lessons is a 'doctrinal understanding' of the outworking of God's plan and purpose. This period is often treated as dull and dormant, but it is a very important time: a vital education is taking place.
- If Israel would receive this education now, it would spare her from having to learn it the 'hard way' later on. As Paul describes it in I Corinthians 10, it was "spiritual meat" and "spiritual drink".

Rephidim: 'No Water' Again (17:1–7)

- They had met this situation before, and not that long ago; yet "the people did chide with Moses" (17:2). Worse, "they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?" (17:7).
- A 'good servant' doesn't doubt the integrity of his Lord. Joseph had learned the lesson of God's faithfulness to His promises, and did not murmur or complain; Israel was not the naturally good and ready servant she thought she was.
- God gave them water when Moses smote the rock with "the rod of God", but first He manifested what they were inside by nature. Moses named the place

"Massah, and Meribah" — in Keith's words, 'temptation' and 'striving with someone.'

Amalek at Rephidim (17:8–13)

- "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim" (17:8). Moses said, "I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand" (17:9): he wanted everyone to see that only by God's power would Israel prevail.
- "when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed" (17:11). Only when Israel exalted God as her only hope and strength — symbolized by the lifted "rod of God" — did she prevail.
- Israel could not handle Amalek on her own, nor any of the enemies her 'great enemy Satan' would bring against her in his opposition to God's plan and purpose. Her only hope lay in God Himself providing for her.

The Special Schooling Closed

- Through four trials God made it evident Israel was not 'good by nature', not naturally obedient, not naturally fit to be utilized by Him; she desperately needed God to deal with her solely on the basis of His mercy and grace.
- The lessons were clearly taught; now, would Israel respond? Did she learn? The next lesson gives the answer, at Mt. Sinai.

L28

God's Ten Rules *Exodus 19–20 • The Law contract, and its contracted blessings and punishments (Leviticus 26)*

Part One: The Conditional Proposition

- At Sinai the purpose was not another lesson but to see whether they had learned. God gave a conditional proposition: "if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me" (19:5).
- Had they learned, they would have confessed their total inability. But the "high hand" with which they came out of Egypt still existed: their welfare would now depend on their own strength, and they would learn the 'hard way' under a legal contract.

What the Law Was For

- The law was not given to teach people how to be saved by living good lives. God gave it because Israel failed to learn how impossible it is to merit God's favor and blessing by their works.
- The Law would unmercifully manifest and condemn their sin: "by the law *is* the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). Paul in II Corinthians 3 calls the Law that which "killeth", the "ministration of death" and the "ministration of condemnation".
- God's appearance for the delivering of the Law was a terrifying thing (19:10-25): anyone who touched Mt. Sinai would be killed, and there was "the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud".
- The 10 Commandments are not the whole Law, but in Keith's words 'the tenor of the Law' (Ex. 34:27); the almost 700 other commands amplify them. They are enough to manifest the sinfulness of anyone today who thinks they are good enough on their own.

Part Two: Contracted Blessings and Punishments (Leviticus 26)

- The Law set forth how God would bless Israel if she did His will and punish her if she did not. This special section of the Law, in Leviticus 26, is like an

outline of the rest of the Old Testament.

- The blessings (vv. 3-13), such as marvelous productivity in the land, would be theirs because the LORD "will have respect unto" them — if they kept the Law. But God had already demonstrated that they can't and won't keep His laws.
- The punishments come in 5 progressive, intensifying courses (vv. 14ff). First (vv. 14-17): illnesses and diseases, and enemies ruling over them. Second (vv. 18-20): a judgment upon their weather, with famines in the land.
- Third (vv. 21-22): affliction by the wild beasts. Fourth (vv. 23-26): invading enemies and siege. Fifth (vv. 27-33): destructive judgments — captivity, and being scattered among the nations.

L29

The Golden Calf *Exodus 32–34 • Israel's sin, and God's response: His mercy and grace her only hope*

Part One: The Law Contract Ratified

- Even before the 'courses of punishment' began, Israel did things that manifested the deep and natural sinfulness of their nature. God gave time to change their minds, but "all the people answered with one voice" (24:3), and the contract was ratified.
- Moses was "in the mount forty days and forty nights" (24:18), and all that time "the sight of the glory of the LORD *was* like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel" (24:17).

The Golden Calf (32:1–6)

- After only forty days, still within sight of God's glory, the people told Aaron, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us" (32:1), and said it was Moses who brought them out of Egypt, not acknowledging the LORD.
- Even Aaron made the golden calf and said, "These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt"; he built an altar before it and called the idol 'Jehovah.'
- This showed, beyond anything else to this point, that they were not good by nature; there is only one explanation — they are sinners by nature, at enmity with God, just as we ourselves are.

Part Two: The LORD's Response (32:7–34:9)

- By the contract, Israel deserved God's wrath (32:7-14). Moses appealed to God, not because they didn't deserve it, but because of His declared and covenanted plan and purpose with them.
- Moses broke the tables of stone (32:15-29). God said He would not go up with "a stiffnecked people" (33:1ff), and the tabernacle was moved "without the camp, afar off from the camp": their works drove God away.
- The LORD "descended in the cloud" and "proclaimed the name of the LORD" (34:5): "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (34:6). His name declares Him the very thing sinful Israel needs.
- Moses "bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped" (34:8). He now understood the 'hinge upon which turned the door of Israel's hope'; God re-wrote the tenor of the Law contract, and their schooling under a stern Law was ready to begin.
- Keith's NOTE: likewise no one today is pretty good in God's sight. People's only hope of salvation and eternal life is to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their

Saviour, who paid the penalty for their sins on the cross of Calvary.

L30

Building God's House *Exodus 25–40 • The tabernacle: a 'house with meaning' designed to teach Israel*

Part One: A 'House with Meaning'

- God didn't have the tabernacle built just for the fun of it, nor as if He needed a place to live. It was part of Israel's schooling under the Law contract — a house God designed to teach them something.
- God designed it Himself: "let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (25:8); "look that thou make *them* after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" (25:40).
- The layout: by the general understanding, the court of the tabernacle measured 150 feet by 75; the tabernacle proper had two rooms, the holy place and the most holy place, or the Holiest of All, separated by a veil.
- The ark of the covenant, in which the two tables of the Law contract were kept, was really a 'casket for the covenant.' Its top (25:17-21), of "pure gold" with two cherubim, God called a "mercy seat" (25:17).

Part Two: No 'Welcome Mat'

- We put 'welcome mats' at our doors; God's house had none. Its structure, furnishings and activities all said Israel was NOT welcome in God's presence, because a problem existed between them and God — the problem of sin.
- The Holiest of All was closed off by a 'veil of separation' (26:31-37), with Cherubim woven into it, guarding God's presence much as they guarded the way of the tree of life after Adam and Eve sinned.
- The ark testified that the Law contract only condemned Israel; the mercy seat, that God was merciful: through the death of another in their place — an animal sacrifice whose blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat — their sins could be covered over.
- Only priests could be in the tabernacle area, and only the High Priest entered the Holiest of All, once a year, with blood. At the altar by the door (27:1-8), continuous sacrifices were offered day to day as a testimony (cf. 29:38-46).
- The tabernacle was truly a 'tent, or house, of witness.' God in His house was off limits to Israel because of her sinfulness; what Israel needed to do was to hear the testimony and respond positively to it.

L31

Moses Makes a Mistake *Numbers 20 • Moses' mistake capped off a series of disobedient acts by the nation*

Part One: A Short Synopsis

- The title refers only to Moses' error in the desert of Zin, about 40 years after the last lesson. It capped off a series of disobedient acts: before entering the land, Israel showed on at least 10 occasions she was not 'great in the LORD.'
- Numbered "by their armies" (1:3), they set out; Moses proclaimed, "Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered" (10:35). Everything looked good on the outside, but nothing had changed on the inside.
- Complaining brought "the fire of the LORD" (11:1). Desiring to be back in Egypt, they did what God declared: "ye have despised the LORD which *is* among you" (11:20). Even Aaron and Miriam rebelled against the LORD in

their complaints against Moses (Numbers 12).

- All the men but Caleb said they could not conquer the land (Numbers 13); only Caleb and Joshua were 'great in the LORD.' Caleb said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."
- Israel's rebelliousness climaxed: they decided to return to Egypt, and prepared to stone Caleb and Joshua. The LORD pardoned Israel, but judged those numbered into the armies: they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years (14:20-39).

Part Two: The Tenth Time, and Beyond

- God declared they had "tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice" (14:22). Yet they "presumed to go up unto the hill top" and were smitten (14:40-45); later came the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16).
- Through the 40 years God provided — "thou hast lacked nothing" (Deut. 2:7). Yet in the desert of Zin "there was no water for the congregation" (20:2), a duplicate of the situation 40 years earlier.
- God told Moses to "speak ye unto the rock before their eyes" (20:8). Instead Moses rebuked the people and "smote the rock twice" (20:11). The LORD still let the water come forth, solely because of His great mercy and graciousness.
- In disbelieving and disobeying God, Moses had sinned, in a manner which hindered God being 'sanctified in the eyes of Israel.' For this God chastened him: Moses would not be allowed to bring the people of Israel into the land.

L32

The Story of Balaam *Numbers 22–24 • Satan's attempt, through Balak and Balaam, to thwart God's plan with Israel*

Not Israel's Only Enemy

- Israel had been 'their own worst enemy', but their sinful nature was not their only enemy. Satan's determination to thwart God's plan and purpose with Israel was still as strong as ever.
- Israel "pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan *by* Jericho" (22:1), ready for the conquest of Canaan, where Satan had established his 'hot-bed' for abominations and ungodliness.

Balak's Plan (22:2–6)

- Balak, king of Moab, asked Balaam: "curse me this people; for they *are* too mighty for me" (22:6). Balaam was one of, if not the top false prophet in Satan's system, known for his ability to amass the powers of the idol gods.
- Through Balaam's 'cursing of Israel' the gods of the other nations would unite: an attempt on Satan's part to put a union of his nations together to oppose God's plan with Israel.

Balaam and His Donkey (22:7–35)

- God told Balaam not to go nor curse Israel, then to go only "if the men come to call thee" (22:20). The men did not come and call him; Balaam, motivated by his greed, just went, and "God's anger was kindled" (22:22).
- The donkey saw "the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand" (22:23). God made her speak, and so "forbad the madness of the prophet" (II Pet. 2:16). God then sent Balaam on with His own message.

The 4 Messages (Numbers 23–24)

- There were 4 messages: the first 3 in response to the 3 times Balak tried to get Balaam to curse Israel, the 4th after Balak had given up. First (23:1-12): Israel is distinctly God's, under His Divine protection.
- Second (23:13-24): His plan with Israel is unchangeable. Third (23:25-24:9): a vision of Israel blessed, her kingdom ruling on this earth. Fourth (24:10-25): the destruction He will bring upon all who oppose His plan and purpose with Israel.

Keith's NOTE: Attempted Now, Permitted Then

- What Satan attempts now through one major king (Balak) and a powerful false prophet (Balaam), God will permit when this present 'dispensation of Gentile grace' is over and He resumes His program with Israel: the beast and the false prophet of Revelation 13.
- The story is more than a talking donkey: it is the record of Satan's first major attempt to oppose God's purpose with Israel through his strength as "prince of this world", and a prophetic fore-shadowing of what will yet take place.

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

'Great' in Number vs. 'Great in the LORD'

God's covenant to make of Abraham's seed a "great nation" meant not only greatness in number but especially being 'great with God.' Having multiplied in Egypt, Israel was 'great' numerically, but not yet 'great with God.' To be 'great in the LORD' Israel had to realize that He and His grace is her only strength and only hope; later, only Moses, Caleb and Joshua were 'great in the LORD.'

Meriting God's Favor (the Law Contract) vs. God's Mercy and Grace

Under the Law contract Israel would be dealt with on the basis of her performance; all she ever merited from God by her own conduct was His judgment and cursing. Israel's only hope of ever being what God's covenanted plan calls for lay in God Himself mercifully and graciously undertaking for her — the 'hinge' Moses saw when God proclaimed His name.

Our Works vs. Trusting the Lord Jesus Christ

The law was not given to teach people how to be saved by living good lives; the 10 Commandments manifest the sinfulness of anyone today who thinks they are good enough on their own. People today who think of themselves and their works as Israel did will get only the wrath of God, in "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God", as Paul declares in Romans 2:1-12. Their only hope is to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

God's Program with Israel vs. This Present 'Dispensation of Gentile Grace'

Balak and Balaam's confederacy parallels what Satan will be allowed to do when this present 'dispensation of Gentile grace' is over and God resumes His program and dealings with the nation of Israel. What is only attempted at this time is permitted then; in that day God Himself will fight Satan's amassed forces, for the time for the establishment of God's kingdom in the land will have come.

Key Scripture References

Exodus 11:4–7	The tenth plague; "the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel"
Exodus 12:12	This plague, as all the previous ones, directed against "all the gods of Egypt"
Exodus 14:13–14	"Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD": a mighty work for Israel's own learning
Exodus 15:25–26	At Marah God made a 'proving ground' for Israel: meriting His favor on their own ability
Exodus 16:20, 27–28	Two simple commands about the manna, and they were not obeyed
Exodus 17:7	Massah and Meribah: Israel "tempted the LORD"
Exodus 17:11	Only with "the rod of God" lifted up did Israel prevail over Amalek
Exodus 19:3–8	God's conditional proposition, and Israel's "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do"
Exodus 24:17	God's glory visible on the mount all the forty days
Exodus 25:8–9, 40	God Himself designed the tabernacle after His pattern
Exodus 34:6–7	God's name proclaimed: Israel's only hope is in His mercy and grace
Leviticus 26	The contracted blessings (vv. 3-13) and the 5 courses of punishment (vv. 14ff)
Numbers 14:22–23	"These ten times": the generation that would not see the land
Numbers 20:7–8, 10–11	Moses smote the rock instead of speaking to it
Numbers 22:5–6	Balak's plan to have Balaam curse Israel
Psalm 78:51	The firstborn: "the chief of *their* strength" in Egypt's idolatrous religion
Romans 3:20; 4:15; 5:20; 7:5	Passages that look back at God's use of the Law and declare its intent and design
I Corinthians 10	Israel's food and water were "spiritual meat" and "spiritual drink"
Galatians 3:10	"As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse"
Revelation 13	The beast and false prophet: Satan's future confederacy against Israel, which Balak and Balaam parallel

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