

ZONDERVAN

*With All Your Heart Discovery Guide*  
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# CONTENTS

Introduction / 7

## Session One

Build Me a Sanctuary / 15

## Session Two

Making Space for God / 57

## Session Three

He Led Them Like a Shepherd / 99

## Session Four

By Every Word — Striking the Rock / 147

## Session Five

With All Your Might: The Final Test / 195

## Session Six

A Well-Watered Garden / 243

Notes / 291

Acknowledgments / 293

Bibliography / 297

## BUILD ME A SANCTUARY

God's story in the Bible is framed by his desire to live with his beloved people. The story begins in a garden paradise where God walked with his people. It ends in a garden where God's people will live with him forever.

Between these scenes is human history — a story of sin, death, and the resulting broken relationship between God and his created people. But intertwined in human history is the story of God's love and his tireless work to restore that broken relationship. The enslavement of the Hebrews in Egypt, their miraculous deliverance, and their exodus to the Promised Land play a pivotal role in the ongoing restoration of God's relationship with his people.

When the Hebrews walked into the desert of Sinai after crossing the Red Sea, they were at last free from enslavement in Egypt. They were not, however, free from bondage to the beliefs and ways of life they had learned in Egypt. That, in fact, was why God led them into the desert: to test them in order to know what was in their hearts and to teach them to obey his every word (Deuteronomy 8:2 - 3).

In the unknown chaos of the desert they faced hardship and uncertainty. As they walked the difficult path set out before them, they grumbled and at times even questioned God's presence with them. But when they arrived at Mount Sinai, God revealed himself to his people in a new way. In a cloud of glory, darkness, thunder, fire, and lightning, he descended onto the

mountain and spoke. He expressed his unending love for them. He promised that if they would live by his every word he would live among them as their loving husband.

Imagine the joy the Israelites felt as they experienced the intimacy of God's presence with them and grew in their relationship with him. Imagine their amazement when God said that he would continue to accompany them on their journey to the Promised Land. No longer would God appear occasionally to a few individuals like the patriarchs and Moses; he would live among them!

To help the Israelites understand the depth of his commitment to live with them and to help them remember that he was present among them, God instructed them to build the tabernacle, a sanctuary for him. The tabernacle was a portable tent shrine that the Israelites would have recognized from the use of such shrines in Egyptian culture. As a familiar cultural form, the tabernacle conveyed a meaningful message that they understood immediately. It was a visual, physical reminder that the sovereign Lord of the universe was with them.

Through the design, construction, and function of the tabernacle, God revealed himself to be unlike any gods his people had known. This study will focus on the purpose, awe, and comfort that the tabernacle — as a symbol of God's constant presence — provided for the Israelites. And it will help those of us who follow Jesus today to better comprehend what it means for us to be the place where God's presence resides.

## Opening Thoughts (3 minutes)

### *The Very Words of God*

*Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.*

*Exodus 25:8*

## **Think About It**

All of us experience pivotal moments in life when we see as we have never seen before. These moments have the potential to change our lives — what we do, how we see the world, even who we are.

But what happens when these great moments are a few months or years behind us? What keeps these moments alive in our hearts and minds so they continue to make a difference in our lives?

## **DVD Notes (21 minutes)**

**How to keep Sinai alive**

**The Hathor shrine at Timnah**

**The message of Abu Simbel**

**God uses the culture to convey his message**

## **DVD Discussion (7 minutes)**

1. What are you beginning to discover about the events at Mount Sinai and their long-term significance in the lives of the Israelites? In God's ongoing plan of redemption? In your life?
  
2. As you viewed the Egyptian temple at Timnah and the temple and battle scene carving at Abu Simbel, what sense did you gain of the importance of the message these structures conveyed to ancient people?

Why do you think God chose these physical images, and do you think they were an effective way to communicate to people in ancient times?

3. Briefly review the Israelites' experience with God at Mount Sinai. Which aspects of that experience are essential to actually living out the kind of relationship with God that he offers?

## PROFILE OF A CULTURE

### The Mining Settlement at Timnah

Located in the Great Rift Valley between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba, Timnah is believed to be one of the first major mining areas in the world. The mines there produced copper, which was combined with tin to make bronze, the most valuable metal of the time. Copper production in the area peaked between the 14th and 12th centuries BC, which was roughly the time of the exodus. Copper is still mined in this region.

The Egyptians brought slaves to work the mines and smelting furnaces of Timnah. The workers dug shafts into the ground and then excavated large galleries to mine the copper. Footholds dug into the rock shafts provided access to the galleries—some as deep as thirty meters—that made up one of the most complex tunnel systems of the time. The refined copper was transported to cities along the Nile River.

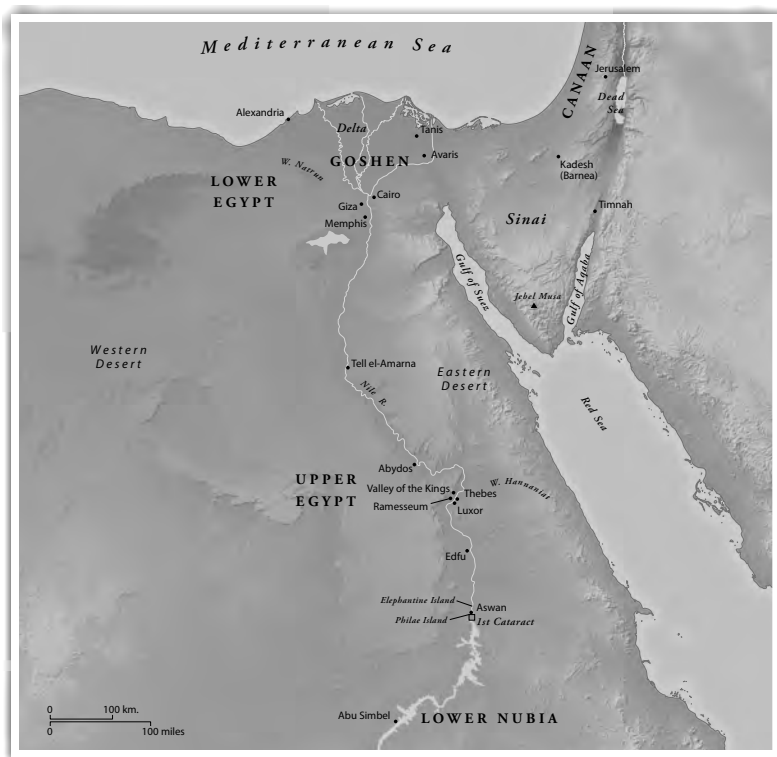


### EVIDENCE OF EGYPTIAN GODS: THE HATHOR SHRINE AT TIMNAH

The temple, or tent shrine, to Hathor at Timnah is evidence of Egyptian influence—where there were Egyptians, there were Egyptian gods. Like other Egyptian temples, the structure has an outer court, inner court, and holy of holies. In the cliff face above the shrine, Pharaoh is depicted bestowing an offering of *ma'at* (indicating that he had maintained harmony in the universe) to Hathor who was known as the protector of miners. As Egyptian power and influence declined in the region, the shrine became a Midianite tent shrine that was similar in design to the biblical tabernacle.

4. Using the map below, locate the cities along the Nile River from Abu Simbel to Goshen, then locate the Sinai Peninsula, the region of Jebel Musa (the traditional Mount Sinai), and Timnah. How far is it from Abu Simbel to Timnah, and what does this tell you about the influence of Egyptian culture in the world of the Israelites?

In light of the vast expanse of Egyptian influence (and with it the influence of Egyptian gods), what are your thoughts about God's desire to live among his people and the way in which he chose to express his presence with them?



## **Small Group Bible Discovery and Discussion (22 minutes)**

### *The Tabernacle: A Way to Remember Sinai*

The centuries-long experience of God's people in Egypt — first as foreigners, then as slaves — had shaped the Hebrews into a people who still maintained aspects of their own religious culture but in other ways had become thoroughly immersed in the religious culture of Egypt. This is not in any way a statement of blame. After all, for four hundred years the Hebrews had been bombarded by Egypt's story that was played out in the rhythm of daily life along the Nile River and surrounded them in the portrayal of Egypt's deities and Pharaohs carved into the great monuments.

Certainly God would have to act with power and drama to gain the attention of the Hebrews and teach them how to live as his chosen people in the Promised Land. And he did! The plagues, the Passover, the crossing of the sea, miracles of water and manna as the Hebrews traveled toward Mount Sinai — all demonstrated the person and character of their God. And then they camped at Mount Sinai, the capstone experience of God's revelation of himself to them.

What would happen next? How would God's people know and remember him — not just on the journey to the Promised Land but forever? Let's see where the tabernacle fits into the story and consider how it was designed to be a sanctuary for God where his presence would live among his people as an ever-present reminder of his revelation at Mount Sinai.

1. God intended far more for his people than simply ending their suffering at the hands of the Egyptians. What did he say he would do for them, and how did he describe the future relationship he wanted with them? (See Exodus 6:6–8.)

2. During their time of bondage in Egypt, the Hebrew people became discouraged and in some ways lost sight of who their God was (Exodus 6:9). What did they discover about their God through the plagues, the Passover, their departure from Egypt, and their deliverance from Pharaoh's pursuing army at the sea? (See Exodus 14:30 – 15:18.)

What impact did their newly acquired knowledge of God have on their hearts?

What picture of hope and their future relationship with God do you see starting to form in the minds and hearts of the Hebrews?

3. After about forty days in the desert wilderness, where God had provided for them and protected them, the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai. What was God's message and promise to them when they arrived at the mountain? (See Exodus 19:3 – 8.)

How did the people respond?

To what extent do you think they understood the kind of relationship God desired to have with them?