

## The Impact of Sinai

*The passage (Ex 19:1-25).*—Exodus now presents God as sovereign Lord over the whole life of man. It does this by emphasizing the covenant relationship and mutual responsibilities. Exodus also asserts Yahweh's lordship by the divinely inspired and authoritative character of the law.

*Special points.*—All of the book up to this point has prepared us for the events of Sinai. This is where the author has been leading us. Here is the mountain of God—the object of Moses' dream. Sinai becomes the setting for the sealing of that covenant.

*Truth for today.*—Sinai would hold a sacred and special place in Moses' heart. It was here or near it that Moses himself met the Lord. He was commissioned from this very spot. He had taken off his shoes on this sacred soil. Now he wanted his people to feel something of this divine presence and power. As Moses ascends the holy mount, God calls out to him and offers the covenant. The guarantee of God's faithfulness in the contract is assured by the divine action already experienced by the deliverance from Egypt. Obedience was the responsibility from Israel's side of the covenant. There must be faith and loyalty. In plain language "to keep my covenant" would mean obeying the law. Israel is to be God's personal possession, his elect community. And this covenant is sealed with all the people, not just its leaders or priests.

Israel was intended of God to be "a holy nation." This meant she was set apart for a divine redemptive purpose in history. Israel was to be the church of God. This is the clear teaching in the Old and New Testaments (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

God does not show his face, but he does speak. He verifies the authority and prophetic role of Moses. The cloud was the symbolic representation of God's presence—as indeed it had been on pilgrimage. The cloud would rest over the tabernacle when they move on from Sinai.

The ceremonial cleansing implies the holiness of God and its opposite in men. The distance between man and God is illustrated by the three-day period of purification required for those approaching this God of holiness. This entire passage stresses an inherent and permanent distinction and difference of position between God and man.

And even after ceremonial purification the people do not have the same access as priests. The penalty for violating these sacred restrictions in the tabernacle (and later the Temple) was severe indeed. It was death.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The teacher's Bible commentary*. 1972 (F. H. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs, Ed.) (66–67). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.