

Exodus:
The Redemption of God's People,
a Covenant with God's People,
the Renewal of the Covenant for God's people,
and the Worship Center of God's People.

IV. Comment on the Writing

A. The Redemption of God's People from Egypt, 1:1-18:27

1. The situation in Egypt, 1:1-22
2. The deliverer of Israel from Egypt, 2:1-4:31
3. The struggle of Moses with Pharaoh in Egypt, 5:1-13:16
4. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt, 13:17-18:27
 - a. The beginning of the exodus, 13:17-22
 - b. The crossing of the Sea of Reeds, 14:1-31
 - c. The triumph songs of Moses and Miriam, 15:1-21
 - d. The journey from the sea to Sinai, 15:22-18:27
 - 1) The murmurings at Marah, 15:22-27
 - 2) The complaints about food, 16:1-36

In the wilderness, the people grumbled for food and God, in His grace, provided quail (v. 13) and manna (v. 31), the latter being a daily provision except for the Sabbath, the day of rest.

That the complaint leading up to the manna is unjustified can be seen from the record itself. They left Egypt with flocks and herds (many cattle) and after 60 days they were complaining that they were without food. Moses reminded them later that they lacked nothing (Deut. 3:7). Moreover, the complaint was absurd because the food of work-gangs in Egypt was far more meager than they recalled. The protest was really against Moses. They craved the eating of meat and of bread and God will meet that need; he will send bread from heaven and quail as well.

a) The complaint of the Israelites, vv. 1-3

It seems that the Israelites are now two months to the day from the exodus. The complaint is that Moses made a tragic mistake; it is better to have abundance in Egypt than starvation in the desert; they so soon forgot their adverse circumstances in Egypt.

b) The gift of provisions: announced, vv. 4-8

Bread from heaven they would receive for a daily provision. On Friday they could gather a double portion because they were prohibited from gathering any on Saturday, the sabbath (this is the first hint in Exodus that sabbath keeping was an ordinance).

c) The gift of provisions: detailed, vv. 9-15

These are, perhaps, migratory birds, said to come up in the spring from Arabia flying north and west, and, in the fall, returning. They fly with the wind, and so generally alight in the evening, covering the ground. If this is part of the explanation, the divine provision would have been to alter their flight paths to bring them to the Israelites and in vast numbers, and specific timing.

- d) Instructions concerning the gathering of manna, vv. 16-26
The daily provision was an omer (about two quarts) per person (more or less). If they gathered in excess, it would spoil before usage.
 - e) The disobedience of some Israelites, vv. 27-32
Some Israelites disobeyed and tried to gather manna on the sabbath, the day of rest. God said to them (v. 28), “How long will you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions?”
 - f) The memorialization of the provision, vv. 33-36
An omer of manna was to be kept in a jar as a testimony to God’s faithfulness (we are not sure where it was placed before the building of the Tabernacle, but Hebrews 9:4 indicates that it was later placed in the Holy of Holies in the Ark [with the Ten commandments and Aaron’s rod]). The provision of manna continued until they crossed the Jordan (Josh. 5:12), the day after they observed the first Passover in the land.
- 3) The murmurings for a lack of water, 17:1-7
This is the fourth recorded lack of trust in the exodus generation. The first was on the shore of the Red Sea (14:11-12), the second at Marah (15:22-27), and the third in the context of the manna/quail provision, some even gathering manna on the Sabbath (16:27-30, perhaps another evidence of distrust).

The enemy of thirst reappears at Rephidim (remember Marah!). The location is dubbed Meribah, a place of contention, strife, or grumbling (this word occurs 8 times in the narrative), and Massah, a place of testing. Moses struck the rock and outflowed abundance. At Marah, the water was bitter; here it is not available at all. In Numbers 20, the people again contended with Moses over a lack of water, and it is again called Meribah (v. 13).

The location of the incident was said to be on the rock at Horeb (v. 6). This affords another name for Mount Sinai, though it appears confusing since the nation had moved from the Wilderness of Sin to Rephidim (v. 1). The term “Horeb” can refer to a region. Rephidim was close to Sinai and the slopes of the mountain reached there.

- 4) The victory over Amalek, 17:8-16
Unlike the three previous struggles dealing with physical necessities of life (water and food), this one deals with deliverance from military threat. Joshua appears for the first time in the narrative.

The Amalekites, a nomadic people, were descendants of Esau, Amalek being a grandson (Gen. 36:12). They attacked the stragglers and the weak later. They proved a persistent adversary until destroyed by David (I Sam. 30). The confrontation likely occurred over access to Wadi Fieran, the water at this large oasis.

The holding up of holy hands is likely not an indication of prayer; Moses held up his staff, the symbol of God's intervention for His people (v. 9). It was by holding His staff that God parted the Red Sea (14:6).

The primary function of this section is the demonstration of yet another proof and benefit of God's presence with Israel. The occasion for the demonstration this time is an attack from the outside instead of an internal complaint. The result, however, is once again an undeniable supernatural intervention. Moses commemorated the victory by building an altar which he named "the Lord is My Banner."

In all the crises the Israelites had faced since they left Egypt, God was teaching them to look to Him. This they should do for deliverance from their enemies (at the Red Sea), for health and healing (at Marah), and for food and guidance (in the wilderness of Sin). They should also have done so for water and refreshment (at Massah-Meribah) and for victory over their enemies in battle (at Rephidim). He was teaching them how dependent they were on Him and that they should turn to Him in any and every need. God is present, when the need arises, to fight alongside, and even on behalf, of His people.

An interesting sidelight is that Exodus 17:14 provides the first mention in the Bible of the writing of official records, though Moses did keep some type of a diary of the sojourn (Num. 33:2). God proved Himself faithful in preserving and protecting His people.

5) The advice of a father-in-law, 18:1-27

This chapter seems initially misplaced. It is the story of the visit of Jethro, the observation that Moses was overworked, and the counsel to delegate his duties whenever possible. However, the clue is in the giving of the law and the explanation of the law in the ordinances (18:19-20). If judges are to be multiplied to relieve Moses, how will they know how to judge? Also, Jethro's visit appears to have been occasioned by the reunion of Zipporah and the boys with their father.

The chapter can be divided into two parts: first, the welcoming of Jethro and the reunion of a family though the emphasis seems to be upon the rehearsal of God's faithfulness in the organization and preservation of a new

community (vv. 1-12) and, second, Jethro's observation of Moses' overwork and his compensating advice (vv. 13-27).

Both emphases in the chapter set the stage for the giving of the law. A community has been formed and it requires regulation as the new people of God.

a. The reunion with Jethro, Zipporah, and his sons, vv. 1-8

That Jethro is described as a priest (v. 1) likely suggests that he was the head of a clan of Midianites (perhaps Kenites). Unlike the Amalekites, Jethro, a Midianite, another desert people, offered Moses and the Israelites a warm welcome. This will not be the case of the Midianites in the Transjordan under Balak (Num. 22-24, 31) and the activities of Balaam.

Eliezer, Moses' second son, is only mentioned here in the Bible. His name reflects, "God is my help," Moses' growth spiritually (v.4), recognizing God's hand of deliverance from Pharaoh who sought his life after the killing of the Egyptian. This is the last mention of Zipporah or her sons in Exodus except for genealogical notations. There is simply a lot that we do not know about Moses' family.

Moses met Jethro, his father-in-law, after returning from engaging the Amalekites in warfare, just as Abraham met Melchizedek after returning from the battle of the kings (Gen. 13-14). Moses is casting him as another righteous Gentile. Just as Abraham met Melchizedek to receive instruction prior to the great Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15), so Jethro gives instruction before the great Mosaic Covenant.

Melchizedek (Gen. 14:17-24)

He was a Gentile priest of Salem (v. 18)

He met Abraham bearing gifts as Abraham returned from defeating the Mesopotamians (v. 18)

He brought gifts to Abraham (v. 18)

He was "King of peace" (v. 18)

Abraham's thought-to-be heir was Eliezer ("God is my help, 15:2)

Melchizedek praised God for rescuing Abraham from the Amalekites (14:19-20)

He offered bread and wine (v. 18)

Jethro (Exod. 18:1-27)

He was a Gentile priest of Midian (v. 1)

He met Moses as Moses returned from defeating the Amalekites (v. 5)

He brought Moses' wife and sons to Moses (vv. 2-6)

He offered Moses peace (v. 7)

Moses' heir was Eliezer ("God is my help," (v. 4)

Jethro praised God for rescuing Moses from the Egyptians (vv. 10-11)

He offered sacrifices and ate bread with Moses (v. 12)

- b) The delight and praise of Jethro, vv. 9-12
Jethro emerges as a man of faith acknowledging the sovereignty of God (v. 11). He does offer sacrifices to the God of Israel and eats a communal meal with the leadership of the nation suggestive of a mutual pact between the parties.
- c) The overwork of Moses in judging, vv. 13-16
Israel had a body of laws to govern moral and civil behavior prior to the giving of the Mosaic Code in the next chapters.
- d) The advice of Jethro, vv. 17-23
Jethro's advice was not to discontinue the work of acting as a judge adjudicating civil conflict, but delegation of the responsibility.
- e) The follow-through by Moses, vv. 24-26
- f) The departure of Jethro, v. 27

B. The Revelation to the God's People at Mount Sinai, 19:1-40:38

This large portion of the book is composed of the giving of the law to God's people (19-20) followed by the ordinances, the application of the law to specific cases of conduct (21-23), and the agreement of the people to obey (24). Moses, then, entered the mount to receive instruction for the tabernacle (25-31). When Moses returned with the token of the covenant, the people were worshipping an image (32-33). After fellowship is restored (34), the tabernacle was constructed (35-40).

Several preliminary things: (1) the people arrived at Mount Sinai 60 days after the Exodus (19:1) though Moses earlier indicated that it was a three-day journey (3:18, circumstances had radically changed). Moses had logistical problems and the people complained likely causing stoppage along the way. (2) Moses did not receive the Law on the Mount; God spoke the Commandments to the people (Moses did receive the Commandments in stone on the mount later). (3) Moses ascended the Mount seven different times; Charlton Heston once (movies compress things). (4) The people remained at the Mount for about one year and one month (Num. 10:11-13). They left Mt. Sinai one year, three months after the exodus event.

It must be understood that the law was given to a people that had been delivered from bondage through the shedding of blood and grand miracle. Israel is a shadowed picture of the people of God. The law was given to the people after their redemption from Egypt, a symbol of oppression and bondage. The function of the law for Israel was the same as it is for us, the more recent people of God:

To reveal the holiness of God (I Peter 1:15)

To reveal the standard of divine fellowship with God (Ps. 24:3-5)

To reveal the inadequacy of mankind to approach God (Gal. 3:19)

The law can be categorized by three types: (1) those concerning criminal actions within the community, such as murder or kidnapping, and were to be punished publicly being a

corporate travesty. (2) those concerning civil wrongs committed against a member of the community by another, such as assault or theft, punishable by the payment of damages. (3) those concerning adjudication required within the family circles, such as adoption, divorce, or slave treatment. These were not settled in a court, but within the family by the head of the household.

1. The revelation of the Mosaic covenant, 19:1-23:33

a. The preparation of the people for the giving of the covenant, 19:1-25

Moses acts as ambassador between the people and the Lord (the priesthood had not been established) ascending the Mount three times to prepare the people for the giving of the Law. It is a holy, dreadful occasion and the people had to prepare themselves.

1) The disclosure of God's promise: the nation would be a kingdom of priests, vv. 1-8

a) The arrival before Mount Sinai, vv. 1-2

The location of Mount Sinai continues to be a subject of debate. Three options entertain our scholars. (1) The traditional site since the fourth century, Jebel Musa, in the southern Sinai. In the sixth century, St. Catherine's monastery was constructed there. The major argument against this location is that it was under Egyptian control and there is no evidence of volcanic activity. Jethro, the Midianite, made a considerable journey to see Moses (the nomadic Midianites roamed land from the Arabian Peninsula to the Sinai) (18:5). (2) The northern Arabian Peninsula, southeast of Aqaba where mountains show volcanic activity. Also, Sinai, Mount Seir, and the region of Edom are grouped together (Judges 5:4, Deut. 33:2). (3) The region around Kadesh-Barnea. This site contradicts Deut. 1:2.

b) The disclosure of God's promise to Moses about the nation, vv. 3-6

c) The promise of the people to follow the Lord, vv. 7-8

2) The disclosure of Moses as mediator of the covenant, v. 9

3) Instructions for preparation to receive the covenant, vv. 10-25

a) The instruction of the people, vv. 10-13

b) The preparation of the people, vv. 14-15

c) The foreboding presence of God on Sinai, vv. 16-19

d) The second warning of the people, vv. 20-25

b. The covenant delineated, 20:1-23:33

Applications

1. Before God gave His words to His people at the mountain, He first rehearsed His kindness and grace to them. "...I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself (19:4)." Before God commands His people, He reveals His grace to them. Obedience is a consequence of a relationship (remember the nation had been delivered by blood covering and miracle from the land of bondage and, thus, is a shadowed picture of God's people at any time or era). Grace is the basis of required obedience; obedience is the evidence of God's favor and not the cause of it. Are you still seeking to earn favor with God? Are you resting in the fact that

He has been gracious to you through Christ? Is obedience a merely duty or is it a heartfelt manifestation of appreciation?

2. Jethro is a model for all of us who has been privileged to have a son-in-law. His greatest qualities seem to have been encouragement, expressed in a recognition of Moses' accomplishments, as well as the Lord's mercy upon him. Further, his ability to observe led to sound advice; Moses was simply taking on too much responsibility and that would lead to disaster. To Moses' credit, he listened to his father-in-law. The flip side of it all is that sons-in-law should listen when their father-in-law's offer competent advice.
3. Moses fell into two traps that are interrelated and that consumes all of us at times. He took on an unwarranted amount of responsibility and he was a failure at this point in the art of delegating. Are we taking on duties that stretch us in such ways that we become burdened and under an impossible load? Do you have to or need to do all you are doing? Are there others that can share the task taking some of the load?
4. While the Mosaic Code is composed of 613 commandments, do this and do not do that, the intent of the law was to produce reverence toward God, the things of God, and respect for our fellow kind. The emphasis of the covenant (the Law) is timeless. We should love God and people, that is its purpose (Matt. 22:37-40). It seems that it is easier to focus on the "do's and do not's" and miss the point of it all. While you may have sought to obey God's words to us, has it translated into love for God and people? Do you have some disrespectful attitudes toward some people? Do you hold resentment?
5. If the Old Covenant was given with such a majestic display of God's power and sovereignty, how much more wonderful is the New Covenant having been sealed by the blood of Christ, having superior promises, and greater provisions in the Spirit. The Old Covenant purposed to engender in ancient people an awareness of their ineptitude and shortcomings so that they would long in hope for the coming of their Savior. He has come and replaced the Old Covenant with a new one. In His coming and death, He met the demands of the Law for us in a new covenant. Do you not rejoice? Christ became our substitute; He fulfilled the exacting demands of the Law for us, in our place. Aren't you glad that Christ met all the requirements of the law for us in His life and death? Life with God requires perfection; He is that perfection for us!
6. Since the law is the revelation of the divine character, His absolute holiness. and since God's character is the ground of meaningful ethics (His character is His standard of right and wrong), it is in a sense the way of salvation. The law is the way of salvation for those who keep it perfectly in motive and action. Because it is an impossible standard for us, Christ came to perfectly fulfill the law for us and to die for every violation of the law we ever or ever will commit. Salvation is through obedience, but Christ has become our obedience! This means that human perfection on our part is not the ground of acceptance before a holy God; it is an impossible standard for imperfect people. Christ is our perfection; God sees us only through the perfections of His son! We are as secure in God's grace, as Christ has obtained God's favor; it is absolute!