

Exodus Chapter Nineteen

Read **Exodus 19:1-3** – Israel to Mount Sinai

v.1 “IN THE THIRD MONTH, WHEN THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WERE GONE FORTH OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, THE SAME DAY CAME THEY *into* THE WILDERNESS OF SINAI.”

Israel has been traveling for three months and is now approaching the mountain of God, Sinai, the mountain that will be the location of the most important event of their entire sojourn. General opinion is that they arrived at Sinai on the same day of the month that they left Egypt, in other words, exactly three months later on the same day.

The Arab name for Mount Sinai is Jibel Mousa, or the Mount of Moses. Clarke in his commentary says that it is one hill with two summits, one called Horeb and the other Sinai. Mount Sinai means the “mount of the bush”, or “mount of the bushes” and quite likely refers to the fact that God spoke to Moses from the bush that burned but was not burned up.

v.2 “FOR THEY WERE DEPARTED FROM REPHIDIM, AND WERE COME *to* THE DESERT OF SINAI, AND HAD PITCHED IN THE WILDERNESS; AND THERE ISRAEL CAMPED BEFORE THE MOUNT.

Now Israel take the next step in their journey, that from Rephidim into the desert and wilderness of Sinai. See Map.

v.3 “AND MOSES WENT UP UNTO GOD, AND THE **LORD** CALLED UNTO HIM OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN, SAYING, THUS SHALT THOU SAY TO THE HOUSE OF JACOB, AND TELL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL;”

When Israel arrives at Mount Sinai, the Lord calls Moses up on to the mountain. Clarke in his commentary suggests that the cloud that had led Israel thus far in their journey moved and settled upon the mountain. His contention is based upon the fact that the cloud in the daytime signified the presence of God. Clarke also contends that it was an angel of the Lord that called Moses to the mountain and sites:

Acts 7:38 “THIS IS HE THAT WAS IN THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS WITH THE ANGEL WHICH SPAKE TO HIM IN THE MOUNT SINA, AND *with* OUR FATHERS: WHO RECEIVED THE LIVELY ORACLES TO GIVE UNTO US:

In most study Bibles you will find that word Lord in bold print, capital letters, or by some means identified as being unique. This is because that in the original language of the scripture the name being translated was Jehovah or Yahweh indicating God the Father.

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Perhaps Mr. Clarke misread either Exodus or Acts because this verse speaks of Moses being called up on to the mountain while Stephen speaks of one who talked to Moses while he was on the mountain.

Cook points out in the Baker commentary that this is the only time in the Pentateuch that the phrase "house of Jacob" is used and implies some significance as being related to a transition point between the patriarchal law and the Mosaic Covenant. Moses has been called up on the mountain in order to be given a message for the children of Israel, the house of Jacob.

Read **Exodus 19:4-6** – God's Instructions to Moses

v.4 "YE HAVE SEEN WHAT I DID UNTO THE EGYPTIANS, AND HOW I BARE YOU ON EAGLES' WINGS, AND BROUGHT YOU UNTO MYSELF."

God first reminds Moses of what he did to the Egyptians, a nation that as we began the study of Exodus was the most powerful in the world at that time and ruled much of the world and was near the peak of its power. God brought them low.

Then he reminds Moses also how that he has brought Israel, carried, led and provided for Israel thus far in their journey. Clarke makes a big deal about the word that is translated "EAGLE". It probably is not the same kind of eagle that we know here in the USA because they were probably different, though most likely related. The original Hebrew word is "neshar" and Clarke contends related to a bird called "rachama" by the Arabs that was known for its care of protection of its young. If so it makes a good analogy and also parallels the words of Jesus in:

Matthew 23:37 "O JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM, *thou* THAT KILLEST THE PROPHETS, AND STONEST THEM WHICH ARE SENT UNTO THEE, HOW OFTEN WOULD I HAVE GATHERED THY CHILDREN TOGETHER, EVEN AS A HEN GATHERETH HER CHICKENS UNDER *her* WINGS, AND YE WOULD NOT!"

v.5 "NOW THEREFORE, IF YE WILL OBEY MY VOICE INDEED, AND KEEP MY COVENANT, THEN YE SHALL BE A PECULIAR TREASURE UNTO ME ABOVE ALL PEOPLE: FOR ALL THE EARTH *is* MINE:"

Now we see that, as is always the case, man's relationship with God is conditional. There are conditions attached to the Will of God, just as there are conditions, requirements of us today as children of God. Consequently at Sinai there were requirements of Israel that must be met in order for Israel to be God's chosen people. God said "IF YE WILL OBEY MY VOICE" "KEEP MY COVENANT", then will they be a peculiar treasure and above all that they shall meet. Moses reminds them of their special relationship with God in his final sermon:

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Deuteronomy 7:6 “FOR THOU *art* AN HOLY PEOPLE UNTO THE **LORD** THY GOD: THE **LORD** THY GOD HATH CHOSEN THEE TO BE A SPECIAL PEOPLE UNTO HIMSELF, ABOVE ALL PEOPLE THAT *are* UPON THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

v.6 “AND YE SHALL BE UNTO ME A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS, AND AN HOLY NATION. THESE ARE THE WORDS WHICH THOU SHALT SPEAK UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.”

So God is ready to make a covenant with the Israelite nation. They would be to him a “KINGDOM OF PRIESTS, AN HOLY NATION.” Moses reminds them of this special relationship with God at various times and one example is found in his parting words:

Deuteronomy 26:19 “AND TO MAKE THEE HIGH ABOVE ALL NATIONS WHICH HE HATH MADE, IN PRAISE, AND IN NAME, AND IN HONOUR; AND THAT THOU MAYEST BE AN HOLY PEOPLE UNTO THE **LORD** THY GOD, AS HE HATH SPOKEN.

And we find very similar words written to us by Peter as he was directed by the Holy Spirit:

I Peter 2:9 “BUT YE *are* A CHOSEN GENERATION, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, AN HOLY NATION, A PECULIAR PEOPLE; THAT YE SHOULD SHEW FORTH THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO HATH CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT;”

Read **Exodus 19:7-15** – Israel Prepares to Meet God

v.7 “AND MOSES CAME AND CALLED FOR THE ELDERS OF THE PEOPLE, AND LAID BEFORE THEIR FACES ALL THESE WORDS WHICH THE **LORD** COMMANDED HIM.”

Moses has his instructions from God so he calls together the elders of the people to pass along those instructions and get Israel prepared.

v.8 “AND ALL THE PEOPLE ANSWERED TOGETHER, AND SAID, ALL THAT THE **LORD** HATH SPOKEN WE WILL DO. AND MOSES RETURNED THE WORDS OF THE PEOPLE UNTO THE **LORD**.”

God has told Israel that he intends to make a covenant with them. They have now promised to serve him; and that “ALL THAT THE LORD HATH SPOKEN WE WILL DO.”

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One of the common errors among our Bible correspondence students, even after they have studied the material presented and answered all of the questions for the particular lesson that deals with this event is that they do not understand two things. First that God made gave the Law of Moses or made the Covenant of the Mosaic dispensation with Israel and Israel only. They do not comprehend that the Mosaic Covenant never applied to any of the other nations of the world and subsequently could not apply to any Gentile or Gentile nation today, even if it still applied to the Hebrew people today. Secondly they do not understand that Israel agreed to keep the Law that God gave them.

v.9 “AND THE **LORD** SAID UNTO MOSES, LO, I COME UNTO THEE IN A THICK CLOUD, THAT THE PEOPLE MAY HEAR WHEN I SPEAK WITH THEE, AND BELIEVE THEE FOR EVER. AND MOSES TOLD THE WORDS OF THE PEOPLE UNTO THE **LORD**.”

God understood that the people of Israel could not stand to look upon the manifestation of His presence because of His brightness and glory. Consequently He tells Moses that he will appear unto them in a “THICK CLOUD”. This was the way that God communicated with Moses and with Israel at various times. For example:

Exodus 24:15-16 “AND MOSES WENT UP INTO THE MOUNT, AND A CLOUD COVERED THE MOUNT. AND THE GLORY OF THE **LORD** ABODE UPON MOUNT SINAI, AND THE CLOUD COVERED IT SIX DAYS: AND THE SEVENTH DAY HE CALLED UNTO MOSES OUT OF THE MIDST OF THE CLOUD.”

v.10 “AND THE **LORD** SAID UNTO MOSES, GO UNTO THE PEOPLE, AND SANCTIFY THEM TO DAY AND TO MORROW, AND LET THEM WASH THEIR CLOTHES,”

Moses is instructed to have the people “SANCTIFY” themselves, cleanse themselves and wash their clothes. God does not want to be in the presence of those who are not clean. Observe with me Jacob as he obeyed God’s command to go to Bethel and build and altar:

Genesis 35:2 “Then JACOB SAID UNTO HIS HOUSEHOLD, AND TO ALL THAT WERE WITH HIM, PUT AWAY THE STRANGE GODS THAT ARE AMONG YOU, AND BE CLEAN, AND CHANGE YOUR GARMENTS:”

And again the ritual cleansing that one had to accomplish under the Mosaic Covenant in order to be clean again after some event occurred that made them unclean:

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Numbers 19:19 “AND THE CLEAN *person* SHALL SPRINKLE UPON THE UNCLEAN ON THE THIRD DAY, AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY: AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY HE SHALL PURIFY HIMSELF, AND WASH HIS CLOTHES, AND BATHE HIMSELF IN WATER, AND SHALL BE CLEAN AT EVEN.”

This same concept is applied to us today through baptism, a special washing that is required in order to cleanse our souls and make us fit for the presence of God.

v.11 “AND BE READY AGAINST THE THIRD DAY: FOR THE THIRD DAY THE **LORD** WILL COME DOWN IN THE SIGHT OF ALL THE PEOPLE UPON MOUNT SINAI.”

God wants them to be ready on the third day. That is the day that He will meet with them and give them His law for that time and place.

v.12 “AND THOU SHALT SET BOUNDS UNTO THE PEOPLE ROUND ABOUT, SAYING, TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES, *that ye* GO *not* UP INTO THE MOUNT, OR TOUCH THE BORDER OF IT: WHOSOEVER TOUCHETH THE MOUNT SHALL BE SURELY PUT TO DEATH:”

The Apostle John states clearly in two places that no man has seen God:

John 1:18 “NO MAN HATH SEEN GOD AT ANY TIME, THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, WHICH IS IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER, HE HATH DECLARED HIM.”

I John 4:12 “NO MAN HATH SEEN GOD AT ANY TIME. IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER, GOD DWELLETH IN US, AND HIS LOVE IS PERFECTED IN US.”

At this time Moses was to set bounds around the mountain that the Israelites were not to cross. Even if they just touched the mountain, much less approached too near to God they would be struck dead.

v.13 “THERE SHALL NOT AN HAND TOUCH IT, BUT HE SHALL SURELY BE STONED, OR SHOT THROUGH; WHETHER *it be* BEAST OR MAN, IT SHALL NOT LIVE: WHEN THE TRUMPET SOUNDETH LONG, THEY SHALL COME UP TO THE MOUNT.”

Neither man nor beast were to touch the mountain, if they did they were to be stoned or shot through; death was to be the result of disobedience of God's commandment. When the trumpet sounded a long blast that would be the signal for the people to gather. This event is remembered and rehearsed by the Hebrew writer as he exhorts those to whom he is writing:

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Hebrews 12:20 "FOR THEY COULD NOT ENDURE THAT WHICH WAS COMMANDED, AND IF SO MUCH AS A BEAST TOUCH THE MOUNTAIN, IT SHALL BE STONED, OR THRUST THROUGH WITH A DART:"

v.14-15 " AND MOSES WENT DOWN FROM THE MOUNT UNTO THE PEOPLE, AND SANCTIFIED THE PEOPLE; AND THEY WASHED THEIR CLOTHES. AND HE SAID UNTO THE PEOPLE, BE READY AGAINST THE THIRD DAY: COME NOT AT *your* WIVES."

Moses obeys the commandments of God, sanctifies the people has them wash their clothes and ready the third day to meet God.

Read **Exodus 19:16-25** – God Comes to Mount Sinai

v.16 "AND IT CAME TO PASS ON THE THIRD DAY IN THE MORNING, THAT THERE WERE THUNDERINGS AND LIGHTNINGS, AND A THICK CLOUD UPON THE MOUNT, AND THE VOICE OF THE TRUMPET EXCEEDING LOUD; SO THAT ALL THE PEOPLE THAT *was* IN THE CAMP TREMBLED."

We can only imagine what it would be like to be in the presence of Jehovah God. What Moses describes here is how God manifested himself to Israel. They could not touch the mountain; they were not to see God, only that which God chose to let them see that represented His majesty. What little bit that God allowed them to see and hear on this occasion caused the people to tremble with fear. The Hebrew writer records later that:

"SO TERRIBLE WAS THE SIGHT, *that* MOSES SAID, I EXCEEDINGLY FEAR AND QUAKE:) **Hebrews 12:21**

v.17 "AND MOSES BROUGHT FORTH THE PEOPLE OUT OF THE CAMP TO MEET WITH GOD; AND THEY STOOD AT THE NETHER PART OF THE MOUNT."

In his final sermon, when Moses exhorts Israel to be obedient to God he reminds them of this occasion. Though most of Israel wouldn't remember because they had been born during the 40 years wandering, those that were twenty years old and younger would and their faith would be reinforced by the words of Moses. He tells them that they should remember meeting with God:

"*specially* THE DAY THAT THOU STOODEST BEFORE THE **LORD** THY GOD IN HOREB, WHEN THE **LORD** SAID UNTO ME, GATHER ME THE PEOPLE TOGETHER, AND I WILL MAKE THEM HEAR MY WORDS, THAT THEY MAY LEARN TO FEAR ME ALL THE DAYS THAT THEY SHALL LIVE UPON THE EARTH, AND *that* THEY MAY TEACH THEIR CHILDREN." **Deuteronomy 4:10**

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v.18 “AND MOUNT SINAI WAS ALTOGETHER ON A SMOKE, BECAUSE THE **LORD** DESCENDED UPON IT IN FIRE; AND THE SMOKE THEREOF ASCENDED AS THE SMOKE OF A FURNACE, AND THE WHOLE MOUNT QUAKED GREATLY.”

Deuteronomy 5:4 “THE **LORD** TALKED WITH YOU FACE TO FACE IN THE MOUNT OUT OF THE MIDST OF THE FIRE.”

A Psalm of David keeps the memory alive as part of the history and worship of Israel:

Psalm 68:8 “THE EARTH SHOOK, THE HEAVENS ALSO DROPPED AT THE PRESENCE OF GOD: *even* SINAI ITSELF *was moved* [trembled] AT THE PRESENCE OF GOD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL.”

v.19 “AND WHEN THE VOICE OF THE TRUMPET SOUNDED LONG AND WAXED LOUDER AND LOUDER; MOSES SPAKE AND GOD ANSWERED HIM BY A VOICE.”

The voice of the trumpet; it was not necessarily an actual trumpet. This type of language is also used in the book of Revelation leading those who do not read carefully to assume that there are instruments of music in heaven. One of my students asked that very question a couple of weeks ago. The purpose of all this is to generate fear and awe of God in the hearts and minds of the Israelites. When I think of this occasion I think of the second coming of Christ:

I Thessalonians 4:16 “FOR THE LORD HIMSELF SHALL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN WITH A SHOUT, WITH THE VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL, AND WITH THE TRUMP OF GOD: AND THE DEAD IN CHRIST SHALL RISE FIRST.”

v.20 “AND THE **LORD** CAME DOWN UPON MOUNT SINAI, ON THE TOP OF THE MOUNT; AND THE **LORD** CALLED MOSES UP TO THE TOP OF THE MOUNT; AND MOSES WENT UP.”

The people are gathered. Moses is present and ready, he thinks, so God comes down and calls Moses to him. Nehemiah, apparently in a prayer, tells those of Judea who returned from being captives of Babylon of God’s appearance to their ancestors as he reminds them of the goodness of God to Israel:

Nehemiah 9:13 “THOU CAMEST DOWN ALSO UPON MOUNT SINAI AND SPAKEST WITH THEM FROM HEAVEN, AND GAVEST THEM RIGHT JUDGMENTS AND TRUE LAWS, AND GOOD STATUTES AND COMMANDMENTS:”

v.21 “AND THE **LORD** SAID TO MOSES, GO DOWN, CHARGE THE PEOPLE; LEST THEY BREAK THROUGH UNTO THE **LORD** TO GAZE, AND MANY OF THEM PERISH.”

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God did not want the people of Israel to touch the mountain or to try to break forward, as people are prone to do at times, because if they did he would destroy them. The Philistines experienced the wrath of God simply by looking into the ark of the covenant:

I Samuel 6:19 “AND HE SMOTE THE MEN OF BETH-SHE-MESH, BECAUSE THEY HAD LOOKED INTO THE ARK OF THE **LORD**, EVEN HE SMOTE OF THE PEOPLE FIFTY THOUSAND AND THREESCORE AND TEN MEN: AND THE PEOPLE LAMENTED, BECAUSE THE **LORD** HAD SMITTEN *many* OF THE PEOPLE WITH A GREAT SLAUGHTER.”

v.22 “AND LET THE PRIESTS ALSO, WHICH COME NEAR TO THE LORD, SANCIFY THEMSELVES, LEST THE **LORD** BREAK FORTH UPON THEM.”

One of the observations that we make in this verse and could have made in past verses is that there were priests of God, men whose tasking was to offer sacrifices to God, before the consecration of Aaron and the tribe of Levi under the Mosaic Covenant.

On this occasion they were to have cleansed themselves and consecrated themselves in preparation to meet with God. In **Leviticus 21:6-8** we find several qualifications that were required under Moses Law before men could serve as a priest. Some of them very similar to those required of elders under the Law of Christ.

v.23 “AND MOSES SAID UNTO THE LORD, THE PEOPLE CANNOT COME UP TO MOUNT SINAI: FOR THOU HAST CHARGED US, SAYING, SET BOUNDS ABOUT THE MOUNT, AND SANCIFY IT.”

Moses basically says, “We’ve already done that”; but God isn’t happy with what has been done. So:

v.24 “AND THE **LORD** SAID UNTO HIM, AWAY, GET THEE DOWN, AND THOU SHALT COME UP, THOU, AND AARON WITH THEE; BUT LET NOT THE PRIESTS AND THE PEOPLE BREAK THROUGH TO COME UP UNTO THE **LORD**, LEST HE BREAK FORTH UPON THEM.”

And God sends Moses back down to make sure that His commandments concerning this gathering be followed without question or failure.

v.25 “SO MOSES WENT DOWN UNTO THE PEOPLE, AND SPAKE UNTO THEM.”