

Exodus

July 1,2007

Chapter 19

I. The Offer

Ex 19:1-6

19:1 In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt — on the very day — they came to the Desert of Sinai. **2** After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. **3** Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: **4**'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. **5** Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, **6** you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

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Verse 2 Since we do not know where Rephidim is and as we do not know exactly where Sinai is, they might have only been a few miles apart.

Verse 4 "Carried you on eagles' wings" clearly did not happen, but is a metaphoric statement of the "flight" from Egypt.

Verse 5 In a world of many gods, where every location had its own protector god, the statement that "the whole earth is mine" is a powerful statement of monotheism.

Verses 5-6 Peter uses the thoughtware in these verses in 1 Peter 2:9:

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

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Verse 5 Strangely 1 Peter 2:9's "chosen people" is a translation of the Greek Septuagint's translation of Ex. 19:2's Hebrew "treasured possession." Actually: Treasured possession = own possessed race = chosen race

Verse 6 After this verse, Israel is never called a "kingdom of priests" again. However, we see examples of Israel partially fulfilling this role at least occasionally by doing these things:

1. Israel would be an example to other nations.
2. Israel would proclaim the truth of God and invite others to follow Him

3. Israel would intercede for the rest of world to offer acceptable offerings (both sacrifices and right behaviors)
4. Israel would keep the promises of God, although not fully, and would preserve His word as given in the OT.

Comment: As we will shortly see, the Israelites fail to keep their end of the covenant. Even though, we are born again with imperishable seed, what must we do to keep our commitment to the Lord?

II. The Agreement

Ex 19:7-9

7 So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. 8 The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.

9 The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you." Then Moses told the LORD what the people had said.

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Verse 7 Moses comes down from the mountain (count how many times he goes up and down it) and confers with the elders telling them what the LORD has told him.

Verse 8 The statement is that all the people responded, not just the leadership (although perhaps the leaders spoke for the people). We will see that both the people and the leadership reneges on the promise at the end of the next chapter.

Opinion: Since the people do not obey God's commands fully, they break the covenant. In my opinion, this leads to a secondary covenant being put into place, administered first by Moses, but later by the Priests as intercessor with God. Because of their inability to keep the covenant, of their inability to stop sinning, as indicated by their inability to receive the direct words of God, they are denied the full benefits, which eventually are offered to Christians after Jesus dies on the cross and is raised to heaven.

III. Guidelines

Ex 19:10-15

10 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes 11 and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 13 He shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on him. Whether man or animal, he shall not be permitted to live.' Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they go up to the mountain." 14

After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they washed their clothes. 15 Then he said to the people, "Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations."

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The guidelines recognize the holiness of God. Notice also in verse 9 and 11, we see God coming to man, not vice versa.

Verse 10 Everyone washing one set of clothes in two days might not sound like a big undertaking to us today. However, there would have been limited water supply at Sinai, and the people did not wash their clothes all that much. One can only imagine 2,000,000 people standing around a spring or pool washing their clothes. If it were not bitter before the washing, it most surely would have been afterwards!

Verse 11 We do not see the LORD directly, but the people saw/heard:

1. Thunder
2. Lightning
3. Thick cloud
4. Trumpet blast
5. Mount Sinai wrapped in smoke
6. Fire
7. Whole mountain quaking greatly

Clearly the people would never have seen anything like this. They could not see God directly, but they saw where he was/had been.

Verse 13 They must have obeyed the guidelines since no one seems to have been punished for violation.

IV. The LORD Comes in Holiness

Ex 19:16-22

16 On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. 17 Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, 19 and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. 20 The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up 21 and the LORD said to him, "Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish. 22 Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must consecrate themselves, or the LORD will break out against them."

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- Verse 16 The storm was probably scary enough, but the people had been taught to be deathly afraid of direct interaction with the LORD.
- Verse 17 The implication is of an orderly procession, but the order is not identified. They probably came in family groups, in clans, in tribes, probably not unlike when they were marching in the desert, except that they would have likely been bunched together much denser than when marching.
- Verse 19 What did Moses say at this exact time? We are not told. Some people say Heb12:21:

21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

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- Verse 20 Moses goes up the mountain, at least the third time while the Israelites were at this camp since the beginning of this chapter.
- Verse 22 The reference to priests is a bit confusing here. This is the fifth time that the word is mentioned in Exodus. The first three were references to Jethro. The fourth was 19:6 above. The sixth time is verse 24. Then we do not see it again until the consecration of the priests in Chapter 29. The verse does not mean that priests were already established.

V. Final Preparations

Ex 19:23-25

23 Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, 'Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.'" 24 The LORD replied, "Go down and bring Aaron up with you. But the priests and the people must not force their way through to come up to the LORD, or he will break out against them." 25 So Moses went down to the people and told them.

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We see a similar situation played out in the sanctuary where only the High Priest can approach the holy of holy and not the people. At least in this situation the people get to hear God directly...even if it does scare the stuffing out of them.

VI. Discussion: Are we afraid of God?

How do we prepare ourselves to approach God?

Are we willing to listen to Him when He speaks?

Would we rather not hear from God? Then, perhaps it is ok for us to do what we want? (Presumably, in a group situation, we would all answer these two questions with a firm "no." How would you answer them in private?)