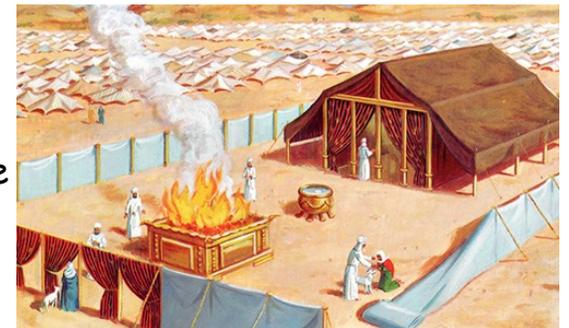


THE JOY OF MY SALVATION

This "read through the bible in a year" program has been challenging for me. The other day, I realized I was 17 chapters behind in the Exodus reading. Oy vey! On the one hand, most of the time I'd rather read longer bits than the schedule suggests because then I don't have to stop in the middle of a good story. On the other hand, I was at the part where a lot of instructions are being given about the treatment of slaves, personal injury, protection of property, social justice, the three annual festivals and the rules that must be followed in regard to them, followed by the Ten Commandments and that disaster. So many details. So many rules. So many requirements.

Then I came to the part outlining the correct offerings for the Tabernacle, plans for building the Ark, plans for the table, plans for the lampstand, plans for the Tabernacle, plans for the altar of burnt offerings, and plans for the courtyard. Soooo much intricate detail. So much precision.



So much repetition. Just when I hoped it was over, I came to the plans for the clothing for the priests, design of the Ephod, design of the chest-piece, addi-

This was about ten chapters worth. So tedious. It's tedious just writing it out.

What I really hated was the part about the sacrifices - which animals were required for which sacrifice, how they must be done, how often they must be done, where they were to be done, what was to be done with the blood, what was to be done with the various body parts - what had to be burned, what could be eaten, what had to be discarded outside of the city, and all that. . I started to get really grossed out. I can't even imagine living that way. So barbaric, so bloody, so violent, so extreme, so ritualistic, so much slaughter. What a horrible environment to live in. And with all that killing several times a day, the stench must have been unimaginable. I hated the thought of all those innocent animals being slaughtered every single day.

Then I thought, *what strange God am I reading about? Who are you?* I can't even fathom this part of the God I know. I felt like I was reading about a terrifying, blood-thirsty entity who must be appeased, or else! A never-ending job that better be done right and with exactness. If you were the priest, your life depended on it. So did the lives of all the people you represented. That would be a terrifying thought. All those sacrifices were pleasing and fragrant to God. It made me shiver it was so creepy. What a fearful way to live. What a heavy

Oh! The joy of my salvation! Those words just became richer and deeper. The joy of my salvation.

No more endless sacrifices. No more wondering if it was done right, was worthy, was enough. No more fear. Often when I pray, I think about how grateful I am that we don't have to perform some kind of ritual to enter into the presence of God, and then have to wonder if we actually were allowed in and whether he hears us or not. We are welcome into his throne room and into his presence because Jesus fulfilled the requirement of sacrifice. No more sacrifices. We are free.

The Lord is my light and my salvation - so why should I be afraid?

Psalm 27:1 (NLT)

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