

Lesson 8

THE COVENANT OF SINAI



On their long journey to the Promised Land of Canaan, the Israelites had to pass through the wilderness of Sinai. On the first day of the third month since the Israelites had left Egypt they arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai. They camped there in front of the mountain.

The Lord called Moses from Mount Sinai and said: “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites. You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. **Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples.** Indeed the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites” (Ex. 19:3-6).

So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. The people all answered as one: "Everything that the LORD has spoken we will do" Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD (Ex 19:7-8).

Consecration of God's people

The Lord then said to Moses: "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and prepare for the third day, because on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people" (Ex 19:10-11)

Moses consecrated the people. They washed their clothes and purified themselves as Moses instructed, They waited for the coming of the Lord.

God on mount Sinai

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning. A dense cloud appeared on the mountain. A very loud blast of the trumpet was heard. This made all the people in the camp tremble in fear. When God came down on the mountain with thunder and trumpet blast, the Israelites were terrified out of their wits. They stood away as they were too scared to see or hear Him. They were not bold enough to see for themselves the great glory of the Lord God. They said to Moses: "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die" (Ex. 20:19).

Moses went up to the mountain. God came down on fire and talked to Moses. There He gave to Moses the Ten Commandments. These were the fundamental directives that the Israelites were to observe to be the people of God. The commandments that God gave through Moses were the proof of the mutual relationship between God and the Israelites.

Moses went to the people and gave them the message that God had given for them. These commandments are described in detail in the book of Exodus chapter twenty.

- . I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me.
- . You shall not make wrong use of the name of the Lord your God.
- . Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.
- . Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.
- . You shall not murder.
- . You shall not commit adultery.
- . You shall not steal.
- . You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
- . You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.
- . You shall not covet your neighbour's house, slave, ox, donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbour (Ex. 20:1-17).

Handing over the Commandments

The Lord spoke to Moses: "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instructions" (Ex. 24:12). So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua and went up to the mountain. Before that he had entrusted Aaron with the responsibility of the people of Israel. Moses spent forty days and forty nights. On Mount Sinai. During those days the glory of the Lord was visible there. God gave Moses instructions on various matters. He explained to Moses what laws the people of Israel should follow and what rituals they should perform. He also gave directions regarding the observance of Sabbath for the glory of the Lord. After explaining everything God gave Moses the deed of the covenant. It consisted of two stone tablets with the commandments. These tablets had writings on both sides in God's own hand.

Sealing of the Covenant

The Israelites received gladly the commandments that God gave them through Moses. Moses offered sacrifice to the Lord and sealed the covenant with the blood of the sacrifice. He poured half of the blood in basins and sprinkled the rest on the altar. Then he read the deed of the covenant for all the people to

hear. Then they said. All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient". Then Moses sprinkled the blood on the people, saying: "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words (Ex. 24:6-8).

The commandments are the gift that God, the loving Father, has given to his children. It was the obligation of the people of Israel to accept these commandments gladly and obey them strictly. Moses made this point clear to the people and they gave their word that they would obey them. After this Moses sealed the commandments. Then he went up to the Mount Sinai to receive the tablets.

The people of God entered into the covenant with God with great preparation. Where by the people of Israel truly became the people of God. It was through this act that God fulfilled His words: **"I will take you as my people, and I will be your God"** (Ex. 6:7).

New Covenant and New Commandment

The Church, that is the new Israel, came into being through a new covenant. This covenant was established through Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus established this covenant after giving the new commandment of love during the Last Supper at the Zion hall (Mt. 26:27-28).

This was the new Commandment that Jesus gave us: **"Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"** (John. 13: 34-35).

Jesus came to fulfill the old covenant and the old commandments. He gave a new commandment and established a new covenant. We the children of the church have the obligation to obey the commandment of love that Jesus gave us. Among all the commandments that the world has received, the most beautiful one is Jesus' commandment of love. This commandment of love is the most important one that we, who travel in this world with the Kingdom of Heaven as goal, should obey.

Let us Pray

O Lord who told me to love one another as you have loved, help me to lead a life according to your commandment of love.

Read the word of God and narrate

Narrate the event of the establishment of the covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:1-17).



Word of God for our Guidance

But showing steadfast love to the thousands of generation of those who love me and keep my commandments (Exodus 20:6).

My decision

Like the Israelites who became the people of God by keeping the commandments, I will also live as a son/daughter of God by keeping His commandments.

Let us do

Write down the ten commandments

1.	.....
2.	.....
3.	.....
4.	.....
5.	.....
6.	.....
7.	.....
8.	.....
9.	.....
10.	.....

Let us find out the answer

1. What is the promise that God gave to those who keep the covenant?
2. Which is the place where God gave the commandments to Moses?
3. What is the main content of the ten commandments?
4. What is the new commandment that Jesus gave us?