



**Sunday School Lesson Summary for September 17, 2006
Released on Wednesday, September 13, 2006**

"God's Covenant with Israel"

PRINTED TEXT: Exodus 19:1–6 and 24:3–8.

READ: Exodus 19:1–6 and 24:3–8.

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 119:33–40.

TIME: 1445 B.C.

PLACE: Mount Sinai

GOLDEN TEXT: "So 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 has said we will do" (Exodus 24:3 NKJV).

HOW TO SAY IT

Aaron: *Air-un*

Abraham: *Ay-bruh-ham*

Amalekites: *Am-uh-leh-kites*, or *Uh-mal-ih-kites*

Isaac: *Eye-zuk*

Jacob: *Jay-kub*

Laban: *Lay-bun*

Levi: *Lee-vye*

Leviticus: *Leh-vit-ih-kus*

Midian: *Mid-ee-un*

Moses: *Mo-zes* or *Mo-zez*

Padan-Aram: *Pay-dan-a-ram*

Rebekah: *Reh-bek-uh*

Rephidim: *Ref-ih-dim*

Shechem: *Shee-kem* or *Shek-em*

LESSON TEXT

Exodus 19:1-6 (New King James Version)

Israel at Mount Sinai

1 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai.

2 For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain.

3 And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:

4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.

5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine.

6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Exodus 24:3-8 (New King James Version)

3 So 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 has said we will do."

4 And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

5 Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD.

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

7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient."

8 And Moses took the blood, sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words."

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. Examine God's covenant with the people of Israel and their response to His words.
2. Show that as people of God, we are called to obey the words of our God.
3. Demonstrate that when God speaks to us, He expects us—as His children—to obey Him.

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, our younger generation made popular the phrase, "*Don't hate.*" While it is acknowledged that this may simply be the language of the moment, the phrase itself has significant meaning. It says that we should not become jealous of what another person or group of persons has, nor of the favor that might be shown towards them by someone in authority.

It is interesting that God chose a small and obscure nation to enter into covenant. However, it is through Israel that God also showed *us* His nature. We learn from His dealings with Israel about His ways of discipline and His will to forgive and restore unconditionally. It gives us insight into the way He deals with us today. There are no arguments here that Israel is God's chosen people, however, be it known that the remainder of God's *non-Israelite* children have been sprinkled with and covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. *Hallelujah!* (See Hebrews 12:24 and 1 Peter 1:2)

LESSON BACKGROUND

In the past two weeks we saw how two great men (Noah and Abraham) were part of God's eternal covenant with Him. These were individual covenants. This week we see how God entered into covenant with Israel as a nation. Note that this was not a treaty between two equals, but a treaty between the superior King and His inferior subjects.

As the Israelites camped in the wilderness at the foot of Mount Sinai and after their exodus from Egypt, God called their leader, Moses, up onto the mountain to receive a promise and a covenant. It was Israel's responsibility to obey the covenant of law if God was to make its people His peculiar, or special, treasure. The Israelites readily agreed to this requirement, and the appropriate burnt offerings and peace offerings were presented at the altar. Sacrificial blood was sprinkled by Moses as a visual sign of this pact.

QUESTIONS

I. CAMP: Exodus 19:1–2

1. What two deliverances did God give Israel in the first three months of the Exodus? (Exodus 19:1–2)

It was the first day of the third month after the Israelites fled from Egypt that they came into the wilderness of Sinai. This was strange territory to them, but it was very familiar to Moses who has spent forty years shepherding flocks throughout this area.

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. (See Exodus 17:8–16 for the full account of this story.)

2. Why was the Sinai familiar territory to Moses? (Exodus 3–4)

Again, it is in Mt. Sinai (also known as Mt. Horeb) that for forty years Moses previously tended the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro (Zipporah's father). This is why the Sinai territory was familiar to Moses. It was in God's divine plan for Moses to revisit this place. It would also be here that Moses had his "burning bush" encounter—first with an angel and then with God. Moses would later receive the Ten Commandments from God in this same place as well. (See Exodus 34.)

3. Where was Mount Sinai located on the Sinai Peninsula? (Exodus 19:2)

When Moses led Israel from Rephidim to the desert—or wilderness, camp was made at the foot of the mountain. The location where the Israelites pitched their tents was a great plain found in the center of the Southern Sinai Peninsula. It was bare and isolated, but it gave them a place to rest and become better organized. Most important, it was the place where God had chosen to speak *to* Moses and—*through* him—to all Israel regarding a national covenant. As a consequence this covenant is called the Mosaic covenant or the Mosaic law after Moses.

II. CONTACT: Exodus 19:3–6.

4. To what did God compare Himself in caring for young Israel? (Exodus 19:3–4)

The imagery God used about bearing Israel upon eagles' wings may have been drawn from observation of the Griffon vultures that were found in that 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. This type of poetic language not only describes Israel's salvation from slavery, but it also describes our salvation from sin.

5. What synonym might be used for "peculiar" when referring to God's people? (Exodus 19:5)

God was saying in this verse to Israel through Moses that obedience 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. (See 1 Peter 2:9 for another similar description of the church belonging to Jesus Christ.) 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.

6. What kind of government did God propose for Israel? (Exodus 19:6)

The form of government that 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.

III. CONFORMITY: Exodus 24:3–8.

7. How did the Israelites react to God's covenant requirements? (Exodus 24:3)

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

[It should be mentioned here that good intentions are often not carried out in actions. The Israelites soon strayed from their promise to be obedient to God's regulations. Exodus 32 describes the making of a golden calf to be used in pagan worship and an orgy of eating, drinking, and playing (probably sex acts) that accompanied it. During the fifteen centuries the Mosaic Law was in force, the people of Israel broke it many times and suffered divine discipline as a result.]

8. How did Moses use stones to set up a dedication ritual? (Exodus 24:4)

After Moses wrote down everything that God had told him, he rose 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.

9. What two kinds of sacrifices were offered to God? (Exodus 24:5–6)

After Moses chose young men to perform the sacrifices, they went into the flocks and selected animals (oxen) to use for burnt offerings and peace offerings. The burnt offerings symbolized Israel's dedication to God—and were entirely incinerated on the altar, while the peace offerings symbolized a proper spiritual relationship with God—and were used in a celebratory meal before the Lord.

10. How did Moses use blood in the dedication ceremony? (Exodus 24:6–8)

Moses took blood from the sacrificed 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 (the highest human name for God Almighty) in the covenant relationship between a holy God and sinful people, with the blood symbolizing God's forgiveness. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross provided a gateway for sinners to enter heaven.

He then 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 since they represented the whole nation of Israel.

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

Note that although the blood used by Moses in the sprinkling was from animals, it filled a significant requirement in the dedication of the covenant. The unaccountable 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.

Similarly, the blood Jesus Christ shed at Calvary to provide an atonement for men's sins was God's requirement. It was absolutely necessary in the fulfillment of His redemptive plan. The old hymn by Robert Lowry puts it succinctly: "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

CONCLUSION

We will never understand fully why God chose the people of Israel above all nations to set up His covenant, but we do know from our lesson that He is a faithful God who calls us into partnership with Him. Our partnership comes when we are prepared to walk the pathway of obeying everything He has asked of us.

Today God makes the same demands of us—simple obedience to His written Word and acknowledgement of the sacrifice of His Son for us. We are called to respond with the same enthusiasm as the people of Israel did to Moses that day. When God calls us into covenant, we are called to obedience.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. God's faithfulness in our past gives us confidence to trust Him for the present and the future (Exodus. 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).

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Live up to the meaning of the new covenant.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us to make the right choices today in those areas that pertain to Your Son and His church. In the name of Your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ, we pray, amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Next week's lesson (September 24, 2006) comes from Joshua 24:1–33. Its title is "Covenant Renewed," and this lesson will examine the assembly, admonition, and agreement between God, Joshua, and the people of Israel in Shechem.

An affecting verse that most of us have either heard and/or read before is this lesson's focus text: "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15 NKJV). In preparation for this lesson, you should read Psalm 51:1–12 as a devotional.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY

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