

# Scripture Lesson Text

**EXOD. 19:1** 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.

**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.

**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;

**4** Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

**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:

**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.

**24:3** And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.

**4** And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

**5** And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD.

**6** And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

**7** And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.

**8** And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

## NOTES

# Promise of Obedience

Lesson Text: Exodus 19:1-6; 24:3-8

Related Scriptures: *Deuteronomy 5:22-29; Joshua 24:14-24; Jeremiah 7:21-29; Haggai 1:1-15*

TIME: 1445 B.C.

PLACE: Mount Sinai

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—“Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do” (Exodus 24:3).

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## *Lesson Exposition*

### **CAMP—Exod. 19:1-2**

**Deliverance I (Exod. 19:1).** As slaves in Egypt, the Israelites had been cruelly mistreated and had cried out to God for help. They needed a strong individual to plead their case before the pharaoh. God had spent forty years preparing a man named Moses out in the land of Midian to do this. As an adoptive son of an Egyptian princess, he knew the language and culture of Egypt, as well as the language and culture of Israel.

Moses was eighty years old by this time, and he had been a shepherd for his father-in-law. He had come out to the wilderness as a fugitive from Egyptian justice, and God had used those four decades to mature him. At the burning bush God called him to go back to Egypt and lead his countrymen out of bondage.

God had sent ten devastating plagues upon Egypt to persuade the Egyptians to let His people go. Gifts were given to the Israelites, probably to speed them on their way out, thus allowing them to leave with great substance. When they were caught be-

tween a pursuing Egyptian army and the Red Sea, God opened up the water to let them through on dry ground and brought it back together to drown their pursuers. This great deliverance was accomplished by God's power alone.

It was exactly three months after they left Egypt that the Israelites came into the wilderness of Sinai. This was strange territory to them, but it was familiar to Moses, who had spent forty years shepherding flocks throughout this area.

**Deliverance II (Exod. 19:2).** The Israelites had journeyed from Rephidim to the west. There they had been confronted by the Amalekites and forced to defend themselves, evidently using weapons secured from the dead Egyptians. Once again God granted them deliverance, but this time He gave them the skill and strength to accomplish it. A full account is given in 17:8-16.

Moses led Israel from Rephidim to the desert, or wilderness, of Sinai. Camp was made at the foot of Mount Sinai, also known as Jebel Musa, one of three peaks in the range of mountains in the center of the southern

Sinai Peninsula. There was a great plain there where the Israelites could pitch their tents.

### **CONTACT—Exod. 19:3-6**

**Review (Exod. 19:3-4).** Mount Sinai, or Mount Horeb as it is sometimes called, was where God had spoken to Moses from the burning bush (chaps. 3-4). Moses was not disappointed when he climbed up to spend time with God while Israel camped down below. The Lord called to him out of the mountain and told him he was to be His spokesman to the children of Israel. This put Moses into the position of a prophet.

The first thing God told Moses to do when contacting his people was to review what God had done for them in releasing them from bondage. In recounting what had happened to their Egyptian taskmasters, Moses could remind his people of the ten plagues used to punish them and force them to let their slaves go. He could remind them of how God had caused the pursuing Egyptians to drown in the Red Sea. He could remind them of how God gave Israel victory over the Amalekites.

God likened His protective work to bearing Israel upon eagles' wings. This imagery may have reference to the Griffon vultures that were found in the area. When their floundering chicks were trying to learn how to fly, the parents would swoop under them and bear them up in midair, preventing them from falling to the ground and perishing. In like manner, the Lord was bringing the young nation of Israel to Himself to be molded into maturity.

**Reward (Exod. 19:5-6).** In light of what God had already done for Israel, it was expected that the nation would be grateful to Him and ready to form a special relationship with Him greater than anything experienced up to that point.

God was saying to Israel that obedi-

ence to His voice and devotion to His covenant would cause the people to become a peculiar, or special, treasure to Him above all the other people of the earth. All human beings belong to God by virtue of creation and His sustaining power, but the Israelites were God's chosen people, and they were to act accordingly.

The form of government God had in mind for Israel might be called a theocratic monarchy. God was to be the Israelites' King, and they were to become a kingdom of priests representing Him and His righteousness to a sinful world. Any earthly judges, seers, prophets, or kings appointed by Him were to operate under His guidance and direction. In this way, Israel was to be known as a holy nation, set apart to God.

### **CONFORMITY—Exod. 24:3-8**

**Acceptance (Exod. 24:3).** Moses had gone back up the mountain at the people's request (20:18-21). The Lord gave him further revelation concerning the covenant. Then He told him to bring his brother, Aaron, and Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel back up the mountain with him. However, only Moses himself was to approach the Lord's presence when they arrived there (24:1-2).

After coming down from the mountain, Moses told the people of Israel about all that God had said, including all the judgments (ordinances, commands) designed to govern their lives. The people were unanimous in their declaration of acceptance.

**Altar (Exod. 24:4).** Initially the Israelites showed great enthusiasm toward God's covenant. As a result, Moses did two significant things. First, most likely using a roll of papyrus brought from Egypt, he wrote down all the words of the Lord. The second thing Moses did was rise up early in the morning to build an altar and set

up twelve stone pillars to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. These evidently were constructed in crude fashion from materials readily available in the wilderness. Moses was preparing for a ritual to ratify the covenant offered by God and accepted by Israel. It was to serve as a sealing ceremony for that contract.

**Offerings (Exod. 24:5-6).** In the absence of an established order of priests, Moses appointed young men to perform sacrifices. He may have chosen one from each of the twelve tribes. They went into the flocks and selected animals to use for burnt offerings and peace offerings. The first symbolized the people's dedication to God, while the second symbolized a proper spiritual relationship with God.

Moses took blood from the sacrificial animals offered up by the young men and put half of it in basins to be set aside. The other half he sprinkled on the stone altar. This altar probably represented Yahweh in the covenant relationship between a holy God and sinful people, with the blood symbolizing God's forgiveness.

**Obedience (Exod. 24:7-8).** Moses next took the book (scroll) on which he had written down the words of the covenant given to him by God on Mount Sinai. This would have included the Ten Commandments, but it would also have listed the other regulations designed to govern the lives of the Israelites.

Once again the people were very agreeable to accept and perform all that God required of them.

We might assume that Moses was optimistic about what Israel would do in relation to the covenant. He took the half of the sacrificial blood that had been reserved in basins and sprinkled it on the people. Since an estimated two to three million Israelites took part in the Exodus, it may well be that Moses actually sprinkled only the tribal leaders assembled directly in front of him. They

represented the whole nation of Israel.

This was a most solemn moment in the dedication ritual. If we turn to Genesis 9:3-6, we see that God made it clear to Noah and his family that life equals blood and that whoever shed a man's blood would have his blood shed as well.

Although the blood used by Moses in the sprinkling was from animals, it filled a significant requirement in the dedication of the covenant. The uncountable sacrifices that would be offered up by succeeding priests in the implementation of the law in subsequent centuries would provide the symbolic basis for God's forgiveness of mankind's sins.

—Gordon Talbot.

## QUESTIONS

1. How old was Moses when he began his work of delivering Israel from bondage in Egypt?
2. Why was the Sinai desert familiar territory to Moses?
3. Where was Mount Sinai located on the Sinai Peninsula?
4. To what did God compare Himself in caring for young Israel?
5. What synonym might be used for "peculiar" when referring to God's people (Exod. 19:5)?
6. What kind of government did God propose for Israel?
7. How did the Israelites react to God's covenant requirements?
8. How did Moses use stones to set up a dedication ritual?
9. What two kinds of sacrifices were offered to God?
10. How did Moses use blood in the dedication ceremony?

—Gordon Talbot.

## PRACTICAL POINTS

1. God's faithfulness in our past gives us confidence to trust Him for the present and the future (Exod. 19:1-4).
2. God has extravagant plans for those who remain faithful to Him (vss. 5-6).
3. It is easy to pledge fidelity to the Lord; living it out is another matter (24:3).
4. Worship is the appropriate response to hearing and receiving the Word of God (vss. 4-5).
5. God's covenant with us is sealed with blood—not of bulls but of His precious and holy Son (vss. 6-8).

—Kenneth A. Sponsler.

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Why did God make a covenant with Israel and call for their obedience, knowing they would not be faithful to it (Exod. 19:5)? What is the lesson for us?
2. What is the current status of the promise to make the people "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exod. 19:6; cf. I Pet. 2:9)?
3. Were the Israelites dishonest in their promise to keep God's word, or were they sincere but overconfident in themselves (Exod. 24:3)?
4. What significance did the bringing of burnt offerings and peace offerings have for the people of God (vs. 5)?
5. Why did Moses sprinkle blood on both the altar and the people (vss. 6-8)?

—Kenneth A. Sponsler.

## Golden Text Illuminated

**"Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do" (Exodus 24:3).**

Israel promised obedience to God apart from expressing their reliance upon Him. Any deliberate thought about what Moses had told them surely should have given them cause for concern—mainly, concern that if they were to be obedient to the Lord, they would need His help.

Israel did not understand their own propensity to sin. The Apostle Paul would much later comment about not knowing sin until the law came (cf. Rom. 7:7). However, it would seem that Israel, though just then receiving the law for the first time, should have known from life experiences how easy it is to fail in the things the law spoke about.

Israel did not think through the penalty for disobedience. Another way this could be stated is that Israel did not understand the severity of God. They should have learned something about God from the various judgments poured out on the Egyptians leading up to and during their exodus from Egypt.

The obvious question at this point is whether we have learned from Israel's experiences. They were, after all, recorded for our sakes (cf. I Cor. 10:11). To make a vow before the Lord (or anyone else, for that matter) is a serious thing. May the Lord help us keep the promises we have made to Him and to others.

—Darrell W. McKay.