

LESSON 17
Exodus 18-20

THE SECOND BOOK OF MOSES CALLED
EXODUS
CHAPTER 18

Jethro comes to Moses bringing Moses' wife and sons; he offers sacrifice to the Lord—Moses sits in judgment seat and hears all cases—Jethro counsels Moses to teach the law, to appoint lesser judges, and to delegate power to them.

1 WHEN ^aJethro, the (high) ^bpriest of ^cMidian, Moses' father in law, heard of all that ^dGod had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt; (“Jethro made a valuable contribution to Moses in suggesting an organization of leaders over units of ten, fifty, one hundred and one thousand to instruct and to judge the people in all but the most difficult of matters, which would be passed up through the system of inferior and superior courts if necessary, until they reached Moses at the head. Moses showed commendable humility and wisdom in accepting the old Priest’s advice. (A modern use of the same type of organization is seen in D&C 136.)” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:82–83.) Joseph Smith changed Exodus 18:1 to read “the high priest of Midian” (emphasis added), confirming what is recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 84:6–7, that Jethro held the Melchizedek Priesthood. Institute Manual, 124)

2 Then Jethro, Moses' father in law, took ^aZipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back,
3 And her two ^asons; of which the name of the one was ^bGershom; for he said, ^cI have been an alien in a strange land: (Heb I have been a sojourner in a foreign land)

4 And the name of the other was ^aEliezer; (ie God of help) for the God of my father, *said he*, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh:

5 And Jethro, Moses' father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the ^amount of God:

6 And he ^asaid (ie sent word) unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her.

7 ¶ And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of *their* welfare; and they came into the tent.

8 And Moses told his father in law all that the LORD had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and *how* the LORD delivered them.

9 And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.

10 And Jethro said, Blessed *be* the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

11 Now I know that the LORD *is* greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt ^aproudly *he* was above them.

12 And Jethro, Moses' father in law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat ^abread with Moses' father in law before God.

13 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to ^ajudge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.

14 And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What *is* this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?

15 And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to ^aenquire of God:

16 When they have a ^amatter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make *them* know the statutes of God, and his laws.

17 And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest *is* not good.

18 Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that *is* with thee: for this thing *is* ^atoo heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.

19 Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: ^aBe thou for the people to ^bGod-ward, (or You represent the people before God) that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:

20 And thou shalt ^ateach them ^bordinances (or laws and doctrine) and ^claws, and shalt shew them the ^dway wherein they must ^ewalk, and the work that they must do.

21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people ^aable men, such as ^bfear God, ^cmen of truth (or faithful or trustworthy men), hating ^dcovetousness; and place *such* over them, *to be* ^erulers of thousands, and rulers of ^fhundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

22 And let them ^ajudge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, *that* every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear *the* ^bburden with thee.

23 If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee *so*, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace. (Thomas Jefferson envisioned America being organized after this method. He called the units of 100 families, wards. This organization will probably exist in some form in America prior to the Second Coming.)

24 So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said. (Moses was humble to accept this new, better way of doing things.)

25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them ^aheads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. (How was Israel organized? 1st Presidency, 12, and Seventy. Which Tribe leads the House of Israel today? Ephraim with 1st Presidency, 12 and Seventy.)

26 And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

27 ¶ And Moses let his father in law depart; and he went his way into his own land.

CHAPTER 19

*The Lord covenants to make Israel a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation—
People sanctify themselves—The Lord appears on Sinai amid fire and smoke and earthquakes.*

1 IN the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they *into* the ^awilderness of Sinai.

2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come *to* the desert of Sinai, and had ^apitched (or encamped) in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD ^acalled unto him out of the ^bmountain, (The Temple) saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on ^aeagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will ^aobey my voice indeed, and keep my ^bcovenant, then *ye shall be a* ^cpeculiar ^dtreasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: (“In the Old Testament, the Hebrew term from which *peculiar* was translated is *segullah*, which means ‘valued property’ or ‘treasure.’ In the New Testament, the Greek term from which *peculiar* was translated is *peripoiesis*, which means ‘possession,’ or ‘an obtaining.’ “Thus, we see that the scriptural term *peculiar* signifies ‘valued treasure,’ ‘made’ or ‘selected by God.’ For us to be identified . . . as [the Lord’s] *peculiar* people is a compliment of the

highest order” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 44; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 34.)

6 And ye shall be unto me a ^akingdom of ^bpriests, and an ^choly ^dnation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

7 ¶ And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD ^acommanded him.

8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will ^ado. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick ^acloud, that the people may ^bhear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.

10 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and ^asanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them ^bwash their clothes, (Prophet – Duties include trying to prepare us to be worthy of God’s presence. Our changing clothes, etc. in the temple is to make us ready to see God.)

11 And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the ^asight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

12 And thou shalt set ^abounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, *that ye go not* up into the ^bmount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: (The Mount of God is sacred. There are some things in the Temple that are so sacred that they should not be touched except when necessary.)

13 There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether *it be* beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

14 ¶ And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

15 And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: ^acome not at *your* wives (Heb do not go near any woman; ie with lust).

16 ¶ And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the camp trembled.

17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to ^ameet with God; and they stood at the ^bnether part of (or foot of) the mount.

18 And mount ^aSinai was ^baltogether (ie covered with smoke everywhere) on a ^csmoke, because the LORD ^ddescended upon it in ^efire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole ^fmount quaked greatly.

19 And when the voice of the ^atrumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a ^bvoice.

20 And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses *up* to the ^atop of the mount; and Moses went up.

21 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to ^agaze, and many of them ^bperish.

22 And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them.

23 And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it.

24 And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD, lest he break forth upon them.

25 So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them. (The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “This is why Adam blessed his posterity [in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman (see D&C 107:53–54)]; he wanted to bring them into the presence of God. They looked for a city, etc., ‘whose builder

and maker is God.’ (Hebrews 11:10.) Moses sought to bring the children of Israel into the presence of God, through the power of the Priesthood, but he could not” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 159). President Ezra Taft Benson, as the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said: “How did Adam bring his descendants into the presence of the Lord? “The answer: Adam and his descendants entered into the priesthood order of God. Today we would say they went to the House of the Lord and received their blessings” (“What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 9). “If they had accepted all of the privileges offered them and followed the instructions which would have qualified them to receive the fulfillment of all God’s promises, they could have been accorded the grandest of all revelations: He offered to come down in the *sight* of all the people *and* let them *hear* when He spoke to Moses that they might know for themselves about His will and His law, and believe in Moses’ future revelations from God, and revere the Lord evermore (cf. Deuteronomy 4:10). Note the need of cleanliness and spiritual dedication in their preparation for this great spiritual experience. **“At the prearranged signal, the sounding of the trumpet ‘exceeding long,’ the people trembled in anticipation and awe, but apparently they were not fully ready to come up ‘in the sight’ of the Lord on the mount where Moses was, for the Lord told him to go down and warn them not to come up. Hints as to why this was so are found in the next chapter, 20:18–19, 18** ¶ And all the people ^asaw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people ^bsaw *it*, they ^cremoved, and stood afar off. 19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God ^aspeak with us, lest we die. and in D&C 84:21–25 21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the ^aauthority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is ^bnot manifest unto men in the flesh; 22 For without this no ^aman can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. 23 Now this ^aMoses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to ^bsanctify his people that they might ^cbehold the face of God; 24 But they ^ahardened their hearts and could not endure his ^bpresence; therefore, the Lord in his ^cwrath, for his ^danger was kindled against them, swore that they should not ^eenter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory. 25 Therefore, he took ^aMoses out of their midst, and the Holy ^bPriesthood also; . **But even though their hearts were not fully prepared to endure His presence, they did hear the voice** and the words of God as the Ten Commandments were given, as will be seen later when we study Moses’ review of these great events in his valedictory, in Deuteronomy 4:10, 12, 33, 36; 5:22–26. “(The presentation of the Ten Commandments on the *stone tablets* is recounted a little later in the narrative, in Exodus 31:18; 32:15, 19; and a *second set of tablets*, prepared after the first set were broken, and are spoken of in Exodus 34:1 ff.)” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:83.) Institute Manual, 124)

IT was the third month after leaving Egypt when the children of Israel reached that innermost mountain-group from which the Peninsula of Sinai derives its name. Roughly speaking, the whole district occupies about twice the area of Yorkshire.*

* According to the Ordnance Survey the triangle of the Sinaitic Peninsula covers an area of 11,600 square miles.

Running through it, like roads, pass very many wadies, all seemingly leading up to the grand central sanctuary, where God was about to give His law to His people. This mountain district bears in Scripture two distinct names - Horeb and Sinai - the former applying probably to the whole group, the latter to one special mountain in it. The meaning of the name Horeb is probably "mountain of the dried-up ground," that of Sinai "mountain of the thorn." At present the whole Sinaitic group is known by the designation of Jebel Musa. It forms "a huge mountain-block, about two miles in length and one mile in breadth, with a narrow valley on either side,... and a spacious plain at the north-eastern end."*

* Desert of the Exodus, vol. 1. P. 111. The quotations, when not otherwise marked, are all from the same work.

That plain, at present known as Er Rahah, is computed to be capable of accommodating a host of two millions. Right before it rises Jebel Musa, from which protrudes a lower bluff, visible from all parts of the plain. This is the modern Ras Sufsafeh (Willow-head), and was in all probability the Sinai upon which the Lord came down, and whence He spake" the ten words." In that case the plain of Er Rahah must have been that on which Israel stood, and the mound in front, on the ascent to Ras Sufsafeh, the spot where Moses "separated from the elders who had accompanied him so far on his ascent."

On leaving Rephidim the main body of the Israelites would pass through what is known as Wady es Sheikh, a broad open valley, containing tamarisk trees, and "cut right through the granitic wall." As a turn in the road is reached, "the journey lies entirely through granite rocks, the sharp, rugged outlines of which, as well as the increasing height and somber gray coloring of the mountains, impart much more solemn grandeur to the scenery." A late eloquent traveler* thus describes the approach to Sinai: "At each successive advance these cliffs disengaged themselves from the intervening and surrounding hills, and at last they stood out - I should rather say, the columnar mass, which they form, stood out - alone against the sky.

* Dean Stanley, in his Sinai and Palestine, p. 72.

On each side the infinite complications of twisted and jagged mountains fell away from it. On each side the sky compassed it round, as though it were alone in the wilderness. And to this great mass we approached through a wide valley, a long-continued plain, which, enclosed as it was between two precipitous mountain ranges of black and yellow granite, and having always at its end this prodigious mountain-block, I could compare to nothing else than the immense avenue through which the approach was made to the great Egyptian temples."

As we try to realize the scene presented at the giving of the Law, we can well understand how "all the people that was in the camp trembled." (Exodus 19:16) The vast plain of Er Rahah, and all the neighboring valleys and glens, were dotted with the tents of Israel. No more suitable camping-ground could have been found than this, the best-watered neighborhood in the whole peninsula, where "running streams are found in no less than four of the adjacent valleys." The plain itself is nearly 5,000 feet above the level of the sea. Right in front, cut off by intervening valleys from all around, rises the Horeb group (its highest point 7,363 feet), and from it projects into the valley, like some gigantic altar or pulpit, the lower bluff of Ras Sufsafeh (6,830 feet) - "the nether part of the mount" - that Sinai from which the voice of the living God was heard. In front is the mound on which Moses parted from the elders. So abruptly does Sufsafeh rise, "that you may literally stand under it and touch its base," and so thoroughly is the mountain range separated from all around, that there could be no difficulty whatever in "setting bounds unto the people round about," to prevent their going up into the mount, or even touching the border of it. (Exodus 19:12) Behind Sufsafeh, on some peak or cleft, Moses was forty days with the Lord, and descending into the adjacent valley, he would - as the members of the Ordnance Survey record they had frequently experienced - hear the sound from the camp without being able to see what passed in it.

But now as the people gazed on it, "Mount Sinai was altogether on smoke." (Exodus 19:18) That vast isolated mountain-block - two miles in length and one in breadth - seemed all on fire! As "the smoke of a furnace" it rose to heaven, "and the whole mount quaked greatly," and "there were thunders and lightnings" and "the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud." But, more awful than any physical signs, "Jehovah came down upon Mount Sinai," "and Jehovah called Moses to the top of the mount," and God Himself "spake all these words" of the commandments. For three days had the people been preparing by continued sanctification, and now they stood in readiness at the foot of, although shut off from, the

mountain. But even so, "when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die." (Exodus 20:18, 19) This outward sanctification of Israel had been preceded by inward and spiritual preparation. As always, the demand and the command of God had been preceded by His promise. For He ever gives what He asks. It is, as St. Augustine beautifully expresses it, "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt." Arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses had gone up to a lower peak, as if to ask the commands of his Lord, and Jehovah had spoken to him from the top of the mountain. He was directed, before the people prepared to receive the Law, to remind them of their gracious deliverance from Egypt, of the judgments of God's hand, and of the mercy and kindness which they had received. For as "on eagle wings had Jehovah borne them, God's dealings being compared to the eagle, who spreads his strong pinions under the young birds when they take their first flight, lest, weary or faint, they be dashed on the rocks (comp. Deuteronomy 32:11). Yet all this mercy - Moses was to tell Israel - was but the pledge of far richer grace. For now would the Lord enter into covenant with them. And if Israel obeyed His voice, and kept the covenant, then, in His own words, "Ye shall be to Me a precious possession * from among all nations for Mine is all the earth. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:5, 6)

* The word is the same as for "choice treasure" (1 Chronicles 29:3; Ecclesiastes 2:8). We have translated the whole verse literally.

The promise thus conveyed was both special and universal; and it described alike the character of God's people and their destination. All the earth was God's, not only by right of creation and possession, but as destined yet to own Him its Lord. Herein lay a promise of universal blessing to all mankind, and with this the mission of Israel was closely bound up. But while all the earth was the Lord's, Israel was to be His "precious possession from among all nations," His choice treasure - for this the Hebrew expression implies - or, as St. Paul (Titus 2:14) and St. Peter (1 Peter 2:9) explain it, "a peculiar people." The manner in which this dignity would appear, is explained by the terms in which Israel is described as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The expression "kingdom of priests" means a kingdom whose citizens are priests, and as such possess royal dignity and power, or, in the language of St. Peter, "a royal priesthood." So far as Israel was concerned, the outward and visible theocracy, which God established among them, was only the means by which this end was to be obtained, just as their observing the covenant was the condition of it. But the promise itself reached far beyond the Old Covenant, and will only be fulfilled in its completeness when "the Israel of God" - whom already the Lord Jesus, "the First-begotten of the dead and the Prince of the kings of the earth," "hath made kings and priests unto God and His Father" (Revelation 1:5, 6; 5:10) - shall share with Him His glory and sit with Him on His throne. Thus the final object of the royal priesthood of Israel were those nations, from among whom God had chosen His people for a precious possession. Towards them Israel was to act as priests. For, just as the priest is the intermediary between God and man, so Israel was to be the intermediary of the knowledge and salvation of God to all nations. And this their priesthood was to be the foundation of their royalty, A still more solemn description of Israel, and of us who are called "the Israel of God," is that of "holy nation." As Calvin rightly observes, "This designation was not due to the piety or holiness of the people, but because God distinguished them by peculiar privileges from all others. But this sanctification implies another, viz., that they who are so distinguished by God's grace should cultivate holiness, so that in turn they sanctify God."

The Hebrew term for "holy" is generally supposed to mean "separated, set apart." But this is only its secondary signification, derived from the purpose of that which is holy. Its primary meaning is to be splendid, beautiful, pure, and uncontaminated. God is holy - as the Absolutely Pure, Resplendent, and Glorious One. Hence this is symbolized by the light. God dwelleth in light that is unapproachable; (1

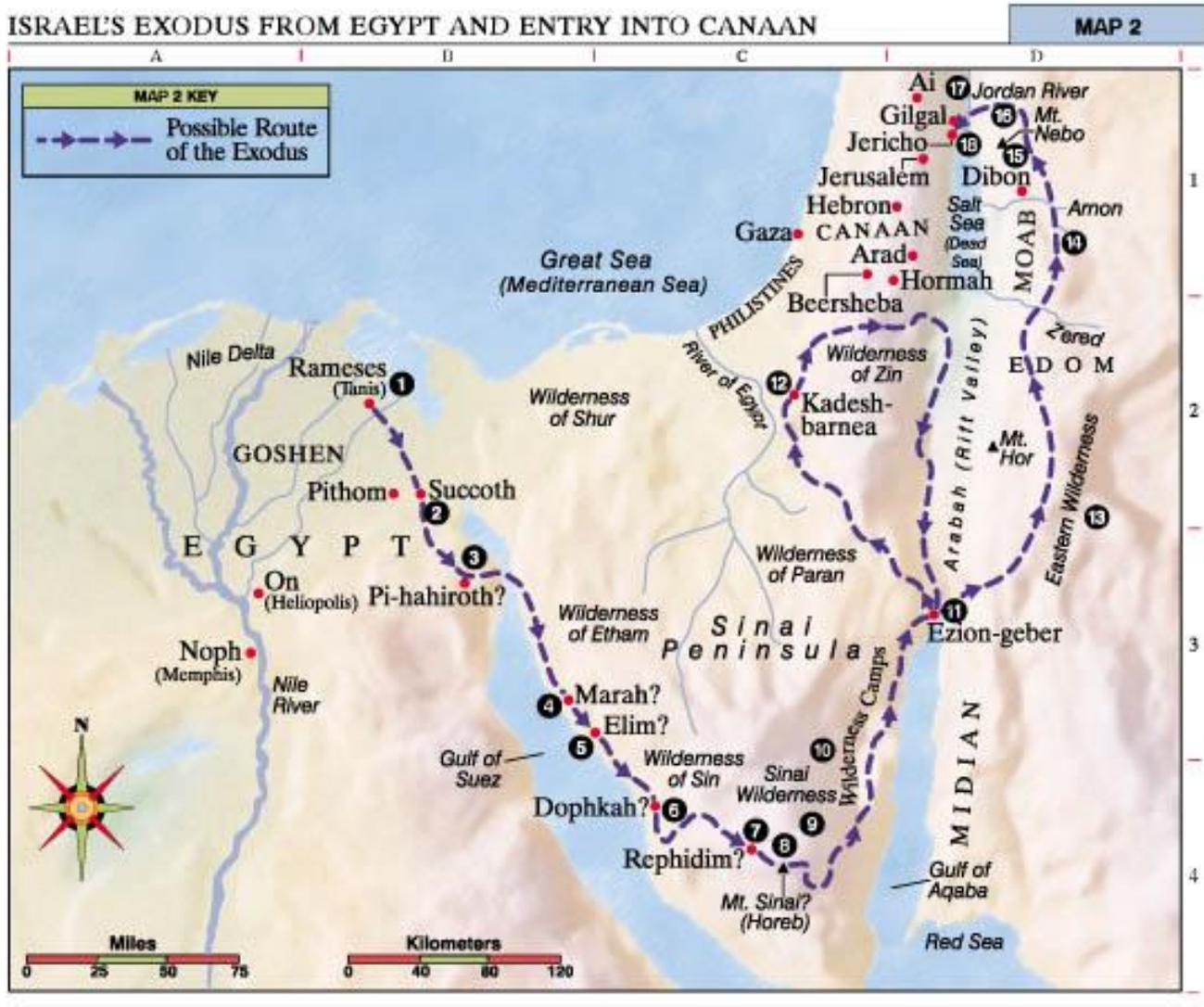
Timothy 6:16) He is "the Father of light, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" - light which never can grow dimmer, nor give place to darkness. (James 1:17) Christ is the light that shineth in the darkness of our world, "the true light which lighteth every man." (John 1:5, 9) And Israel was to be a holy people as dwelling in the light, through its covenant-relationship to God. It was not the selection of Israel from all other nations that made them holy, but the relationship to God into which it brought the people. The call of Israel, their election and selection, were only the means. Holiness itself was to be attained through the covenant, which provided forgiveness and sanctification, and in which, by the discipline of His law and the guidance of His Holy Arm, Israel was to be led onward and upward. Thus, if God showed the excellence of His name or His glory in creation, (Psalm 8) the way of His holiness was among Israel. (Psalm 77:13; Psalm 104; Psalm 103)

This detailed consideration of what Moses was charged to say, will help us to understand both the preparations for the covenant, and the solemn manner in which it was inaugurated. When Moses intimated to the people the gracious purpose of God, they declared their readiness to obey what God had spoken. But as the Lord could only enter into covenant with the people through the mediation of Moses, on account of their weakness and sinfulness, He spoke in a thick cloud with His servant before them all, so that they might see and hear, and for ever afterwards believe. As previously indicated, the outward preparations of the people were twofold. First, they underwent certain purifications, symbolical of inward cleansing. Secondly, bounds were set round Sinai, so that none might break through nor touch the mountain.* Then, on the third day,** Moses led forth the men, and placed them "at the nether part of the mount," "that burned with fire." There God proclaimed His holy and eternal law amidst portentous signs, which indicated that He was great and terrible in His holiness, and a jealous God, though the fire of His wrath and zeal was enwrapt in a dense cloud.

* When we read in Exodus 19:54, "let not the priests and the people break through," we are to understand by the former expression not the Aaronic priesthood, which had not yet been instituted, but those who hitherto discharged priestly functions - probably the heads of houses.

** According to Jewish tradition this was the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover. Edersheim. Vol 2. Ch 10)

BIBLE MAPS
ISRAEL'S EXODUS FROM EGYPT AND ENTRY INTO CANAAN



1. **Rameses** Israel was thrust out of Egypt (Ex. 12; Num. 33:5).
2. **Succoth** After the Hebrews left this first campsite, the Lord attended them in a cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:20-22).
3. **Pi-hahiroth** Israel passed through the Red Sea (Ex. 14; Num. 33:8).
4. **Marah** The Lord healed the waters of Marah (Ex. 15:23-26).
5. **Elim** Israel camped by 12 springs (Ex. 15:27).
6. **Wilderness of Sin** The Lord sent manna and quail to feed Israel (Ex. 16).
7. **Rephidim** Israel fought with Amalek (Ex. 17:8-16).
8. **Mount Sinai (Mount Horeb or Jebel Musa)** The Lord revealed the Ten Commandments (Ex. 19-20).
9. **Sinai Wilderness** Israel constructed the tabernacle (Ex. 25-30).
10. **Wilderness Camps** Seventy elders were called to help Moses govern the people (Num. 11:16-17).
11. **Ezion-geber** Israel passed through the lands of Esau and Ammon in peace (Deut. 2).
12. **Kadesh-barnea** Moses sent spies into the promised land; Israel rebelled and failed to enter the land; Kadesh served as the main camp of Israel for many years (Num. 13:1-3, 17-33; 14; 32:8; Deut. 2:14).
13. **Eastern Wilderness** Israel avoided conflict with Edom and Moab (Num. 20:14-21; 22-24).

- 14. Arnon River** Israel destroyed the Canaanites who fought against them (Deut. 2:24-37).
- 15. Mount Nebo** Moses viewed the promised land (Deut. 34:1-4). Moses delivered his last three sermons (Deut. 1-32).
- 16. Plains of Moab** The Lord told Israel to divide the land and dispossess the inhabitants (Num. 33:50-56).
- 17. Jordan River** Israel crossed the Jordan River on dry ground. Near Gilgal, stones from the bottom of the Jordan River were placed as a monument of Jordan's waters being divided (Josh. 3-5).
- 18. Jericho** The children of Israel possessed and destroyed the city (Josh. 6).

CHAPTER 20

The Lord reveals the Ten Commandments—Israel is to bear witness that the Lord has spoken from heaven—They are forbidden to make gods of silver and gold—They are to make altars of unhewn stones, and to sacrifice to the Lord thereon. (When were the 10 Commandments first given? To Adam.

Variations of these laws are given in the rules laid down in Leviticus and Deuteronomy as they are applied to specific matters, but generally they form the foundation for all proper human conduct. The first four commandments show him his proper relationship to God. The fifth commandment establishes the importance of the family and proper family relationships. The last five commandments regulate man's relationships with his fellowmen. A man who has committed himself to the perfecting of his relationship with God, family, and fellowman is well on his way to perfection in all things. Institute Manual, p. 127.)

1 AND God ^aspake all these ^bwords, saying,

2 ^aI am the ^bLORD thy ^cGod, which have brought thee out of the land of ^dEgypt, out of the house of ^ebondage.

SCRIPTURE MASTERY: 3 Thou shalt have ^ano other ^bgods before me. (If God is not first, then all other things are affected. Nothing in life, not even such treasured things as families or even life itself, can take priority, or come before, God. His power is only power that can save us.)

4 Thou shalt ^anot make unto thee any ^bgraven ^cimage, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:

5 Thou shalt not ^abow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a ^bjealous (Heb *qannah*, possessing sensitive and deep feelings) God, ^cvisiting the ^diniquity of the ^efathers upon the ^fchildren (ie insofar as the children learn and do the sinful things the parents do; but see v. 6 concerning those who repent and serve the Lord) unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that ^ghate me; (Modern idols or false gods can take such forms as clothes, homes, businesses, machines, automobiles, pleasure boats, and numerous other material deflectors from the path to godhood.)

6 And shewing ^amercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my ^bcommandments.

7 Thou shalt not take the ^aname of the LORD thy God in ^bvain; for the LORD will not hold him ^cguiltless that ^dtaketh his name in vain. (ie utters an oath or makes a promise using the Lord's name without valid purpose) (When a person is baptized and covenants to take the name of Christ upon himself, if he forgets that solemn oath made at baptism, he has taken the name of the Lord in vain. **How** you speak says much about who you are. Clean and intelligent language is evidence of a bright and wholesome mind. Use language that uplifts, encourages, and compliments others. Do not insult others or put them down, even in joking. Speak kindly and positively about others so you can fulfill the Lord's commandment to love one another. When you use good language, you invite the Spirit to be with you. Always use the names of God and Jesus Christ with reverence and respect. Misusing their names is a sin. Profane, vulgar, or crude language or gestures, as well as jokes about immoral actions, are offensive to the Lord and to others. Foul language harms your spirit and degrades you. Do not let others influence you to use it. Choose friends who use good language. Help others around you use clean language by your example and by good-naturedly encouraging them to choose other words. Politely walk away or

change the subject when others around you use bad language. If you have developed the habit of swearing, you can break it. Begin by making a decision to change. Pray for help. If you start to use words you know are wrong, keep quiet or say what you have to say in a different way. Strength of Youth, 22-23)

8 Remember the ^asabbath (Heb stopping, cessation, rest (from labor)) day, to keep it ^bholy. (Once each week man is commanded to cease his own labors and allow God to perform his work of sanctification on him. Resting on the Sabbath, then, implies far more than taking a nap or stopping normal activities. Mankind must enter into the Lord's work on that day. The Lord has given the Sabbath day for your benefit and has commanded you to keep it holy. Observing the Sabbath will bring you closer to the Lord and to your family. It will give you needed rest and rejuvenation. Many uplifting activities are appropriate for the Sabbath. Worship the Lord, attend church, spend quiet time with your family, study the gospel, write letters, write in your journal, do family history work, and visit the sick or homebound. Your dress before, during, and after church meetings should show respect for the Sabbath. When seeking a job, share with your potential employer your desire to attend your Sunday meetings and keep the Sabbath day holy. Many employers value employees with these personal convictions. Whenever possible, choose a job that does not require you to work on Sundays. Sunday is not a holiday or a day for recreation or athletic events. Do not seek entertainment or spend money on this day. Let your friends know what your standards are so they will not try to persuade you to participate in activities that are not appropriate for the Sabbath. For the Strength of Youth, 32-33)

9 ^aSix days shalt thou ^blabour, and do all thy work:

10 But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy ^astranger (or sojourner) that *is* within thy gates:

11 For *in* ^asix days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD ^bblessed the sabbath day, and ^challowed it (or sanctified, or consecrated).

SCRIPTURE MASTERY: **12** ¶ ^aHonour (or respect, or value) thy ^bfather and thy ^cmother: that thy ^ddays may be ^elong upon the ^fland which the LORD thy God giveth thee. (Anytime a child lives wickedly he brings shame to his parents, whether or not the parents are righteous. So, honoring parents may not always imply obeying them. In those relatively few cases where parents may ask for or encourage unrighteous behavior in their children, the individual brings dishonor to his parents if he obeys them.)

13 Thou shalt not ^akill. (Heb murder)] (“In a pertinent statement set forth in a message of the First Presidency to the Church during World War II and delivered at the general conference on April 6, 1942, this subject was fully discussed. This was delivered at a time when nearly one hundred thousand Latter-day Saint youths were engaged in or were undergoing training for combat in the most destructive war in all history. I quote here from that message (pages 32–36): “. . . the Church is and must be against war. The Church itself cannot wage war, unless and until the Lord shall issue new commands. It cannot regard war as a righteous means of settling international disputes; these should and could be settled—the nations agreeing—by peaceful negotiation and adjustment. “But the Church membership are citizens or subjects of sovereignties over which the Church has no control. The Lord himself has told us [D&C 98:4–7]. “While by its terms this revealed word related more especially to this land of America, nevertheless the principles announced are world-wide in their application, and they are specifically addressed to “you” (Joseph Smith), “and your brethren of my church.” When, therefore, constitutional law, obedient to these principles, calls the manhood of the Church into the armed service of any country to which they owe allegiance, their highest civic duty requires that they meet that call. If, harkening to that call and obeying those in command over them, they shall take the lives of those who fight against them, that will not make of them murderers, nor subject them to the penalty that God has prescribed for those who kill. . . . For it would be a cruel God that would punish his children as moral sinners for acts

done by them as the innocent instrumentalities of a sovereign whom he had told them to obey and whose will they were powerless to resist. “The whole world is in the midst of a war that seems the worst of all time. This Church is a world-wide Church. Its devoted members are in both camps. They are the innocent war instrumentalities of their warring sovereignties. On each side they believe they are fighting for home, and country and freedom. On each side, our brethren pray to the same God, in the same name, for victory. Both sides cannot be wholly right; perhaps neither is without wrong. God will work out in his own sovereign way the justice and right of the conflict, but he will not hold the innocent instrumentalities of the war, our brethren in arms, responsible for the conflict. This is a major crisis in the world-life of man. God is at the helm.” “There is, then, a vast difference in destroying life while acting under the mandate of a sovereign nation whom we are in duty bound to obey and wantonly killing on our own responsibility. It would be well for every young man called to military service to study carefully the above quoted statement of the First Presidency.” (Lee, in “The Sixth Commandment,” Part 2, *The Ten Commandments Today*, pp. 93–94.))

14 Thou shalt not commit ^aadultery. (Physical intimacy between husband and wife is beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife. God has commanded that sexual intimacy be reserved for marriage. When you obey God’s commandment to be sexually pure, you prepare yourself to make and keep sacred covenants in the temple. You prepare yourself to build a strong marriage and to bring children into the world as part of a loving family. You protect yourself from the emotional damage that always comes from sharing physical intimacies with someone outside of marriage. Do not have any sexual relations before marriage, and be completely faithful to your spouse after marriage. Satan may tempt you to rationalize that sexual intimacy before marriage is acceptable when two people are in love. That is not true. In God’s sight, sexual sins are extremely serious because they defile the power God has given us to create life. The prophet Alma taught that sexual sins are more serious than any other sins except murder or denying the Holy Ghost (see Alma 39:5). Before marriage, do not do anything to arouse the powerful emotions that must be expressed only in marriage. Do not participate in passionate kissing, lie on top of another person, or touch the private, sacred parts of another person’s body, with or without clothing. Do not allow anyone to do that with you. Do not arouse those emotions in your own body. In cultures where dating or courting is acceptable, always treat your date with respect, never as an object to be used for your lustful desires. Stay in areas of safety where you can easily control your physical feelings. Do not participate in talk or activities that arouse sexual feelings. Homosexual activity is a serious sin. If you find yourself struggling with same-gender attraction, seek counsel from your parents and bishop. They will help you. Victims of rape, incest, or other sexual abuse are not guilty of sin. If you have been a victim of any of these crimes, know that you are innocent and that God loves you. Seek your bishop’s counsel immediately so he can help guide you through the process of emotional healing. If you are tempted to commit sexual transgressions, seek help from your parents, your bishop, and friends you can trust. Pray to the Lord, who will help you resist temptation and overcome inappropriate thoughts and feelings. If you have committed sexual transgressions, begin the process of repentance now so you can find inner peace and have the full companionship of the Spirit. Seek the Lord’s forgiveness. Talk with your bishop. He will help you obtain the forgiveness available to those who truly repent. For the Strength of Youth, 26-28)

15 Thou shalt not ^asteal. (President Spencer W. Kimball said: “In public office and private lives, the word of the Lord thunders: ‘Thou shalt not steal: . . . nor do anything like unto it.’ (D&C 59:6.) “We find ourselves rationalizing in all forms of dishonesty, including shoplifting, which is a mean, low act indulged in by millions who claim to be honorable, decent people. “Dishonesty comes in many other forms: in hijacking, in playing upon private love and emotions for filthy lucre; in robbing money tills or stealing commodities of employers; in falsifying accounts; in taking advantage of other taxpaying people by misuse of food stamps and false claims; in taking unreal exemptions; in government or private

loans without intent to repay; in unjust, improper bankruptcies to avoid repayment of loans; in robbing on the street or in the home money and other precious possessions; in stealing *time*, giving less than a full day of honest labor for a full day's compensation; in riding without paying the fare; and in all forms of dishonesty in all places and in all conditions. "To all thieveries and dishonest acts, the Lord says, 'Thou shalt not steal.' Four short common words He used. Perhaps He wearied of the long list He could have made of ways to steal, misrepresent, and take advantage, and He covered all methods of taking that which does not properly belong to one by saying, 'Thou shalt not steal.'" ("A Report and a Challenge," *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, p. 6.)

16 Thou shalt not bear ^afalse witness against thy ^bneighbour. ("To bear false witness is to testify to or to pass along *reports, insinuations, speculations, or rumors* as if they were true, to the hurt of a fellow human being. Sometimes the practice stems from a lack of correct information—sometimes from lack of understanding—sometimes from misunderstandings—sometimes from a vicious disposition to distort and misrepresent. "Whereas murder involves the taking of human life, *bearing false witness* centers in the destruction of character or its defamation. It reaches to the ruin of reputation." (Adam S. Bennion, in "The Ninth Commandment," Part 1, *The Ten Commandments Today*, pp. 134–36.) Be honest with yourself, others, and the Lord. When you are honest in every way, you build strength of character that will allow you to be of great service to God and others. You will be blessed with peace of mind and self-respect. When you are honest, you will be trusted by the Lord and by those around you. Dishonesty hurts you and usually hurts others as well. When you lie, steal, shoplift, or cheat, you damage your spirit and become less able to do good things. Be honest in your job, giving a full amount of work for your pay. Don't rationalize that wrong is right, even though many people around you may think there is no harm in being dishonest. Being honest requires courage and commitment to do what you know is right. For the Strength of Youth, 31)

17 Thou shalt not ^acovet (Heb desire, take pleasure in) thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's ^bwife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's. ("This is the last of the Ten Commandments, and if it were not so involved with all the others, some might suppose it to be one of the least. But all the commandments are so intertwined that none can be broken without weakening all the others. To illustrate (and to remind ourselves of the other nine): "He who covets the mere material 'things' of life may have 'other gods before him,' and may 'bow down before them,' in thought and in spirit, if not in physical fact. "He who covets may become coarse and careless in other things also, such as taking 'the name of the Lord God in vain.' "He who covets may desecrate the Sabbath day to get gain. "He who covets may fail to sustain his father and his mother in their need. "Some who have coveted have killed to get gain. "Many who have coveted a 'neighbour's wife' have committed the grievous sin of adultery. "He who covets is more likely to steal (or to swindle or embezzle or engage in sharp practices). "He who covets may bear false witness to get gain. "And so again: The tenth commandment is inseparably integrated with all the others, and coveting could lead to infraction of all the others—for there is a wholeness in life in which each part complements the other. And there is a wholeness and harmony in the word of God, and it all comes from the same source. And whenever we ignore any divine counsel or commandment, we can be sure that we weaken ourselves and increase our susceptibility to other sins. . . . "The commandment against covetousness does not mean that we should not have a wholesome discontent or a wholesome desire to improve ourselves or our situation. It does not mean that we should not have an honest ambition to have more of the better things of life. It does not mean that we may not admire what our neighbor has, and seek by our own industry to earn things of like worth. The earth holds plenty for all—and the urge to acquire for ourselves such good things as other men have is a productive quality of character—provided that we acquire them by honest effort, by lawful means, and by keeping life well-balanced. The danger comes when mere 'things' begin to matter too much." (Richard L. Evans, in "The Tenth Commandment," Part 1, *The Ten Commandments Today*, p. 142–44.) The scriptures contain an interesting definition of coveting. Paul, on two occasions, equated coveting with idolatry (see Ephesians

5:5; Colossians 3:5). The implication is that when one sets his heart on things of the world to the point that allegiance to God and His principles no longer matters, then material things become as a god to that person; he follows after them or worships them, and this practice is the same as idolatry. The Lord said that idolatry was a major characteristic of this generation (see D&C 1:16). Samuel told Saul that sin and iniquity were also idolatry (see 1 Samuel 15:23) Institute Manual 134-35)

18 ¶ And all the people ^asaw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people ^bsaw it, they ^cremoved, and stood afar off.

19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God ^aspeak with us, lest we die.

20 And Moses said unto the people, ^aFear not: for ^bGod is ^ccome to ^dprove you, and ^ethat (or because respect for him will always be present with you, you will not sin) his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

22 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have ^atalked with you from heaven. (They heard God's voice but did not see Him.)

23 Ye shall not make ~~awith me~~ (unto you) ^bgods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

24 ¶ An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt ^asacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

25 And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn ^astone: (The stones for the altar cannot be cut. They must be natural stones.) for if thou lift up thy ^btool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

26 Neither shalt thou go up by ^asteps (ie a ramp was rather to be provided) unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not ^bdiscovered (or revealed) thereon. THE impression produced upon the people by the phenomena accompanying God's revelation of His law was so deep, that they entreated that any further Divine communication might be made through the mediatorship of Moses. As Peter, when the Divine power of the Lord Jesus suddenly burst upon him, (Luke 5:8) felt that he, a sinful man, could not stand in the presence of his Lord, so were the children of Israel afraid of death, if they continued before God. But such feelings of fear have nothing spiritual in themselves. While Moses acceded to their request, he was careful to explain that the object of all they had witnessed had not been the excitement of fear (Exodus 20:20), but such searching of heart as might issue, not in slavish apprehension of outward consequences, but in that true fear of God, which would lead to the avoidance of sin. And now Moses stood once more alone in the "thick darkness, where God was." The ordinances then given him must be regarded as the final preparation for that covenant which was so soon to be ratified. (Exodus 24) For, as the people of God, Israel must not be like the other nations. Alike in substance and in form, the conditions of their national life, the fundamental principles of their state, and the so-called civil rights and ordinances which were to form the groundwork of society, must be Divine. To use a figure: Israel was God's own possession. Before hallowing and formally setting it apart, God marked it out, and drew the boundary lines around His property. Such was the object and the meaning of the ordinances, (Exodus 20:22; 23) which preceded the formal conclusion of the covenant, recorded in Exodus 24: Accordingly the principles and "judgments" (21:1), or rather the "rights" and juridical arrangements, on which national life and civil society in Israel were based, were not only infinitely superior to anything known or thought of at the time, but such as to embody the solid and abiding principles of national life for all times. And in truth they underlie all modern legislation, so that the Mosaic ordinances are, and will remain, the grand model on which civil society is constructed.* * Fully to understand the sublime principles of the Mosaic, or rather the Divine Law, they must be examined in detail. This, of course, is impossible in this place. Without entering into details, we note the general arrangement of these ordinances. They were preceded by a general indication of the manner in which Israel was to worship God. (Exodus 20:22-26) As God had spoken to Israel "from heaven," so they were not to make any

earthly representation of what was heavenly. On the other hand, as God would "come unto" them - from heaven to earth, and there hold intercourse with them, the altar which was to rise from earth towards heaven was to be simply "an altar of earth" (ver. 24), or if of stones, of such as were in the condition in which they had been found in the earth. Moreover, as the altar indicated that place on earth where God would appear for the purpose of blessing Israel, it was only to be reared where God recorded His name, that is, where He appointed it. In other words, their worship was to be regulated by His manifestation in grace, and not by their own choice or preferences. For grace lies at the foundation of all praise and prayer. The sacrifices and worship of Israel were not to procure grace; grace had been the originating cause of their worship. And so it ever is. "We love Him, because He first loved us," and the gift of His dear Son to us sinners is free and unconditional on the part of the Father, and makes our return unto Him possible. And because this grace is free, it becomes man all the more to serve God with holy reverence, which should show itself even in outward demeanor (ver. 26). Edersheim, Vol 2, Ch 11)

President Thomas S. Monson: "Although the world has changed, the laws of God remain constant. They have not changed; they will not change. The Ten Commandments are just that— commandments. They are not suggestions. They are every bit as requisite today as they were when God gave them to the children of Israel" ("Stand in Holy Places," Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2011, 83)

The revelation of God's will, which Israel heard from Mount Sinai, is contained in the ten commandments, or, as they are called in the Hebrew original, "the ten words."* These were prefaced by this declaration of what Jehovah was and what He had done:

"I am Jehovah thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Exodus 20:2)

* The Decalogue, comp. Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13.

This (as Calvin says) "to prepare the souls of the people for obedience." The "ten words" were afterwards written on two tables of stone, which were to be kept within the ark of the covenant, "the mercy-seat" being significantly placed over them. (Exodus 25:16; 40:20) **It is not easy to say how they were arranged on these two tables, but not improbably the first four "words" with "the Preface" (in ver. 1) may have occupied the first, and the other six commandments the second Table of the Law.*** But we only know for certain, that "the tables were written on both their sides, on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables."**

* Most likely not the whole of each commandment, but in every case only the actual direction (such as "Thou shalt not steal") was graven on the tables. This would give in the Hebrew, for the first four commandments, along with the "Preface," seventy-three words, and for the other six commandments thirty-one words. It is well known that the Roman Catholics and the Lutheran Church combine the two first commandments into one, and divide the tenth into two. But for this there is not the shadow of ground or authority, either in the Hebrew text or even in Jewish tradition.

** Exodus 32:15, 16. When we read that the law was "received by the ministration of angels" (Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2), we are not to understand by it that God Himself did not speak all these words, but either to refer it to those "ten thousands" of angels who were His attendants when He spoke on Sinai (Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalm 68:17); or, more probably, to the difference between the Old and the New Testament dispensations. In the former, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity appeared only in the Angel of the Covenant; in the latter, he became incarnate in the Person of Jesus Christ, the God-Man.

Considering more closely these "ten words", of the covenant," we notice, first, their number, ten, as that of completeness. Next, we see that the fifth commandment (to honor our parents) forms a

transition from the first to the second table - the first table detailing our duties towards God; the second those towards man. But our duty to our parents is higher than that towards men generally; indeed, in a certain sense is Divine, just as the relationship to an earthly father symbolizes that to our Father in heaven. Hence the command is to honor, whereas our duty to men only requires us to love them. Again, almost all the commands are put in a negative form ("thou shalt not"), implying that transgression, not obedience, is natural to us. But "the commandment is exceeding broad," and requires a corresponding right state of mind. Accordingly we find that the law of the ten commandments is summed up in this. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself." Lastly, the first five "words" have always some reason or motive attached to them. Not so those of the second table, which are mostly put quite generally, to show that such commands as, not to kill, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to bear false witness, are intended to apply to all possible cases, and not only to friends or fellow-citizens.

Passing from general considerations to particulars, we find that the "first word" not only forbids all idolatry in thought, word, and deed, but enjoins to love, fear, serve, and cleave to the Lord. (Deuteronomy 6:5, 13; 10:12, 20) The "second word" shows the manner in which the Lord will be served - more particularly, not under any image or by any outward representation. As Calvin remarks, it condemns "all fictitious worship which men have invented according to their own minds," and not according to the word of God. The "third word" forbids the profaning of the name of Jehovah, in which He has manifested His glory, by using it either for untruth or in vain words, that is, either in false or idle swearing, in cursing, in magic, or such like. The "fourth word", which implies a previous knowledge of the Sabbath on the part of Israel, enjoins personal, domestic, and public rest from all manner of labor on God's holy day, which is to be spent in His service and for His glory. The "fifth word" directs honor to parents as (in the language of Luther) "the vicars of God," and hence implies similar reverence towards all God's representatives, especially magistrates and rulers. The Second Table progresses from outward deed (in the sixth, seventh, and eighth "words") to speech (ninth commandment), and finally to thought and desire. The "sixth, seventh, and eighth words" apply equally to what may injure our own life, chastity, or property, and those of others. The "ninth word" should be literally translated: "Thou shalt not answer against thy neighbor as a false witness" (or "as a witness of falsehood"). Comparing this with the statement in Deuteronomy 5:20, where the expression is "a witness of vanity," we gather that not only all untrue, but all unfounded statements against our neighbor are included in this commandment. Lastly, the "tenth word" sounds the inmost depths of our hearts, and forbids all wrong and inordinate desires in reference to anything that is our neighbor's.*

* In Deuteronomy 5:21 two different expressions are used - the "desire" being awakened from without by that which is seen to be beautiful; while the "coveting" springs from within - from the evil inclinations or supposed requirements of him who covets.

Such law was never given by man; never dreamed of in his highest conceptions. Had man only been able to observe it, assuredly not only life hereafter but happiness and joy here would have come with it. As it was, it brought only knowledge of sin. Yet, for ever blessed be God: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17) Edersheim, Vol 2, Ch 10)