

Part One: Introduction

Written by Bob Stone

I wrote the following song to summarize what we studied in [our last session](#) on the life of Moses and the Ten Commandments. It is entitled: "On Eagles' Wings."

"I'll lift you up on eagles' wings. I'll carry you home. In your trials, I'll be with you and guide you through the storm. Remember My deliverance; I brought you here to be a kingdom priest, holy nation, a treasure for Me. You'll bring me to the place You planned, a promised land for me. If I'll obey Your commands, You'll keep me free."

These words are inspired by Exodus 19, as well as Israel's journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. Let me highlight Exodus 19 and review what we have covered in our studies together.

In Exodus 19, the Lord gives us the basis for the covenant relationship with His people—v.3-4. Ex. 19:3—*Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house 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.*

The Lord asks Moses to remind the people about three things He has done for them:

- He defeated the Egyptians
- He bore them on eagles' wings
- He brought them to Himself.

Likewise, if you are a believer and follower of Jesus, you know what it is to have these things done for you.

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In our last study of Moses and the Children of Israel, we revisited the three things God did for Israel, and we saw how the Lord similarly acted on our behalf. Just as He "proposed" a covenant/marriage relationship with Israel, He "courts" us and draws us to Himself. If you have accepted the Lord's proposal, you have a completely new identity and will discover for the first time why you were created!

We saw that conditions were part of the covenant/proposal, and looked at the promised rewards of the covenant relationship. **Let this passage sink deep into your heart.** vv. 5-6— "N
ow if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, 6] you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

Those of us who have made a commitment to follow Jesus Christ need to be reminded of what God says to us too:

"...you will be my treasured possession"—v. 5 "..." you will be for me a kingdom of priests"—v. 6a "... and a holy nation"—v. 6b

If we follow Jesus, we will be a **treasured possession**, because we have entered into a relationship with our King; a **holy nation**, because we belong to God; a **kingdom of priests**, because we have been redeemed to a special status before Him, and should offer our lives as a sacrifice. God has brought us into a covenant relationship that is high and noble, as well as intimate and personal.

Notice how Israel responds (it's a model for us): *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 every thing the Lord has said."* It is easy to say these kinds of words, but we must remember what Israel discovered: unless our commitment is an act of the will and based on faith, it won't stand in the crucible of testing.

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v. 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 go up the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 13 He shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on him. Whether man or animal, he shall not be permitted to live.' Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they go up to 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. 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, the whole mountain trembled violently, 19 and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

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."

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."

Why all this activity? Why this mountain climbing marathon? (He climbed the mountain three or four times at age 80. He must have been tired.) I think God is trying to teach Moses and the people how important His Words must be to their lives—giving them an object lesson.

I think He is also illustrating the many facets of their relationship with Him. Yes, God has brought us into a high and noble covenant relationship that is also intimate and personal—*like a marriage*

. But we are also in relationship with the King of Kings. As believers we have a relationship

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with a God who is the awesome creator of the universe; One whose power is unlimited. This relationship with our King also implies we must be a holy nation and royal priests—those who sacrifice for the Most High God and who obey His commands. We have, therefore, a very personal relationship with an awesome God.

With this relationship in mind, let's move on to chapter 20, vv. 1-18. Here God shows us how we must relate with Him and others.

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. 3 **You shall have no other gods before me.***

*4 **You shall not make for yourself an idol** 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 fathers 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 manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. 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 manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your*

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neighbor."

18 When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear.

The Commandments, or Conditions of the Covenant—Exodus 20:1-18.

As we study these commands, remember God gave them in response to the Israelites' willingness to be a special treasure, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.

This section of Scripture contains the Ten Commandments, known all over the world as the basis for order, legal jurisprudence, and civilized society. There are basically two parts to the Law. The first is the commandments of the Law, which you find in Exodus 20; the second is the ceremonial law, or ordinances regarding worship. Many people think the Law is just the Ten Commandments, but it also contains the ceremonial ordinances, explained in Exodus 21 through the books of Leviticus and Numbers.

Larry Richards says: "Often in Scriptures 'the Law' speaks of these first uttered commandments of God to Israel (the Ten Commandments). But the word Law ('torah' in Hebrew) does not always refer to the Ten Words (commands) spoken from the mountain. It also refers at times to the whole system of life expressed by the continuing Old Testament revelation, a system containing many positive statutes and ordinances as well as the apparent negatives of the Ten. Also, the believing Jew thought of the books of Moses especially (that is, Genesis through Deuteronomy) as the Torah, 'the Law.'" (Larry Richards, Freedom Road, David C. Cook, Elgin Illinois, 1976.)

Why do we have the Law? Some who don't understand its purpose are making a big mistake. They think the Law was given to get them out of Egypt (their sin); to save them, so they can go to heaven. Some people think, "All I have to do is obey the Ten Commandments." But reading Exodus, we see something else about deliverance. The people were delivered by the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, and that is the only way we can be delivered—not by obeying the Law. The Law was given to a delivered people and was **not**

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the means of escape from Egypt (our sin). The only way to escape the judgment of God is by faith in the blood of the Lamb/our Lord and Savior Jesus. (See Gal. 3:11; Rom. 3:20.)

Then why the Law? Why the Ten Commandments? In the original context, the Law was given for life in the Promised Land, which they were about to enter; this was how the delivered people were expected to live. The people of Israel needed the discipline and training in holiness—because like our nation and world, they were adrift morally. This new nation needed guidelines and laws to live by as it escaped the pull and captivity of 400+ years in Egypt (years without instruction) and prepared to enter the Promised Land. The Israelites also needed a God-given culture to distinguish them from the Canaanites, a very evil and corrupt people.

God required obedience to these rules, but this generation did not follow the commands. In fact, this generation never entered the promised land, having wandered around for 40 years because they weren't obedient to the Law they were given. They aren't unique. Disobedience is typical for anyone who tries to obey the Law—he can't.

We'll look next at why the Law was given in the first place. [See you there!](#)