EXODUS

Chapter 19

*At Mount Sinai*

**In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on the very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. 2 After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. 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. 5 Now 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.” 7 So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak. 8 The people all responded together, “We will do everything the Lord has said.” So Moses brought their answer back to the Lord. 9 The Lord said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you.” Then Moses told the Lord what the people had said. 10 And the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes 11 and be ready by the third day, because on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, ‘Be careful that you do not 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.” 25 So Moses went down to the people and told them.**

**19:2** *Desert of Sinai.* Located in the southeast region of the peninsula (see note on 3:1). The narrator locates there the events recorded in the rest of Exodus, all of Leviticus, and Nu 1:1–10:10. (CSB)

**19:3** *Jacob … Israel.* See note on 1:1. (CSB)

**19:4** *I carried you on eagles’ wings.* The description best fits the female golden eagle. (CSB)

**19:5** *if … then.* The covenant between God and Israel at Mount Sinai is the outgrowth and extension of the Lord’s covenant with Abraham and his descendants 600 years earlier (see chart on “Major Covenants in the OT”). Participation in the divine blessings requires the obedience of faith (see note on Ge 17:9). (CSB)

*my covenant.* See note on Ge 9:9. (CSB)

*out of all nations … my treasured possession.* The equivalent phrases used of Christians in 1Pe 2:9 are “chosen people” and “people belonging to God” (see Dt 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps 135:4; Mal 3:17). (CSB)

*the whole earth is mine.* God is the Creator and Possessor of the earth and everything in it (see Ge 14:19, 22; Ps 24:1–2). (CSB)

**19:6** *kingdom of priests.* Israel was to constitute the Lord’s kingdom (the people who acknowledged him as their King) and, like priests, was to be wholly consecrated to his service (see Isa 61:6; cf. 1Pe 2:5; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). (CSB)

*holy nation.* See 1Pe 2:9. God’s people, both individually and collectively, are to be “set apart” (see note on 3:5) to do his will (see Dt 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19; Isa 62:12). (CSB)

**19:8** *We will do everything the Lord has said.* The people promised to accept the terms of the covenant (see 24:3, 7; Dt 5:27). (CSB)

**19:9** *dense cloud.* See 13:21 and note. *the people will hear me speaking.* See Dt 4:33. (CSB)

*put their trust in you.* See 14:31 and note. (CSB)

**19:10–11** Outward preparation to meet God symbolizes the inward consecration to act as God’s holy people. (CSB)

**19:12–13** The whole mountain becomes holy because of God’s presence (see 3:5 and note). Israel must keep herself from the mountain even as she is to keep herself from the tabernacle (see Nu 3:10). (CSB)

**19:15** *Abstain from sexual relations.* Not because sex is sinful but because it may leave the participants ceremonially unclean (see Lev 15:18; see also 1Sa 21:4–5). (CSB)

**19:16** *thunder … lightning … trumpet blast.* God’s appearance is often accompanied by an impressive display of meteorological sights and sounds (see, e.g., 1Sa 7:10; 12:18; Job 38:1; 40:6; Ps 18:13–14). *thick cloud.* See 13:21 and note. (CSB)

**19:18** *fire … smoke from a furnace.* See Ge 15:17 and note. (CSB)

**19:22** *priests.* See also v. 24. Before the Aaronic priesthood was established (see 28:1), priestly functions were performed either by the elders (see note on 3:16; see also 3:18; 12:21; 18:12) or by designated younger men (see 24:5). But perhaps the verse anticipates the regulations for the Aaronic priests who will be appointed. (CSB)

*who approach the Lord*. To officiate at sacrifices (see 40:32; Lev 21:23). (CSB)