

EGYPT & EXODUS: PART TWO

Read: Exodus 19-40, particularly Chapters 19-20, 23-25, 32-34, 40
Corresponds to Workbook pp. 49-56

Exodus 19: God meets the Israelites at Mount Sinai

The last time Scripture brought us to Mt Sinai (also called Mt Horeb), we witnessed Moses receiving his vocation at the burning bush. Now, in Exodus 19, Moses is bringing the People of God, two million strong, to the very site to receive their vocation. God's plan is that this nation He is forming will become a nation of priests who relay His blessing to ALL people and nations (Genesis 12:3; Matthew 28:19). Will they be up to the task? Will they "obey the voice of God and keep the covenant" that has fashioned them into God's very family? The suspense hangs heavy as the Story of Salvation continues.

In the events to follow, God will demonstrate His merciful love to an even greater degree to His wayward sons and daughters. In the process, He will begin to teach them how to worship Him, a "work" they desperately need to purify hearts from their idolatrous past and influences. Although physically now removed from the land of Egypt, "Egypt" must be removed from their mindsets and hearts—a "work" that only God can perform, with their cooperation.

Exodus 19:4-6

God tells Moses to tell the people: "You have seen.....how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." These are tender words spoken by God to you as well; He only wants you to draw close to Him, in relationship. How have you experienced God "carry" you and invite you to know Him better? _____

"How wonderful and strange how Christianity is not a set of ideas. It's not a philosophy or an ideology. It's a relationship with someone (Jesus) who has a voice, who is leading us to a renewed and transformed life with God."¹

God gives a *conditional* promise to the Jews, promising to make of them: (1) a kingdom of priests and (2) a holy nation. This is to give Israel both a purpose and an identity. How is this echoed in 1 Peter 2:9? _____

What are those two conditions found in Exodus 19:5?

- (1) _____
(2) _____

How do the people respond in Exodus 19:8? _____

¹ Barron, Bishop Robert. Excerpt from *Daily Gospel Reflections with Bishop Barron*: John 10:1-10. Accessed April 26, 2021 from wof@wordonfire.org.

When have your intentions fallen short in “doing all that the Lord has spoken”? With which of God’s commands do you most struggle? Have you asked God to change your heart into a more obedient one? _____

Exodus 19:16-19

How does God reveal His glory and might to the people in this passage? How do the people respond? (Ex 19:16)_____

Exodus 20: The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are given by God on the 50th day after their release from Egyptian captivity, which is marked by the Jewish feast of Pentecost.

How do we count the Ten Commandments?

“The Hebrew text of the Bible is very clear that there are ‘ten commandments,’ or fundamental laws given by God at Sinai (Ex 34:28; Deut 4:13; 10:4). It is much less clear, however, about how these ten are to be divided and counted. Two traditions have arisen.

First, there is the method of counting in Judaism and most of Protestantism. Following the text of Ex 20:1-17, Jews separate the commandment against other gods (Ex 20:3) from the prohibition of idols (Ex 20:4) to form two commandments. Likewise, they combine the prohibitions against coveting wives and property into one (Ex 20:17), forming one final commandment.

Second, there is the Catholic (and Lutheran) method of counting, going back at least as far as Augustine. Following the text of Deuteronomy 5:7-21, Catholic tradition understands the prohibition of worship of other gods and idolatry as one command (Deut 5:7-10), but distinguishes the prohibition of lust (Deut 5:21a) from the prohibition of avarice (Deut 5:21b) to form the 9th and 10th commandments. In support of this distinction, it is worth noting that in the Deuteronomic form of the Decalogue, two different words are used to describe the coveting in question: ‘Neither shall you covet (Hebrew *hamad*) your neighbor’s wife; and you shall not desire (Hebrew *’awa*) your neighbor’s house’ (Deut 5:21).”²

The Ten Commandments can be viewed as God’s way of calling His people to be “holy” or “set apart,” and this has very specific implications both in our relationship to God and others. Note “how each commandment revolves around the sanctity/holiness of some aspect of the relationships between God and man”:³

Relationship with God

- Commandment 1: Sanctity of God
- Commandment 2: Sanctity of the Divine Name

Relationship with Others

- 4. Sanctity of Paternity/Maternity
- 5. Sanctity of Life

² Bergsma, John and Brant Pitre. *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament*. © 2018 by Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, pp 179.

³ Bergsma, John. *A Catholic Introduction of the Bible: The Old Testament*. pp 179.

Commandment 3: Sanctity of Time

- 6. Sanctity of Marriage
- 7. Sanctity of Private Property
- 8. Sanctity of Speech/ the Truth
- 9. Sanctity of Another's Spouse
- 10. Sanctity of Another's Property

"If your God lets you do whatever you want then your God is you."⁴

Exodus 21-22: Social Laws: Love Your Neighbor

Many modern readers are horrified that the Bible does not take a firm stance against slavery. In the ancient world, slavery was ubiquitous, and often in Biblical times people voluntarily became slaves to gain security or stability (see Ex 21:5-6). Remember that these restrictions concerning slavery were protective in nature, to ensure female slaves were respected and slaves had a means of securing their freedom. These provisions were nothing short of revolutionary!

How are Christians to protect the vulnerable today against those who are cruel or greedy? _____

"On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles in tongues of fire, bringing a new manner of life and a new way of relating to the poor that astonished their pagan neighbors. Rather than ignoring and discarding the weak and vulnerable, Christians actively sought them out and offered them help. The widows and the orphans, the slaves and the captives, the blind and the lame (Luke 4:18-19)—all of these poor were the Church's concern, her 'true treasure,' as Saint Lawrence memorably said. In every succeeding age, the same Spirit has brought forth men and women to do a work that is perennially new."⁵

Exodus 23: Conquest of Promised Land Promised by Promise-Keeping God

What specific assistance will God give His people, according to Exodus 23:20? What are the people to do (Ex 23:22)? _____

Exodus 24: Covered by the Blood

Moses conveyed to the people God's instructions. How do they respond, echoing Exodus 19:8? _____

A relationship with God must be built first and foremost on obedience. We have already seen how this works (or doesn't) with Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:16-17), Abraham (Genesis 17:1) and the other Patriarchs, and now with the people in the desert. Although God always takes the initiative, He expects His children to listen to Him and obey. How obedient to God's commands typically are you, on a scale of 1 to 10? _____

"God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him"- Acts 5:32

⁴ Chris Stefanick.

⁵ *Magnificat*, May 2021, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp 33.

In Hebrew ritual worship, blood has always been associated with cleansing from sin. How was God preparing His people for the eventual sacrifice of Jesus, the beloved first-born of the Father, even now in the desert, with the ratification of the covenant, by the blood being “thrown” upon the people (Ex 24:8)? _____

1 John 1:7- “If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his Son Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, alleluia.”

“Following the covenant ceremony is a meal, another element of ancient covenant ceremonies. Sharing the flesh of the sacrificed animals and eating the meal in God’s presence (Exodus 24:11) becomes a means of sharing the same body and thus of becoming one flesh. The shedding of animals’ blood also signifies the punishment for those who would violate the covenant: their blood would likewise be shed.”⁶

How does this prefigure what occurs at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the New Covenant enacted by Jesus? _____

Exodus 25-30: The Plan for the Tabernacle

Now that God has given the Law to His people, He is ready to give them the liturgy. The entire purpose for the Exodus was to teach them how to worship Him. With tedious details, God will give Moses a specific plan to build an Ark and Tabernacle area for God to dwell so that His people will always be comforted and guided by His Presence (Exodus 25). “When the seven lamps were burning, the lampstand would evoke the burning bush from which God revealed himself to Moses; the menorah symbolized that God’s presence on the Mount is made perpetual in the tabernacle and the liturgy... In Exodus 29:45-46, God Himself reveals the purpose of the Exodus: that ‘I might dwell among them.’ Liturgy and law serve to bring Israel into an intimate relationship with God. The God revealed in the burning bush and the fiery mountain is going to do the unexpected; He will tabernacle with His people. The portable tabernacle with its pitched tent enclosing the Ark of the Covenant will allow the awesome presence of God to travel. Leaving Sinai, Israel will not leave God.”⁷

The Catholic Connection:

The Mass “is a profoundly Biblical way to worship.... When we speak of the Mass, we are venturing into the Holy of Holies, where God would have us live with Him....The Old Testament tells of characters and events that are historically true; but in God’s plan they also foreshadow or prefigure history’s ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. In theological language, the Old Testament sacrifices are ‘types,’ and Jesus’ sacrifice marks their fulfillment.

What does sacrifice accomplish? Sacrificial worship recognizes God’s sovereignty over life; it gives thanks; it solemnly seals a covenant oath; it expresses renunciation and sorrow for

⁶ Gray, Tim and Jeff Cavins. *Walking with God: A Journey Through the Bible*. © 2010 by Ascension Press, West Chester, PA, pp 79.

⁷ Gray, Tim. *Walking with God*. pp 80-82.

sins. The Gospel writers use the language of Passover to describe both Jesus' Last Supper and his crucifixion. The sacrificial lamb fits the divine pattern of our salvation.

Christ comes to us in the Mass; he remains with us in the Tabernacle.

When St Paul spoke of the Mass, he pointed out that the same cup that brought blessing to the faithful brought death to sinners (see 1 Corinthians 11:29-32). We should be attentive: we are always in God's presence. When we approach Holy Communion, we are drawing near to the fire of God's love."⁸

New Testament Connection:

When God gave elaborate plans for the building of the Tabernacle in Exodus 26-30, He mandated that a veil be placed to separate the Holy Place (the main Temple room) from the Holy of Holies (the Holiest Place where the Ark of the covenant resided). Solomon duplicated this layout when he later constructed the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 3:10-14), and such was the case even during Jesus' time. This veil served as a barrier to all but the High Priest, who only entered on the Day of Atonement. When Jesus died, this thick temple veil was torn in two, from top to bottom (indicating God's action, not man's), representing a new access by all to God through Christ (see Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45).

After pondering Ephesians 2:18 and Hebrews 4:14-16, how and why can you today confidently approach the Holy One? _____

How are you now a Temple of the living God, according to 2 Corinthians 6:16-18? _____

Note how blood is sprinkled on both Aaron/his sons and their garments in Exodus 29:21, as a sign of being consecrated or set apart for special service to God. You also are called to holiness, as were the original Jews, who were to share this blessing of set-apart, holy living with all the nations.

Exodus 32: The Golden Calf

Exodus 32:1-6

The Jews become anxious. Moses has been absent for 40 days and nights, on the top of Mt Sinai, lost in fire and cloud, speaking to an awe-inspiring and fear-invoking God. What if he never returns? What are they to do? What plan do they hatch, with Aaron's complicity? _____

An idol is anything we allow to come between us and God. What is your idol(s) today? How have they changed over time (or have they)? _____

"What does it mean to trust, to turn one's heart to God? It means to root the whole of one's life in God, and not to ground our concerns in the things of the world: wealth, power, pleasure, and honor.

⁸ Hahn, Scott. *Study Guide for 'The Lamb's Supper.'* © 2010 by Image Books, NY, NY, pp 17, 38-39, 50, 72, 79.

Ask yourself: 'What is the center of gravity in my life?' The Bible consistently proposes this question. For example, read the book of Joshua, when Joshua lays it on the line for the people of Israel: 'Do you serve the Lord or some other gods?' That's the question being asked of you today."⁹

Exodus 32:24

How does Aaron (ridiculously) rationalize his sin? What in actuality had he done, in Exodus 32:4? _____

Was God amused? How many men died that day? Exodus 32:28 _____

When was the last time you made an excuse or absurd rationalization for your sin? _____

Exodus 32: 25

The term "broken loose" implies that the Jews were engaging in sexual orgies as part of their worship with abandon, reminiscent of many pagan practices of the time. Again and again, when God's people are unfaithful to the covenant, Scripture casts it in terms of marital infidelity (Hosea 1-2; Isaiah 1-2; Ezekiel 16). Whenever faith is abandoned, marital infidelity follows. How do you see this in our own culture? _____

Exodus 32:26-29

How was this the beginning of the Levitical priesthood? What did they do to show their allegiance to God and His Covenant? _____

This is a profound watershed moment in the lives of the Jewish people. Prior to this, every Jewish father served as priest in his family. Now, only particular members of the tribe of Levi would do so. Sin has consequences.

Summary: "The golden-calf apostasy has been described as the original sin of ancient Israel. It is the first and worst tragedy of Israel's national life as the People of God. No sooner have the Israelites pledged obedience to the Lord at Sinai than they betray him for an idol of their own making. Things could never be the same after such brazen and thankless rebellion. The lesson learned by Adam- that sin brings painful and lasting consequences- is now to be learned by Israel.

God's covenant with Israel is significantly altered as a result of the golden-calf incident. In the original form of the Sinai covenant, Israel is bound to observe the Ten Commandments (Ex 20) and a modest collection of civil and religious laws called the Covenant Code (Ex 21-23). After the sin of the golden calf, however, Israel's legal obligations are drastically multiplied, most notably by the addition of detailed ceremonial laws governing every aspect of religious life and worship. These ceremonial precepts were thus viewed as penitential measures designed to discipline Israel for its idolatry and to prevent further lapses into idolatry. On the

⁹ Barron, Bishop Barron. *Daily Gospel Reflections from Bishop Barron*: John 14: 1-6. Accessed online April 30, 2021 from wof@wordonfire.org.

other hand, these same laws were thought to have the pedagogical purpose of training Israel in the rudiments of authentic worship and of preparing the way of the Messiah. The inference may be drawn that *Yahweh is responding to Israel's shameful and uncontrolled worship of the calf by requiring a divinely determined and highly controlled form of worship that will draw the covenant people away from idols and impress upon them a sense of Yahweh's awesome holiness.*"¹⁰

Exodus 32:35

Why do the plagues that once beset the Egyptians now descend upon the Jews?

It is "important to stress that God's declaration that He will punish Israel here (Ex 32:10) is not arbitrary or vengeful but, rather, the enforcement of the commitment made by the Israelites in the covenant at Sinai in which the sacrificial blood symbolized death for covenant infidelity (Ex 24:8)... It is a sign of God's mercy toward Israel that the construction and erection of the Tabernacle, planned before the Calf, continues after the covenant breaking and renewal."¹¹

Exodus 33: Intercession of Moses

This chapter shows the great spiritual maturity which has occurred interiorly in Moses since he first angrily addressed God following the Jews' complaints while still enslaved (Exodus 5:22). Moses had enjoyed an intimacy with God Almighty not enjoyed even by Abraham, as it states "The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Exodus 33:11). All of this is about to change.

Exodus 33:15

Moses clearly states to God: If you don't go with us, I'm not moving anywhere! He was very aware that the Israelites needed God to survive.

Does this resonate with you? Are you convinced that you need God to survive? _____

"Jesus didn't come for the healthy; He came for the sick. Jesus didn't come for the cleaned up and the self-righteous; He came for the dirty and sinful. Jesus didn't come for the self-sufficient; He came for the people who needed a rescue."¹²

"We may say with confidence: 'The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:6).

How does Moses' status with God change following his intercessory pleas not to annihilate the Jews for their apostasy? _____
Although the Jews are given a second chance, and regain the privilege of having God's presence dwell among them, Moses loses the intimacy he had formerly enjoyed, for now he has

¹⁰ *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: Exodus*. Commentary and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch. © 2012 by Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, pp 60.

¹¹ Bergsma, John. *A Catholic Interpretation to the Bible: The Old Testament*. pp 185, 187.

¹² Benninkmeyer, Lisa. From the devotional: *Rest: 31 Days of Peace*. Accessed online from *Daily Catholic Wisdom* on April 29, 2021 from yourfriends@catholicwisdom.org.

identified himself with this sinful people. How is Moses a “type” of Jesus, who as intercessor and High Priest of all sinful people on the cross, cries, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned Me?” _____

Do you live life of sacrificial prayer for others? What is the cost? Are you willing to pay it? _____

But note that in spite of the loss described above, Moses is given a most profound theophany and revelation of God’s nature in Exodus 34:6-7 that is one of the most treasured moments in Jewish history.

Exodus 34: Commandments Given Again, with Revelation of God’s Character

Exodus 34:6- “The Lord passed before (Moses) and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord, a God _____ and _____, slow to _____, and abounding in _____ and _____, keeping MERCIFUL LOVE for thousands forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin....”

The people had grievously sinned against their compassionate Father, God Almighty. In spite of a miraculous deliverance from the Egyptians and continuous provision of manna and water in the face of their whining and complaining, the people had fashioned an idol before Moses even had time to descend from the mountain with the Ten Commandments. The relationship with God is ruptured. But God patiently “put up” with them and did not abandon them. Likewise, today, we cannot repair our ruptured relationship with God on our own. “Jesus can heal your deepest brokenness—the break between you and God. That is the healing we most need, a healing of that relationship. That is the healing that stretches into eternity. That is the peace that lasts forever. And it is offered to you.”¹³

“May the Lord, who is good, grant pardon to everyone who has resolved to seek God, the Lord...though he be not clean as holiness requires” (2 Chronicles 30:18-19).

Word Study: *Hesed*

In reviewing Exodus 34: 7, the Hebrew word for “merciful love” is *hesed*. “The word *hesed* has a rich variety of meanings ranging from ‘loyalty’ and ‘fidelity’ to ‘mercy’ and ‘loving kindness.’ At root it carries a sense of ‘devotion’ or ‘commitment to another.’ It is one of the most important words in the theological vocabulary of the Old Testament. In the sphere of human relations, it is the obligation to do good and to maintain loyalty to one’s family, whether in relation to natural kinship (Gen 24:49; 47:29) or to covenant relationship (Gen 21:23; 1 Sam 20:8). *Hesed* is also an inner requirement of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. On the one hand, God expects filial love and loyalty from his people (Hos 6:6; Mic 6:8); on the other, God shows himself committed to Israel by keeping his covenants without fail (Deut 7:9; 2 Sam 22:51; Is 55:3; Mic 7:20). Time and again Scripture emphasizes how Yahweh is lovingly bound to his children and manifests his fatherly care through guidance (Ex 15:13), faithfulness (Jer 31:3),

¹³ Benninkmeyer, Lisa. From the devotional: *Rest: 31 Days of Peace*. Accessed online from *Daily Catholic Wisdom* on April 30, 2021 from yourfriends@catholicwisdom.org.

and mercy (Num 14:19; Is 63:7). This is the divine goodness that lasts forever, as chanted in the refrain of Ps 136.”¹⁴

Exodus 34:12

What warning does God give His people? What serves as a “snare” in our own culture today? _____

Historical note: The destruction of idols, shrines, and pillars of the Canaanites was a practical form of renunciation of idolatry. For example, the Canaanite fertility goddess, Asherah, had sacred trees or poles under which temple prostitutes were found busy. Throughout the years to come, these sites with illicit activity were constant sources of temptation and occasions for serious sin.

Exodus 34:29-35: Shining Face of Moses

How did being in God’s presence change Moses? How does the time you spend with the Lord (praying, meditating on Scripture, Eucharistic Adoration, worshipping at Mass, etc.) change your countenance and make you “radiant with joy” (Ps 34:5)? Who do you know who glows with “joy of the Lord as their strength” (Nehemiah 8:10)? _____

“All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit”- 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Exodus 40: Tabernacle Assembled/ God’s Residence in Cloud & Glory

Exodus 40:34- “Then the _____ covered the tent of meeting, and the _____ of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” God stayed with His people on their journey. Perhaps you have heard the charge that God was more “distant” in the Old Testament, but comes in Person with the advent of Jesus. But nothing could be further from the truth!

What vision does the apostle John have of God’s present dwelling place, in Revelation 21:3? _____

What does St Paul add in Ephesians 2:22 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20? _____

“God dwells among us in the Church. Let us turn to him and pray:

- *You are in our midst; your name we bear:
 - Make us a fit dwelling place for your love.
- *You have made us temples of your Spirit:
 - Cleanse our hearts and make of them a house of prayer.
- *You have chosen us as your resting place forever:
 - Grant us peace in your presence.

¹⁴ *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: Exodus.* Commentary and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch. © 2012 by Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, pp 62.

God of glory, you dwell in our midst through Jesus Christ, the new and eternal Temple of your Presence. Turn our hearts to worship you in the midst of our daily lives, that we may come one day to dwell with you in light.”¹⁵

Today rejoice and be anxious for nothing for, “the Lord is near!” (Philippians 4:5)

The completion of the Tabernacle was a significant moment for the Israelites, as it had not been since the Garden of Eden that God and man had dwelt together. This was to be a place of encounter for the people of God to meet their God and enjoy communion. The Ark of the Covenant contained a jar of manna, the stone tablets with the inscribed Ten Commandments, and later Aaron’s rod, signifying his priestly authority. “In the fullness of time” Jesus would come as the Bread of Life/heaven, the Word of God, and as High Priest of all, who came to us as Emmanuel, “God with us.”

Life application: Finding Your Place in the Story of His Glory

“Sometimes the ways of God in our lives seem inconsistent with what we read in His Word. We hear that obedience to Him will cause us to ‘abound in prosperity’ (Deut 28:11). We hear He can turn a desert into ‘pools of water’ (Ps 107:35). We hear He makes a barren woman ‘the joyous mother of children’ (Ps 113:9). Yet the story doesn’t always seem to go that way.

That’s because we can’t see the whole story—and, we think the story is all about us. We know what we want it to sound like and look like in *our* home, in *our* lives. But this is *God’s* story He is writing and unfolding—His grand epic of redemption—and He is calling us to play a bit part, to participate in spreading His glory throughout the whole earth.

This doesn’t mean pretending to be unaffected by grief, or denying the reality of unfulfilled longings. But it does mean we can press through with faith, because we know our good, wise, loving God has created the plot, and we know our role in His story is contributing to the overarching purpose of revealing His glory.

Are you willing to play the part He has written for you in His script? Are you willing to be delayed, upset, or inconvenienced for it? Because when the story has all been told, you will be able to sit back in your heavenly theater seat and see exactly how your one ‘simple’ story line made perfect sense and contributed to the overall plot. You’ll know that He had a deliberate purpose for everything. And you’ll understand that God’s will is exactly what we would choose if we knew what He knows.”¹⁶

Summary:

Slowly read through Acts 13:17-25. How is this a summary of what we have covered thus far in this Bible Study of Genesis-Exodus and in reference to its fulfillment in Jesus?

What has happened in Exodus?

1. God has formed the people of Israel into a nation.
2. God has entered into covenant with Israel.

¹⁵ *Magnificat*. April 2021, Vol. 23, No. 2. pp 382.

¹⁶ Demoss, Nancy. From: *The Quiet Place: Daily Devotional*. © 2012 by Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL, April 27.

3. These historical events are celebrated sacramentally and begin to form the liturgy of the people of Israel—and will be significant in the development of New Covenant liturgy as practiced still by the Catholic Church.

Looking ahead:

“God, in calling Israel into the covenant at Sinai, seeks to usher in a new creation. The tabernacle is a portable Garden of Eden where God dwells with his people. After creation, God gave Adam and Eve a law, but they rebelled against him and fell by taking the forbidden fruit. Israel follows in Adam’s footsteps; after receiving the law, Israel transgresses it by worshiping the golden calf. But this is not the end of the story. God is merciful and forgiving, a program of restoration and hope is given, and God promises to dwell in the midst of his sinful people. Thus, **the story takes a familiar pattern: creation, fall, and restoration.** *This is the storyline that will be repeated again and again in Israel’s history.*”¹⁷

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¹⁷ Gray, Tim. *Walking with God*. pp 87.