

Exodus 33:6-7 HCSB So the Israelites *remained* stripped of their jewelry from Mount Horeb onward. (7) Now Moses took a tent and set it up outside the camp, far away from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. Anyone who wanted to consult the LORD would go to the tent of meeting that was outside the camp.

Now Moses took a tent...outside the camp.

A widespread contemporary textual criticism view is that this section represents a source that thought the tent of meeting was already erected. However, the better view is that this is a temporary tent used for meeting the Lord. Because the building of the tabernacle was now in doubt if the Lord was not going to be in their midst, another plan seemed necessary.

Moses took this tent and put some distance between the camp and it. Here he would use the tent as the place to meet God, calling it by the same name since it was a surrogate tent. Thus, the entire section was a temporary means of meeting God, until the current wrath was past. Cp 1 Samuel 4:21-22.

Such a place was necessary, or at least highly expedient, since it is not probable that they could do without it for the year or so it would take to construct the final building. This speaks to the necessity of a quick return to the Lord when we have sinned. What soul, once he has tasted of the benefits of the Lord's presence, could long forgo such an experience?

The availability of God's direct counsel on any given matter in close proximity to every family every day – what a tremendous privilege! The vast majority of the people apparently took the privilege for granted which inevitably led them to their sin and present looming destruction. Shouldn't we post-moderns, who routinely take the church for granted, and place nearly every other human activity above church attendance, learn from this?¹

This was a type of excommunication or shunning, with the Lord being in the position of the one who shuns the sinner who calls himself a brother and yet persists in his sin.²

The point is that sinfulness prevents the active presence of the Lord leading his people. The Lord was leading his people, but now more remotely because of their sin. Then, in vv.12-17, Moses interceded for the people, and the intercession of the mediator guaranteed the Lord's presence. The point of all of this is that God wanted the people to know that if He was not with them they should not go. Finally, the presence of the Lord was verified to the mediator by a special revelation (vv.18-23).

Far away. "A good distance"; the infinitive absolute is used here as an adverb.

Tent of meeting. Cp Exodus 29:42 Not only the chosen mediator but all the people could (at the appropriate time and in a different manner) encounter God.

Anyone. The clause begins with "and it was," the perfect tense with the *vav* conjunction. The imperfect tenses in this section are customary, describing what used to happen (others describe the verbs as frequentative).

Who wanted to consult the Lord. The form is the Piel participle. The seeking here would indicate seeking an oracle from Yahweh or seeking to find a resolution for some difficulty (as in 2 Samuel 21:1) or even perhaps coming with a sacrifice. The tent was even here a place of prayer, for the benefit of the people. It is not known how long this location was used but it would have taken about a year from this time period to construct the new tabernacle.³

¹ Matthew 13:12 (cp Matthew 25:29; Luke 8:18; 19:26); Luke 12:48; Revelation 2:4-5.

² Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Timothy 3:5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Titus 3:10; 2 John 1:10-11

³ Exodus 18:15, 19-20; Deuteronomy 4:29; 2 Samuel 21:1