



# God's Presence Fills the Tabernacle

*Exodus 33–34, 40*



## LESSON GOAL

Students will pray for God's mercy and thank Him for His faithfulness.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Explain how God showed His mercy and faithfulness to Israel.
- Describe how a holy God dwelt with His people.

## KEY VERSE

"And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation'" (Exodus 34:6–7).

## APPLICATION

- Pray for God's mercy and turn from sin.
- Joyfully praise God for sending His Son and the Holy Spirit.

### Symbol Key



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



## PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

*"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children" (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).*

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

### Bible Background

Israel's idolatry with the golden calf could have resulted in their destruction. Indeed, God had promised that He would "visit punishment upon them for their sin" (Ex. 32:34). Some of the people were destroyed by the Levites (whom God told to kill rebellious Israelites) and by the plague that God sent. Although others escaped immediate death, those who were unbelieving would suffer eternal punishment. But God showed amazing grace to Israel. He allowed the majority of the two million Israelites to live, He was willing to allow them to enter the Promised Land, and He promised to send His angel before them (32:34). (The presence of the angel had originally been promised in Exodus 23:20–24. He was the angel of Yahweh, the preincarnate Christ, who had the power to forgive sins and who had God's name.) God promised Israel, "I will send My Angel before you, and I will drive out" the nations. But this awesome news of grace was sobered with news of the consequences of sin: "I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people" (Ex. 33:2–3). Israel was stunned and went into mourning. They were worried by God's pronouncement that He would not go with them because He might destroy them (33:5). Although the plan for the tabernacle had been given, the promise of God's presence was precariously close to being revoked. Exodus 33–40 tells of God listening to Moses' prayer for God's presence to go with Israel, God revealing His glory to Moses, and God filling the tabernacle with His presence.

### Promise of God's Presence: Exodus 33:1–17

Moses met with the Lord in a temporary tabernacle outside the Israelite camp. When Moses went into this "tent of meeting," the pillar of cloud that had led Israel to Sinai descended in front of the tent. God would talk with Moses there. The LORD spoke to Moses "face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Ex. 33:11). Moses did not actually see God's face (an issue that will be discussed later in Exodus 33), but Moses had an intimate friendship with God, a friendship that displayed God's love and mercy.

Moses was disturbed that God's presence would not dwell among the people. Knowing that he had found favor with God (Ex. 33:12–13), he took advantage of that special relationship and interceded for the people. He asked God to "consider that this nation is Your people." God answered, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (33:14). In Exodus 32:10, God had offered to make Moses' descendants into a great nation, but Moses was more concerned with God's glory among the nations than his own promotion. That same desire for God's glory fueled Moses' second prayer as he asked for the certainty of God's presence. Moses asked, "How then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us?" (Ex. 33:16). Israel would not be a separate people, the holy nation and kingdom of priests that God had intended, if God's presence was not with the people. In answer to Moses' prayer for His glory, God again promised to be with Israel.

### Additional Reference Materials

*Moses and the Gods of  
Egypt: Studies in Exodus*  
by John J. Davis

*The MacArthur Study  
Bible* by John MacArthur

### **Desire for God's Presence: Exodus 33:18–22; 34:1–9, 29–34**

Moses clearly had a passion for God's glory. His first two requests for God's glorification in Israel developed into a third request. Moses prayed, "Please, show me your glory" (Ex. 33:18). Moses wanted to see God glorified both in Israel and in his own life. Moses' favor with God did not lead him to complacency over his position. Pride did not overtake him when God answered his requests. Rather, Moses hungered after a deeper relationship with the infinitely satisfying God. How amazing that God should be glorified by our wanting Him!

God answered Moses' prayer. God revealed, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you" (Ex. 33:19). Both "My goodness" and "the name of the LORD" signify the totality of who God is. His goodness and His name are summarized in this sentence: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (33:19). God is sovereign over all creation. All power is His, and He chooses whom He will have mercy on.

Although God promised to reveal His glory to Moses, He told Moses that he could not see His face and live. Even righteous Moses would have been consumed by the unmitigated holiness of God. God would provide a place where Moses could be hidden by God's hand from the rest of God's glory. God would allow Moses to see His glory, but only a part of that glory.

God commanded Moses to ascend Mount Sinai the next morning. He was to bring with him two stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments would be written (Ex. 34:1). For the second time, Moses spent 40 days and nights on Mount Sinai, neither eating food nor drinking water (34:28). The Lord descended in the cloud, and just as He had promised, "proclaimed the name of the LORD" to Moses (Ex. 34:5). As the Lord passed by, God revealed Himself with the words much cherished by saints from all ages:

"The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation" (Ex. 34:6–7).

Moses' response is exemplary: "Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped" (Ex. 34:8). While we can only imagine what it must have been like to see God's glory, God mercifully captured some of that glory in words. God is gracious, longsuffering, unlimited in goodness and truth, and forgiving of sin; but at the same time, He punishes the unrepentant and allows the devastating effects of sin to be felt for future generations. Believers must remember who God is and live in light of that knowledge. Worship and worshipful obedience are our joyous offering to our glorious God.

On top of the mountain, God confirmed the covenant previously made with Israel (Ex. 34:10, 27). When Moses came down with the Ten Commandments, his face shone from talking with God (34:29). God's presence had a visible effect on Moses' face. The Israelites were terrified, so Moses veiled his face. God's glory had left an unmistakable mark on Moses.

In the New Testament, God promises to dwell in the believer. If we have come to know Christ, who is "the brightness of His [God's] glory and the express image of His person" (Heb. 1:3), we can be certain that we "are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). In the revelation of Christ, we have come to see God unveiled and are being conformed to the glorious image of Christ.

## Dwelling in God's Presence

After the covenant had been renewed, Moses took an offering from the people and collected the necessary materials for the construction of the tabernacle. God "called by name" and "filled...with the Spirit of God" Bezalel to help construct the tabernacle (Ex. 35:30–31). A group of artisans was given special wisdom and understanding in order "to know how to do all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary" (36:1). The tabernacle was a shadow of heaven, and it was essential that it be built exactly as God had commanded. Unlike the episode of the golden calf, when the Israelites committed idolatry with their self-styled worship, the Israelites now obeyed "according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses" (39:32). The tabernacle was raised on the first day of the second year. Almost a full year had passed since the exodus from Egypt (40:17). Three months had been spent coming to Sinai (19:1), and approximately another eight months had passed since their arrival. The episode of the golden calf was surrounded by two 40-day periods with Moses on Mount Sinai, leaving approximately six months in which the tabernacle was constructed.

Finally, the time for God's dwelling among the Israelites had come. Moses followed God's decrees for setting up the tabernacle, for its anointing, and for the consecration of the priests (Ex. 40:1–33). When all was done, "the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (40:34). Not even Moses could enter the tabernacle because of the cloud above and the glory inside. While Moses had been allowed to see the "back" of God's glory, he could not see the manifestation of His glory that indwelt the tabernacle. God's glory was so great that no man could see His holiness. The cloud was above the tabernacle during the day and fire was above it at night. When the cloud moved from the tabernacle, the Israelites knew it was time to break camp and follow (Ex. 40:36–38).

In Genesis 17:8, God promised Abraham that He would be the God of Abraham's descendants. In Exodus 3:7, God called Israel "My people." In Exodus 6:7, God promised, "I will take you as My people, and I will be your God." And when Israel finally came to Sinai, after seeing the magnificent manifestation of God's power during the exodus and His provision in the wilderness, Israel was privileged to have God make a covenant with them. God swore to them, "You shall be a special treasure to Me above all people...and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5–6). Although Israel had broken the commands that God Himself had given, He graciously restored them to the covenant relationship. He relented from His wrath and promised to take them to the land sworn to Abraham. But the ultimate revelation of His forgiveness and grace was that God Himself dwelt among the people. What a splendid array of God's attributes is revealed in His dwelling among the people of Israel!

The book of Exodus is about God making a people for Himself. The end of Exodus reveals God having accomplished what He had purposed, despite the Israelites' continuous rebellion and hard hearts. God glorified Himself among Israel and the nations, revealing that He was Yahweh, the self-sufficient I AM, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. This awesome God had chosen to dwell among sinful men. In Leviticus, God will reveal more to Israel concerning how sinful man could dwell with the Holy God in their presence.

## POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth"*  
(Psalm 78:1).

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



### Review Questions

*Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.*

What was Israel's great sin?

*They broke the second commandment. They bowed down to an idol and said it was the Lord. This also breaks the third commandment, "You shall not use the name of the LORD your God in vain." To call a worthless idol "the LORD" is to use God's name in vain or in a useless way.*

Do you think this pleased God?

*No, the people's actions did not please God. They had sinned against Him.*

What did the people deserve because of their sin?

*They deserved to be punished for what they had done. God wanted to destroy them for their disobedience (Ex. 32:9–10).*

What did God do instead?

*He showed them mercy. Mercy is showing kindness to someone who deserves punishment. Only 3,000 people died when all the people should have.*

In what ways did Moses respond to their sin?

*He prayed for the people, that God would have mercy on them. He became very angry and broke the tablets that had the Ten Commandments on them. He burned and ground the golden calf into fine dust, scattered it into the water, and made the people drink it.*



### The Brightness of God's Glory

God is so holy and glorious that if anyone actually saw Him in His fullness, that person would die. God's presence is described as intense light. Moses had been allowed to see the "back" of God's glory, but not even he could enter the tabernacle once the glory of the Lord filled it. To help your students understand and grasp these concepts, give them the example of the sun. We cannot (and should not) look into the sun without it hurting our eyes. Have the students brainstorm for some objects that they need to protect them from the sun: sunglasses, lotion, caps, umbrellas, etc. You may even want to bring some of these examples to class. God's glory is much more intense, more consuming, and even brighter than the sun! Ultimately, we are protected from God's holiness and can only behold His glory by being in Christ.



### Describing God

In order for Moses to know who God was, God described His characteristics. Describe a few simple objects to the students, and have them guess what they are.

For example: "I am round, you can kick or throw me, and I am about the size of your head. What am I?" A soccer ball. Show them a soccer ball and explain that they knew what it was from your description of its characteristics. In the same way, although we cannot see God, we can know who God is by how He described Himself. Other ideas include a blanket, an apple, and a bicycle.

## PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

*"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78:4).*

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included to use during worship time. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

### Bible Lesson

#### Reading of the Text

Read portions of Exodus 33–34, 40.

#### Introduction

If you could have anyone come and live with you, who would it be? Would it be a relative or a good friend? Perhaps it would be someone famous. Do you know someone famous? Well, the nation of Israel had a very special guest come and live with them. The person who came to live with them was the person who created them, and this same person was the one who rescued them from Egypt. Do you know who their special guest was?

#### Leadoff Questions (LOQs)

**LOQ:** When God placed Moses in the cleft of the rock and passed by him, why did He not let Moses see His face?

**Answer:** If Moses were to see God, he would have died. God is holy, and His glory is like a consuming fire that would have killed Moses (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29).

**LOQ:** What did the Lord proclaim about His character as He passed by Moses?

**Answer:** "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation" (Ex. 34:6–7).

**LOQ:** What did God say He would do for Moses and the people of Israel?

**Answer:** He made a covenant with Moses and the people of Israel that He would "do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD" (Ex. 34:10).



**LOQ:** God said that He would drive out nations from the land that Israel would inhabit. God warned the people to not make a pact (or an agreement) with any of these nations. Why?

**Answer:** Because the people of Israel might not be faithful to God and worship only Him if they fell under the influence of other nations who worshiped other gods (Ex. 34:12–17).

**LOQ:** After coming off Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments for a second time, Moses' face shone. Why did Moses' face glow after being in God's presence?

**Answer:** God's holiness and glory were so intense that Moses had only to spend time with God for there to be a physical effect. This demonstrates to us just how magnificent God's glory is.

**LOQ:** We do not glow in the same way that Moses did after being in the presence of God. But how should we appear to others when we have spent time in God's presence and we have God live in us? Should others see a difference in us?

**Answer:** We are able to come before the Almighty God each and every day. This should be the style of our lives. Although we do not physically glow after spending time with God, we should have a spiritual glow so those around us can see a difference in us.

**LOQ:** In what ways did Moses prepare the tabernacle for use once it was erected?

**Answer:** There were many ways: for example, putting up the veil, setting the golden altar of incense before the ark of the testimony, placing the altar of burnt offering in front of the doorway, and placing the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar (Ex. 40:1–33).

**LOQ:** What lesson can we learn from how Moses did all that the Lord commanded?

**Answer:** God expects absolute obedience from us. He does not expect us to do whatever we want in our own way, but He has given us instructions for a holy life that we are to obey.

**LOQ:** What happened after Moses obeyed all God's instructions accurately?

**Answer:** The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34).

**LOQ:** Verse 35 says that Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it. Why was Moses not able to enter when God's glory was present?

**Answer:** Man is sinful, and Moses was a man with sin. Because God's glory was unveiled in the tabernacle, Moses (as any man) would have died in the presence of His glory. God's glory is a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29).

**LOQ:** What does God's holiness teach us about the seriousness of our sin and our coming into God's presence?

**Answer:** As we come into the presence of God in prayer, we should consider the seriousness of our own sin. We should confess our sin and admit that what we have done is wrong. It is important for us to look at our sin as abominable in the eyes of God and to do everything in our power to avoid displeasing God in the future.

## Summary

This lesson shows that God is faithful to keep His promises. He never breaks His word. He never lies, and He is always trustworthy. He said He would come and dwell among the people of Israel, and He did.

Second, we learned of the holiness of God. God is separate from His creation. He is separate from mankind because we are sinful and He is pure, perfect, and without sin. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because of the holiness of God. The glory of the Lord would have consumed him.

Third, we saw that God cared for His people by guiding them through the wilderness. He loved them and did not leave them in the wilderness to die.

## Application

God, who came to dwell in the tabernacle with the people of Israel, is the same God we worship today. God does not change, so you can trust Him to be faithful to do what He says He will do. How do we find out how to obey God today? By reading the Bible.

God is holy and without sin, but humans are sinful. Therefore, we cannot enter God's presence. What can be done so that you can be right before God? You must be changed. Your sinful heart must be washed clean. The only way to have your heart cleansed is to believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins. You must believe that you deserve God's punishment but that Jesus Christ took the punishment in your place (2 Cor. 5:21). You must repent from your sins and trust Jesus to save you from God's anger. Then God will cleanse your heart.

After your heart is cleansed, God will guide you through life. You will find God's instructions for holy living in the Bible (Psalm 119:105).

## Presentation Ideas



### A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



### Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



### Pitch a Tent

Bring a camping tent to class. Ask student volunteers to help you follow the directions to set up the tent properly in preparation for the coming of the Lord. Use the tent when teaching about Moses' encounter with God outside the camp in Exodus 33:7–11. Cover your face with a veil when you come out of the tent to demonstrate how the face of Moses shone because of God's glory in Exodus 34:29–35.



### Shattered Ten Commandments Puzzle

Before class, draw two tablets on butcher paper and write a summary of the Ten Commandments on them. Cut the tablets into puzzle pieces. Before teaching the section on Exodus 34, hand out the puzzle pieces to various students in the class. Remind the class that in the previous lesson Moses broke the Ten Commandments after he learned of Israel's idolatry. Ask the students to piece the tablets of the Ten Commandments back together. Tape the reassembled tablets to the board and use them to review the ten instructions God had given Israel. Explain that in today's lesson God instructs Moses to cut two more tablets of stone like the first ones so he could rewrite the words of God's covenant, the Ten Commandments (Ex. 34:28).

## Praise and Worship

*Great Is Thy Faithfulness*

*I Will Sing of the Mercies*

*There Is a Redeemer*

## PRACTICE THE TRUTH

*"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:7).*

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



### Art Project: Mount Sinai Rock Garden

Materials: cardboard cut into 12-inch triangles, 10 small rocks for each student, paint of various colors (must have black and red), small paintbrushes

Directions: Review the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. Ask the students to note key words from each command to help them remember God's instructions. Write these key words on the board. Instruct the students to paint the key words on each of their rocks. Over the key words for commandments 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, the students should paint a red circle around the word, and draw a diagonal line through it to show they are not supposed to do those things. While the rocks are drying, pass out a triangular piece of cardboard to each student. Have the students paint it to resemble a mountain, and label it "Mount Sinai" with black paint. Encourage the students to take their Mount Sinai and rock collection home to make a rock garden in a special place in their yard to remind them to obey God's commands!

Key words from the Ten Commandments: Other gods, Idols, Misuse God's name, Sabbath, Honor parents, Murder, Adultery, Steal, Lie, Covet



### "God's Presence Fills the Tabernacle"

Use this work sheet to reinforce the key truths of this week's lesson. The work sheet is located at the back of the lesson.



### Journal Page: "Fellowship with God "

Give each student a copy of the journal page at the back of this lesson. The students can work on the page individually, in small groups, or at home.

### Coloring Sheets

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of this lesson. The students can color the pages in class or at home.



### MEMORY VERSE

Review Exodus 20:1-17.



### The Missing Commandment

Write each commandment on a strip of paper, and use masking tape to post them all on the wall. It will work better if they are not in order. Ask the students to cover



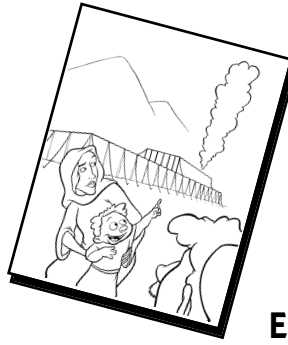
their eyes. As they do this, remove one of the commandments from the wall. When the students open their eyes, ask them which one is missing.

### **The Commandment Race**

Give each student copies of the Ten Commandments that have been cut into strips and held together with a paper clip. These should not be in order. When you say "go," the students can remove the paper clip and race to put their commandments in order. The first to arrange them correctly is the winner. This could be played with the entire class or within small groups, which could help younger students compete within their peer group.



# God's *Presence Fills* the **Tabernacle**



**Exodus 33–34; 40**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**1.** What did Moses ask God? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2.** Where did God place Moses before He passed before him? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**3.** Why would Moses die if he saw God's face? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**4.** List two characteristics of God revealed in Exodus 34:6–7.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**5.** After Moses talked with God, his face \_\_\_\_\_.

**6.** The \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ filled the tabernacle.

**7.** Why was Moses not allowed in the tent of meeting after the cloud had settled upon it?

\_\_\_\_\_



## Fellowship with God

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One reason God told the Israelites to build the tabernacle was because He wanted to dwell among them. God has always desired fellowship with His people. Just think about some of the Bible people we have learned about so far in Genesis and Exodus. Can you fill in the blanks below with the names of the people whom God was pleased to be with?

\_\_\_\_\_ heard God walking in the garden in the cool of the day (Gen. 3:8).

\_\_\_\_\_ found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and he walked with God (Gen. 6:9).

The Lord appeared to \_\_\_\_\_ as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day (Gen. 18:1).

\_\_\_\_\_ wrestled with God and said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. 32:30).

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The Lord appeared to \_\_\_\_\_ as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day (Gen. 18:1).

\_\_\_\_\_ wrestled with God and said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. 32:30).

From the midst of the fiery bush, God called \_\_\_\_\_  
(Ex. 3:4).

From the midst of the fiery bush, God called \_\_\_\_\_  
(Ex. 3:4).

God led the \_\_\_\_\_ in a pillar of cloud by day  
and a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21).

God led the \_\_\_\_\_ in a pillar of cloud by day  
and a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21).

Immanuel: God is with \_\_\_\_\_ (Matt. 1:23).

Immanuel: God is with \_\_\_\_\_ (Matt. 1:23).

What are some of the ways you have fellowship with Christ?

What are some of the ways you have fellowship with Christ?

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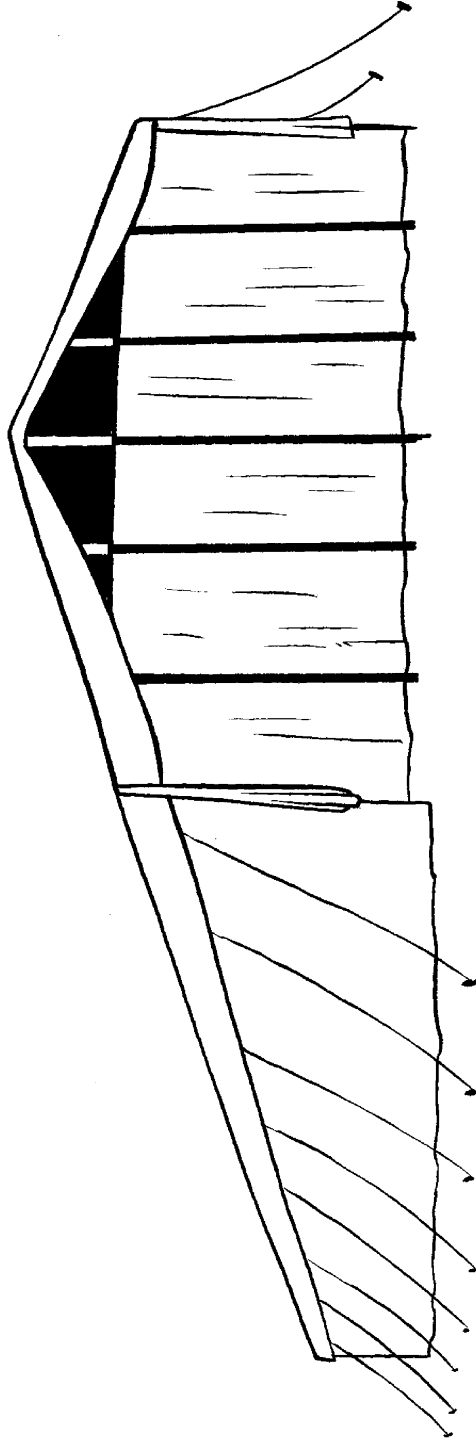
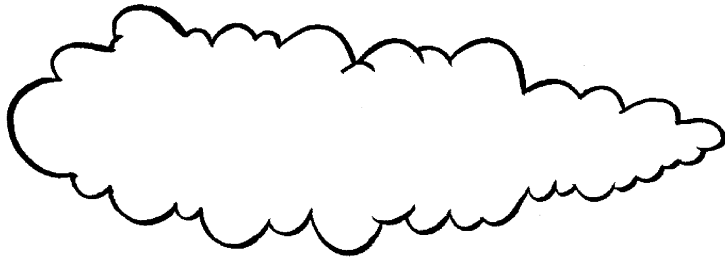
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The LORD said to Moses, "So shall it be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by"  
(Exodus 34:22).





**“Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34).**

