



FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM | *The Story of Israel*
the books of EXODUS & LEVITICUS & NUMBERS

CLASS INSTRUCTIONS

Every Class will have Biblical reading for preparation. However, *we will not read the whole text in classes.* Please **pre-read** before the class. *Take Home Review Sheets* for notes will be provided on a weekly basis.

Regarding Health and Safety, we will sit in comfortable distanced seating during class – and it is recommended that masks be worn to your seat and as you leave.

#FALL 2020

L E S S O N S C H E D U L E

1.	9/8	Introduction to the Class and the Exodus of Israel
2.	9/15	Bondage and the Rise of the Deliverer Exodus 1-2
3.	9/22	The Call of the Deliverer Exodus 3:1-4:23
4.	9/29	Liberation Begins Exodus 5:1-6:30
5.	10/6	The Prophet and The Power of God Exodus 7:1-10:29
6.	10/13	The Prophet and The Power of God (2) Exodus 11:1-12:51
7.	10/20	The March to Freedom Exodus 14-15
8.	10/27	The Journey of Complaint and the Testing of the People Exodus 16-17
9.	11/3	Jethro and Moses, the Law Giver Exodus 18-19
10.	11/10	Covenant Is Made with Ten Commandments: The Moral Code Exodus 20
11.	11/17	Covenant Ordinances (Ex. 21:1): Obedience and Disobedience (Lev. 26:14-46 with Deuteronomy 28-30) and Capital Crimes (Exodus 21).
12.	12/1	Covenant Ordinances: Holiness (Ex. 22:31; Lev. 19:1-3; 20:7, 26): <i>"You must be holy" involves many things, including respect, Sabbath and the Tithe</i> (Ex. 22:29-30; 23:19; Lev. 27:30-34).
13.	12/8	The Covenant Calendar Special days of the Tabernacle (Ex. 23:14-17; 31:12-17; 34:18, 21-26; 35:1-3; Lev. 16:1-34; 19:30; 23:1-44; 25:1-24; 26:2): The Sabbath Day (Ex. 31:12-17; 34:21; 35:1-3; Lev. 19:30; 23:1-3; 26:2); The Sabbath Year (Lev. 25:1-7). The Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-24); *The Passover (Lev. 23:4-5); The Festival of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 34:18; Lev. 23:6-8); The Festival of Firstfruits (Lev. 23:9-14); The Festival of Harvest (Lev. 23:15-22); The Festival of Trumpets (Lev. 23:23-25); The Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-34; 23:26-32); The Festival of Tabernacles (Shelters) (Lev. 23:33-44).
14.	12/15	Continued The Covenant Calendar

Lesson 9

Jethro and Moses, the Law Giver | Exodus 18-19

After God had purified the bitter waters of Marah (15) and sent quail and manna (16:8) and then made water come from a rock at Massa and Meribah (17), there was no question to the honest heart of every Israelite **that God Provides and Heals (15:26)**.

Burnout is no modern anomaly. Moses was dangerously close to burning himself out when his father-in-law came to his rescue. What appears on the surface to be the insignificant visit of a relative is a really a divine provision to deliver Moses, not from the wrath of Pharaoh, nor from the attack of the Egyptian army, but from himself. As Jethro himself put it, Moses was wearing himself and the Israelites out (18:18). Thanks to the common sense of a wise father-in-law, Moses was delivered from his own destruction, the burnout which resulted from distorted perceptions and wrongly imposed demands.

Jethro's Arrival (18:1-12) | The first section reveals the occasion for the arrival of Jethro. He was meeting Moses with his wife Zipporah and their two sons. And when he arrives, there appears to be a warm welcome and homecoming with a sharing of all the Lord had done for Israel (which Moses' family was not exposed to see). And in response, Jethro said, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods; indeed." And then with Moses, worships Yahweh. He praised God for His grace for Israel, as evidenced by Moses' report (9-10). Second, Jethro seems to acknowledge, for the first time, the superiority of God over all other "gods," which one would suppose included his own previously worshipped pagan gods because Midianites generally were idolaters (cf. Num. 25:17-18; 31:16). His faith is demonstrated in his offering of sacrifices to God, and in the sacrificial meal, which Jethro, Moses, and all the elders of Israel shared (12).

Earlier, the text tells us "he heard everything God had done for Moses and for his people ..." (1). And for that reason, Jethro, perhaps also on the urging of Zipporah and the sons, he made trek through the desert to reunite them because he knew Moses' family needed him and they needed to be together. In chapter 4, Moses requested, somewhat deceptively, that he be given leave to return to Egypt with his family (4:18). There was an unpleasant event with Zipporah, related to the circumcision of Moses' son, which nearly cost Moses his life (4:24-26). Some have concluded that Zipporah, in anger, returned to her father at this time, but our text tells us that Moses "sent her away." We can at least suggest that Moses sent his family back to Jethro at a time when Moses feared for their safety. Perhaps, too, he felt that the pressures of confronting Pharaoh and of leading Israel were too great to have the additional responsibilities of a husband and father. However, Jethro had concluded that whatever the reasons for the separation of Moses and his family were had now safely been set aside.

Then, after they worshipped together in the homecoming, it only took one day for Jethro to see Moses' need. Truthfully, it is difficult to imagine how it was that it only took one day for Jethro to gather the information to conclude what he did about the well-being of Moses and then exclaim, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" but his response (and Moses to him) suggests that he was indeed well-informed.

Jethro's Advice (18:13-27) | The next morning, Moses and the people of Israel began their daily routine. The people who sought to know God's will from Moses began to line up at the designated place, perhaps just outside Moses' tent. With a nation composed of nearly 2,000,000 people (600,000 men, cf. 12:37), one can imagine that the line was long, and that it began to queue up very early in the morning. Moses, we are told, seated himself, sitting as Israel's sole judge (13, 14). The people came to him with all those matters which needed a decision, instruction, or counsel. The people looked to Moses alone for a word from God for guidance in their lives. At the end of the day, the long line of waiting Israelites was still there. The people were weary from standing all day, and so was Moses (14, 18). Jethro was able to quickly identify the problem to which, it seems, Moses was oblivious.

Jethro was baffled by the inefficiency of what had taken place during the day. I believe it is safe to assume that Moses was completely caught off guard by Jethro's disapproval. Moses was so covered up

by his work, so desperately trying keep his head above water that he didn't have time to reflect on what he was doing. Jethro, on the other hand, had already suspected a problem for some time evidenced by his failing to call for his family as they were arriving in the Exodus. Moses had not only sent his family home for him to care for, but he had apparently had little contact with them, and he had delayed in reuniting with his family. That morning, Jethro began to see the piece fall into place.

The response of Moses reveals his distorted perception, which was the root problem. While Jethro quickly sized up the situation, Moses wasn't thinking very clearly about what he was doing. His response reveals several misconceptions regarding his role as a leader. Consider them with me for a moment.

- (1) Moses believed that every request for his help made the matter his responsibility. When asked why Moses handled matters as he did, Moses responded, in effect, "I am doing this because the people have asked me to."
- (2) Moses seemed to assume that because people came to him personally for help it was his responsibility to help them personally.
- (3) Moses wrongly reasoned that because his task was to lead the entire nation, he must do so by dealing with people one at a time. And what Moses was doing was in effect, teaching the same thing 100 times to 100 people.
- (4) Perhaps most telling was that Moses seems to have assumed that no one else was able to do what he was doing. Moses told Jethro that the people came to him "to seek God's will" (v. 15).
- (5) Moses seems to have lost sight of his unique gifts and calling. God had not called Moses to do everything, but to do some things. Moses was given responsibility to lead the nation Israel as a whole, and thus his task was very different from that of others, who could deal with people on a personal, intimate, one-on-one basis.

Jethro's advice probably made possible the completion of the Pentateuch by Moses. Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament—the Pentateuch. This is a great literary work, not to mention its status as divine revelation. The writing of the Pentateuch was Moses' implementation of Jethro's counsel: "Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform" (Exodus 18:20). The way Moses was consumed by his duties as judge, he would never had the time to write the very chapter which we have studied, and from which we can learn so much. How directly we have benefited from Jethro's counsel to Moses. Millions have been blessed because of the change which Jethro's visit brought about in the life of Moses.

God's Purpose for the Decalogue (19:1-6) | Verses 4-6 are the heart of the section, and some would go so far as to say they are the heart of the Old Testament revelation of God pertaining to His covenant with Israel. The first three verses set the stage for the pronouncement which God is about to make. Perhaps it is the third month "to the very day" (1, cf. Exod. 12:41) that Israel is said to have arrived in the wilderness of Sinai. It was here that Israel would remain for 11 months (cf. Numbers 10:11). From the mountain, God spoke some of the most significant words found in the Old Testament which Moses was to proclaim to the Israelites (vss. 3, 6b): "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6a).

These words convey several important truths: (1) Israel's history is proof of God's faithfulness to His covenant. (2) Israel's deliverance was for the purpose of being brought to God, so that the nation could be His prized possession and to serve Him as a priestly nation (Genesis 12:2). (3) In order to maintain this privileged status, Israel must keep God's covenant (as defined by the Law).

Preparations for the Appearance of God (19:7-15) | Moses conveyed the words which God had spoken to him on the mountain to the people (7). Unanimously, the people eagerly responded, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do!" (8) It is noteworthy that the Israelites agreed to do all that God commanded in principle, rather than in particular. That is, the Law has not yet been given. To this point, God has only indicated that the people must keep their covenant by obeying the laws which He is about to set down. Moses returned to the top of the mountain to convey the words of the people to God. God purposed to clearly establish Moses' position and authority publicly.

His appearance to Moses will accomplish this purpose. During the two day interval, a number of things were to be done:

- (1) Boundaries were to be set, barring both man and beast from coming in contact with the mountain (12-14). Any man or beast which touched the mountain was to die. Death was not to come from the hand of God, but from the hand of the Israelites (12-13). Execution must occur in such a way that no one would touch the executed person (13).
- (2) The people were to consecrate themselves by washing their garments (10, 14).
- (3) The people were to abstain from sexual intimacy prior to God's visitation on Mt. Sinai (15). There was, of course, nothing evil or defiling about normal marital sexual relations, but, as the Law would later spell out, there was a ceremonial uncleanness. Thus, until God's visitation sexual abstinence was required.

What is it that makes violating the boundaries God has set such a serious matter? The text does not provide us with the answers to these questions directly, but I would suggest that it is a revisiting of the burning bush where God would be treated holy – and the covenant He enters with His people would be treated holy. It is this irreverence which God finds such a serious sin. If you are not inclined to agree with me as to the seriousness of irreverence, let me remind you that it was irreverence which resulted in Uzzah being struck dead, even though his intentions (to keep the ark from falling from the ox cart) were well-meaning (2 Samuel 6:6-7). It was also Moses' irreverence (in the striking of the rock) which kept him from entering into the promised land (Numbers 20:12).

The Manifestation of God on the Mountain (19:16-25) | The sights and sounds are impossible to fully comprehend, and not easily brought to our conscious minds as we read the chapter. But let us use our imaginations for a moment and try to recreate in our minds what it must have been like to have been standing at the base of that mountain as God descended upon it. Moses alone was summoned to the top of the mountain to meet God (20). He was told to go back down to the people and to warn them not to draw too near to the mountain to gaze at the spectacular scene which was taking place (21). The priests, 206 too, were to consecrate themselves, lest they be smitten of God (22). When Moses descended this time, he was to return with Aaron (24). Their leadership was thereby confirmed.

The Law was Israel's corporate covenant with God and her constitution as a nation. Repeatedly, the Law which God gave Israel through Moses was referred to as a covenant (Exod. 19:5; 24:7-8; 34:10, 27-28; Deut. 4:23; 5:2). The three principle covenants of the Old Testament were the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1-3), the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7:11-16; 1 Chronicles 17:10-14), and the Mosaic (or Sinaitic) covenant. The Mosaic covenant is different from the other two covenants. This was a covenant which was provisional, and which was to be replaced by a "new covenant" which would be an eternal covenant. "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "But this covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My Law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34; cf. also Isaiah 55:3; 61:8; Ezekiel 37:26).

The Law (in its broadest form—the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible) was intended to serve as a record of God's faithfulness to His promises and to His people. The ten commandments, along with the rest of the laws of God, was given to serve as the covenant between God and His people, and as their national constitution, by which the nation would be guided and governed.

NEXT WEEK | 11/10 | Covenant Is Made with Ten Commandments: The Moral Code | Exodus 20