

Study 22: Moses, Part 9 Exodus 19-21

At the suggestion Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, and with God's approval, Moses had selected "capable men" to serve as judges over the people. Then Jethro had headed back home to Midian.

Ex 19 It's been 3 months since they left Egypt (v 1), and now Moses and the people come to the Desert of Sinai, where they camp in the desert in front of the mountain (v 2). The Lord calls to Moses from the mountain (v 3): and said,

"This is what you are to say to the descendants 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, for the whole earth is mine. 6 You will be for me a **kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**' [This terminology was applied to the Church by Peter: I Pet 2:5, and by John: Rev 1:5-6]. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

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.

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 approach the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain is to be put to death. 13 They are to be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on them. No person or animal shall be permitted to live.' Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they approach 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."

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. [Cp. Matt 28:1 – After the Sabbath, at dawn... Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.] 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**, and the whole mountain trembled violently. 19 As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him [*with thunder*].

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." [What priests?]

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.

Ex 20 And God spoke all these words:

2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. [This takes the form of the suzerain treaties of that time period]

3 “You shall have no other gods besides me.

4 “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

7 “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

8 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

12 “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

13 “You shall not murder.

14 “You shall not commit adultery.

15 “You shall not steal.

16 “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

17 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

18 When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance 19 and said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.”

20 Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”

21 The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

22 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites this: ‘You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven: 23 Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold.

24 “‘Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you. 25 If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. 26 And do not go up to my altar on steps, or your private parts may be exposed.’

Ex 21 [There follows here a list of seemingly miscellaneous laws. They are tied together, though, either by *theme* (e.g., damage caused by a person’s animal, or harm caused by someone’s negligence), or by recurring *keywords* in the Hebrew text (see, in context). Verse 1:] “These are the laws you are to set before them:

2 “If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the **seventh** year, he shall go free, without paying anything. 3 If he comes alone, he is to go free alone; but if he has a wife when he comes, she is to go with him. 4 If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and only the man shall go free.

5 “But if the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’ 6 then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and **pierce his ear with an awl**. Then he will be his servant for life. [Isa 53:5 says, “He was pierced for our transgressions”].

7 “If a man sells his daughter as a servant, she is not to go free as male servants do. 8 If she does not please the master who has selected her for himself, he must let her be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to foreigners, because he has

broken faith with her. 9 If he selects her for his son, he must grant her the rights of a daughter. 10 If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights. 11 If he does not provide her with these three things, she is to go free, without any payment of money.

12 “Anyone who strikes a person with a fatal blow is to be put to death. 13 However, if it is not done intentionally, but God lets it happen, they are to flee to a place I will designate. 14 But if anyone schemes and kills someone deliberately, that person is to be taken from my altar and put to death.

15 “Anyone who attacks [or *kills*] their father or mother is to be put to death.

16 “Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper’s possession.

17 “Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.

18 “If people quarrel and one person hits another with a stone or with their fist [or *with a tool*] and the victim does not die but is confined to bed, 19 the one who struck the blow will not be held liable if the other can get up and walk around outside with a staff; however, the guilty party must pay the injured person for any loss of time and see that the victim is completely healed.

20 “Anyone who beats their male or female slave with a rod must be punished if the slave dies as a direct result, 21 but they are not to be punished if the slave recovers after a day or two, since the slave is their property.

22 “If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman’s husband demands and the court allows. 23 But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

26 “An owner who hits a male or female slave in the eye and destroys it must let the slave go free to compensate for the eye. 27 And an owner who knocks out the tooth of a male or female slave must let the slave go free to compensate for the tooth.

28 “If a bull gores a man or woman to death, the bull is to be stoned to death, and its meat must not be eaten. But the owner of the bull will not be held responsible. 29 If, however, the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull is to be stoned and its owner also is to be put to death. 30 However, if payment is demanded, the owner may redeem his life by the payment of whatever is demanded. 31 This law also applies if the bull gores a son or daughter. 32 If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels [about 12 ounces] of silver to the master of the slave, and the bull is to be stoned to death.

33 “If anyone uncovers a pit or digs one and fails to cover it and an ox or a donkey falls into it, 34 the one who opened the pit must pay the owner for the loss and take the dead animal in exchange.

35 “If anyone’s bull injures someone else’s bull and it dies, the two parties are to sell the live one and divide both the money and the dead animal equally. 36 However, if it was known that the bull had the habit of goring, yet the owner did not keep it penned up, the owner must pay, animal for animal, and take the dead animal in exchange.