

# Israel Meet Your God

## Exodus 19

**CONTEXT:** So remember that Israel has been delivered from Egypt. We are three months into the story. Most of the 40 years will be spent at the foot of Mt. Sinai where they are arriving in today's text. The rest of Exodus will be here, all of Leviticus, and much of Deuteronomy will be spent in the Valley below Mt. Sinai. We pick up when they arrived in this temporary home...

### Exodus 19:1–25 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.

You see this sort of “**Time Frame**” language for a couple of reasons in the Bible.

- First, It's forming Israel's **calendar** - many of the festivals that Israel would celebrate would come from the time spent heading to Sinai.
- Second, it's showing us that this was an actual **event** in history. This is NOT - “Once upon a time”. Moses gets very specific about the date of this event. Everything that followed literally happened.

<sup>2</sup> They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, <sup>3</sup> while Moses went up to God.

Mt. Sinai was the place where Moses had first met with God, this is where the Burning Bush experience had occurred. God told him in **Exodus 3:12 (ESV)**  
<sup>12</sup> ...when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

Where here they are - 2 million Hebrews encamped in the wilderness below Mt. Sinai.

3b. The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: <sup>4</sup> ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.

Now this is very important - because God is about to give them the Law. But before he gives them the law God makes it very clear that they were liberated from Egypt, they were saved out of Egypt, by HIS WORK, not there's.

I did this to the Egyptians... I bore you on eagles' wings.... I brought you to myself.

If you are saved, it is because of the work God did. Jonah said it best, “salvation is of the Lord”.

**Jonathan Edwards** said, “*You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary.*”

Salvation is entirely, completely, 100% the work of God. Please understand that.

If you feel like God did most of the work, but you did maybe, 20%, or 10%, you are saying in fact that the death of Jesus Christ on your behalf was insufficient.

God says, “Salvation out of Egypt was all me”. But then he begins talking about what theologians call sanctification. That is how we grow to be more like the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

**Salvation** happens instantly, in a moment in time, and it’s all God’s doing. When you are saved, you are as saved as you are ever going to be. You are as saved as anyone is saved. You are as saved as Billy Graham, you are as saved as the Apostle Paul himself. When you’ve been in Heaven for a million years, you are no more saved than you were the moment you first believed. That’s salvation and it’s all God’s doing.

**Sanctification** is gradual and progressive and it involves a cooperation and co-laboring between you and God.

How does this happen? **Verse 5** - if you will obey my voice. That’s the first part, ordering your life in accordance with God’s Word.

**ILLUSTRATION:** My mom’s favorite pass time has always been putting together puzzles. She loves it, the more complicated and the more pieces the better. If you are going to put a puzzle together, you have to constantly reference the top of the box. You look at the top of the box, you identify an area to tackle, say the sky, so you go find all the blue, then you look for edges, you know.... But you constantly look at the top of the box to decide how to put the puzzle together.

It’s the same way in life, you look to God’s Word, and you move things around.

- You want to know what a good marriage is like???? Look to the Word.
- You want to know how to parent your kids???? Look to the Word.
- You want to know how to build a healthy church???? Look to the Word.

If you will obey my voice?  
Keep my covenant...

Now keeping the covenant involved more than keeping the law of God, it involved

1) the law, 2) the sacrificial system, 3) the choice to follow.

So they are to Obey the Word, Keep the Covenant, Evangelize the World. Look at verse 6 - 6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. What this is saying is that ultimately the nation as a WHOLE would be like Priests for the other nations around them.

Israel was to be a peculiar people, a city sat upon a hill, that the whole earth could come and learn of the gracious God of Israel. Just as God said to Abraham, “through your descendant the entire world shall be blessed”.

that’s why the temple was to be a house of Prayer for all Nations. That’s why a Gentile Court was included in it’s design.

Israel’s great commission was a come and see commission - our’s is a go and tell commission.

So they are to obey, keep covenant, and tell the world.

7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. 8 All the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.”

**G. Campbell Morgan** said of this statement - this was a very sincere and very ignorant commitment. You see just a few weeks later this same group of people will be worshipping a golden calf saying, “This is the god who brought us up out of Egypt”.

8b. And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord. 9 And the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.” When Moses told the words of the people to the Lord, 10 the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments 11 and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

So God says, “I’m going to manifest myself to the people in three days”. Notice the purpose - So that the People will hear when God speaks to Moses and believe. Isn’t that kind of God to accommodate the people’s struggle.

But notice what He says...

12 And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, ‘Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. 13 No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man,

he shall not live.’ When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.”

Folks, when the unseen God, the Ancient of Days - Jehovah Himself makes Himself known, it is a terrifying thing. It is a serious thing. If someone passes the boundary shoot him with an arrow and let him die.

<sup>14</sup> So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. <sup>15</sup> And he said to the people, “Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.”

Notice that preparation is involved in meeting with God. You don’t show up haphazardly. You don’t wake up and decide if you are going to worship or fish. No, this is a serious heart commitment. You read ahead - we are working through the book of Exodus, read it, get familiar with it.

Now think of all that God has said,  
Obey my word, keep covenant with me, be a priest to the world, consecrate yourself and be prepared to meet with me... then look what happens.

<sup>16</sup> On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings

Have you ever been awakened by thunder? Imagine sleeping in a tent like these people were... then suddenly you hear thunder that shakes the ground. Everyone was up... they ran outside and look toward the Mountain... lightening flashing, thunder clapping everywhere...

16b. and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.

This trumpet blast I believe was the very Arch Angel of God - perhaps that same trump of the Lord that will sound at the second coming. This was no warm and fuzzy kumbaya moment. This was terrifying. God had come.

These are called THEOPHANIES by theologians. Manifestations of the unseen God.

- God appears to Jacob as a powerful wrestling warrior.
- God appears to Job as a hurricane.
- God appears to Moses as a blazing fire.
- God appears to Joshua as a man of war armed for battle.
- Read Ezekiel 1, God appears to him in an overwhelming vision that he can hardly describe.
- Later in Exodus 33, Moses says to God, “show me your glory” and God says, “It would kill you”.

Sometimes people say, "I just wish God would show up"... really? It may not go like you think. Imagine, suddenly all of your secrets laid bare before his holy eyes.

You say, but Pastor God is good and loving. Yes, but the Dentist is good and I get scared of the Dentist... how much more should we fear God?

17 Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. 19 And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. 20 The Lord came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Now what is about to happen - God is about to give them the 10 commandments.

But stop for a moment and consider the beckoning and terrifying nature of this encounter with God. Are you sure you want to know God? Are you sure you want to experience Him?

**C.S. Lewis said in his book Miracles**, "An 'impersonal God'-well and good. A subjective God of beauty, truth and goodness, inside our own heads-better still. A formless life-force surging through us, a vast power which we can tap-best of all. But God himself, alive, pulling at the other end of the cord, perhaps approaching at an infinite speed, the hunter, King, husband-that is quite another matter."

There comes a moment when the children who have been playing at burglars hush suddenly: was that a real footstep in the hall? There comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion ('Man's search for God!') suddenly draw back. Supposing we really found Him? We never meant it to come to that! Worse still, supposing He had found us?"

If there is a God you are in a sense alone with Him. You cannot put him off with speculations about your neighbor's hypocrisy, or memories of what you have read in books. What will all that chatter and hearsay count when the anesthetic fog we call the real world fades away **and the divine presence becomes palpable**, immediate and unavoidable?

And to consider, even for a moment, that this God may be offended by your behavior.... It is terrifying and it should be.

OK - so stop for a moment and consider two things.

1. There absolutely terrifying nature of this encounter with God.
2. The fact that this same God bore them on Eagle's wings and Brought them to this point.

He hasn't Brought them into this encounter to destroy them - but to love them. How can these people know THIS GOD and not be destroyed? The answer - a **mediator**.

<sup>21</sup> And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to the Lord to look and many of them perish.

Moses is to go down from the Mountain and serve as a MEDIATOR between God and the people.

AS Jesus walked upon the Earth, we are told that he was had laid aside his Divine prerogative his glory was veiled by his flesh. But there were times it spilled over.

- When Jesus calmed the storm in Mark 4 we read that the disciples were filled with fear and the asked, “who is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”
- In Mark 5 we read where Jesus had cast the demons out of the a man and we read that the people begged Jesus to depart from there land... why? God has showed up and they were terrified.

What happened? The God on the Mountain had visited their town.

When Jesus died on the cross - do you remember what happened? Darkness came down on the Mountain, the Earth trembled... much like what happened in Exodus 19... lest you think I'm drawing an inappropriate analogy... I got the idea from Hebrews 12.

### **CONCLUSION/INVITATION: Hebrews 12:18–24 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest <sup>19</sup> and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. <sup>20</sup> For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” <sup>21</sup> Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” <sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, <sup>23</sup> and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, <sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

What does that mean? The murder of Able was the first unjust murder in the Bible... scripture uses the language of his blood crying out for justice against Cain.

But the blood of Jesus... it speaks a better word. It cries out for grace.

Jesus is the true and better Moses who not only approaches God on behalf of the people, but he gave his life so that you God's wrath wouldn't burn against you.

So now - is God a consuming fire? Yes! Is God in a sense terrifying? Yes!

But peace has been made between you and the God on the Mt by Jesus Christ.