

## *Exodus Study and Discussion Questions*

### *Lesson Four: Sinai: Decalogue and Book of the Covenant – Exodus 19-24*

Read Exodus 19.

- 1) In Exodus 19:5-6, what did the Lord demand of the Israelites and promise in return? **The Lord demanded full obedience to His covenant. If the Israelites obeyed Him, He promised to make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**
- 2) According to 19:9-15, what instructions were the Israelites given to prepare them to be in God's presence? What did God do to teach Israel that He is holy? **The Israelites were told to wash their clothes, keep a distance from the mountain, and consecrate themselves (including fasting from sexual activity). On the third day, Mount Sinai was surrounded by a dense cloud, thunder and lightening. As the Lord descended in fire, the mountain was covered in heavy, black smoke and trembled. Twice, the Lord warned the people to keep a physical distance (19:12-13, 21-24). This warning and His intimidating display instructed Israel in His holy nature.**
- 3) Exodus 19:23 says the people were to set apart Mount Sinai as holy.
  - a) Define holiness. **God is higher than and entirely different in essence from any created being or object. American Heritage Dictionary (ahdictionary.com): "1) "Belonging to, derived from, or associated with a divine power; sacred. 2) Regarded with veneration or specified for a religious purpose. 3) Living or undertaken with highly moral or spiritual purpose. 4) Regarded as deserving special respect or reverence." Online Etymology Dictionary: "Primary (pre-Christian) meaning is not possible to determine, but it was probably 'that [which] must be preserved whole or intact, that cannot be transgressed or violated...'"**
  - b) Have you ever been tempted to lose reverence for God's holiness? How can one see God as a "devouring fire" (Exodus 19:18; Hebrews 12:29) and yet desire intimacy with Him (Hebrews 10:22; 1 John 4:16-18; Revelation 3:20)? **To see God as holy is to live repentant lives, so that nothing comes between Him and us. His provision of salvation through Jesus should draw each of us to Him in love and gratitude, for on our own, we are incapable of living in obedience to Him. Personal sharing**

Read Exodus 20:1-17.

- 4) Restate each of the Ten Commandments (the "Decalogue") as simply as possible.

1) Have no gods except Me	2) Don't make or worship any idol/image
3) Don't misuse My Name	4) Keep the Sabbath
5) Honor your parents	6) Do not murder
7) Do not commit adultery	8) Do not steal
9) Do not lie about anyone	10) Don't covet what others have

- 5) What does the Decalogue teach us about the Lord? **The Decalogue (meaning "ten words" [covenants were called "words"]) teaches us the following: God is unique. No one compares to Him, is like Him, or is worthy of worship besides Him. Therefore, He is justly jealous of our worship. Since He is holy, He must punish sin; but His expression of everlasting love far exceeds His punishment of the unrighteous. Because He is holy, even His name should not be misused (for it represents His character). As Creator, He has the right to set apart one day as holy and to expect us to honor it with glad obedience.**

- 6) Use your own words or phrases to summarize the Ten Commandments' instructions about how we ought to treat one another. Who, in particular, will you ask the Lord to help you treat in this manner? (Guard against slandering this person when offering your answer in group discussion. It may be best not to give the person's name.) **According to the Ten Commandments, we should treat others with honor, love, and unselfishness. In sum, we should put others' best interests above our own. Personal sharing**

Read Exodus 20:18-26.

- 7) In Exodus 20:20, Moses told the people, "God has come to test you..." Consider the context in which these words were spoken (from 20:18, as well as chapter 19) and the goal of the test stated in 20:20. What was the test? **The test mentioned in Exodus 20:20 may have initially been to see if Israel would obey God, in reverent fear, by not approaching the mountain (19:12-13; 19:21). But the "test" was surely ongoing, not merely for that moment. They received a visual – the awesome sights and sounds they experienced at this moment at Sinai – that was to impact them throughout their lives, a visual of God's glory to "keep them from sinning." Would they keep this visual in mind whenever tempted to break a commandment? If so, God says their fear of Him would keep them from sinning. Sadly, Israel failed this test, time and again, in the desert. Finally, in the context of 16:4-5 (the manna incident in which God said, "I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions"), God's commands are always tests to expose what is in the hearts of people – glad obedience or rebellion.**
- 8) Israel received a revelation of God on Mount Sinai that was new to them. God's children continue to experience new revelations (understanding or insight) about His character and will as we study His word and grow in our faith. How are such new revelations also tests for us? What new revelation about God is currently testing you? **Anytime we learn something new about God, we are tested by how we respond to what we learn. Our response reveals our hearts' attitude toward God. For example, as my knowledge of God's love increases, confidence in His love should result in deeper peace in my heart and greater love shown toward others. If I discover God has a plan for me that is different than what I thought, I should change my plans to line up with His. Personal sharing.**

Read Questions 9-10 below. Keeping them in mind, skim Exodus 21-23. These chapters record "The Book of the Covenant" (see Exodus 24:7). It is the *civil law* the Lord gave to govern His people.

- 9) Give six or more examples of how the civil law encouraged the Israelites to live honest, loving, and holy lives. **Examples include the following: The law required that a servant who fulfilled his service but chose to remain a slave to protect his family from being forcibly separated be able to do so (21:5). The law protected a woman from being abandoned (since, in their patriarchal society, she would become destitute [21:7]). The law concerning a bull goring a man or woman to death required the owner to protect his other neighbors at his own expense (the loss of his bull, 21:28). The death of an animal, while in the care of a neighbor, was to be resolved by an oath, in which the neighbor would vow their innocence in the animal's death. The animal's owner was required to accept his neighbor's word as truth and not demand restitution (22:11). Another law required a man who slept with a virgin to marry her. In that culture, she would have otherwise become an outcast (22:16). 22:21-23 states that the Israelites were not to take advantage of foreigners, widows, or orphans. 22:25 says not to charge interest when lending money to someone in need. The law also required that the lender graciously return a cloak given as security at sundown (thus, putting the poor borrower's needs ahead of his own interests). 23:2-9 required the Israelites to do right, ensure justice, live with integrity, and not oppress an alien. 23:10 allowed the poor to eat off the wealth of others. 23:12 ensured animals were treated well. 23:14-19 instructed the people to hold three celebrations annually, giving the Lord the worship due Him, but also bringing cheer to their hearts and the hearts of their neighbors. 22:31 summarizes, "You are to be my holy people."**

- 10) Cite specific phrases in the Book of the Covenant that express graciousness or mercy. 21:10, “he must not deprive”; 22:21, “do not mistreat”; 22:22-23, “do not take advantage of... I will certainly hear their cry”; 22:27, “I will hear, for I am compassionate”; 23:9, “you yourselves know how it feels”; 23:12, “so that (they)...may be refreshed”; 23:14-16, “celebrate.”
- 11) Consider that the following two passages bring the Book of the Covenant into focus:
- Exodus 21:23-24 gives a law of retaliation that promotes equity. How does this law summarize the attitude of all the other laws? An “*eye for an eye*” promotes justice (fairness) by *limiting* punishment so that it does not exceed the crime (21:23). All the laws had justice (equity) as their end.
  - In Matthew 22:34-40, Jesus summarized the entire law with two principles. What are these guiding principles? “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “love your neighbor as yourself.”

Read Exodus 23:20-24:18.

- 12) From Exodus 23:20-33, summarize the list of things the Lord said He would do if His people listened to Him and obeyed. God said that if the Israelites carefully listened to and obeyed Him, He would go ahead of them and bring them into Canaan, provide for their physical needs, protect them from illness, give them long life, establish their borders, and oppose and drive out their enemies, causing them to fear Israel.
- 13) What does Exodus 24:7 have in common with Exodus 19:8 and 24:3? In all these passages, the people agreed to obey the Lord.
- 14) What sealed the covenant between God and Israel, according to Exodus 24:8? Blood (Moses sprinkled blood on the people).
- 15) Read Deuteronomy 32:46-47, Psalm 1:1-3; 19:7-8; 119:1-8, 97-106, and James 1:22-25. What attitudes toward the Law (the word of God) are expressed? Do you share these attitudes? Why or why not? Moses said the words of God are “life.” David said the Law was his delight; it made his life better. James said that blessing results from keeping God’s word. All of these passages express zeal for the Law (the word of God). Personal sharing