

March 2, 2025

“A Kingdom of Priests, A Holy Nation”
Lesson 1

Exodus 19:1-14

Intro

God delivered Israel from 400 years of slavery in Egypt through multiple miracles which showed that the Egyptian “gods” were really powerless. God led His people into the wilderness, protecting and providing for them, finally arriving at Mt. Sinai where God first revealed Himself to Moses. Exodus 19, our passage for today, begins the climactic meeting of God with His redeemed people.

A key aspect in today’s lesson is Moses’ role as mediator. Moses is the one God uses to communicate His plans and commands to the people to form Israel into a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation”, the main point of our lesson, as shown by it being used as the lesson title.

Read Exodus 19:1-14

1. vs. 1: The people have been traveling for two months since they left Egypt
This verse begins the account on the first day of month 3
God told Pharaoh to let the people leave so they could worship Him in the wilderness
This is about to happen
This desert and the places they have been traveling didn’t have natural accesses to water
The people were dependent on God for their needs
2. vs. 2: Rephidim is where Moses struck a rock to provide the people water in Exodus 17
The people hadn’t believed that God would provide for them
Here is one place where God used Moses as His mediator to provide for the people
Rephidim is also the place where the Amalekites attacked Israel when they were vulnerable
This is where Moses raised His arms to show that God was providing victory for them
The people will spend about a year camping here before moving on
3. vs. 3: In the ancient Near Eastern world, high places were considered holy sites
It was believed they were closer to heaven, and the gods were thought to live there
Before the temple was built, the people worshipped God in “high places” (I Kings 3:2)
Solomon’s temple was constructed at a high elevation as a proper place to worship
4. vs. 4: God here declares what He has done to rescue Israel and claim them as His own
The show why Israel is to trust and obey Him: He is the God who delivers
Eagles are powerful and majestic birds
The reference here shows a powerful God who cares for those who need His care
The people didn’t just barely escape Egypt—they were powerfully delivered
5. vs. 5: God here explains His covenant relationship with Israel
God is the one who initiates the covenant, this conditional accord between two parties
If Israel obeys God’s covenant, then they will be His “treasured possession”
Because all the earth is God’s, He can choose Israel to be in this special position

6. vs. 6: This holy status that Israel would have isn't just for their benefit alone
They are to be a "kingdom of priests" for the benefit of the whole world
Because Israel is holy and different from other nations, they will be a light to others
This again shows Moses as the mediator, giving God's words to the people
7. vs. 7: Here Moses gave all of these things God said to "the elders of the people"
This allows Moses to speak to a manageable number of leaders
These leaders will then give this information to their people
This shows Moses to be a faithful servant, doing exactly what God had told Him to do
Vs. 3: "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob..."
8. vs. 8: There is debate about what this verse tells us
The people says "We will do everything the Lord has said"
Did the people hear from their leaders what the stipulations were, and agree to them?
Did they hear God wanted to be in covenant with them, and say they wanted that that too?
By reading all of Ex. 19-20, it seems more likely that the second of these ideas is better
The verse ends with Moses going back up the mountain to speak with God again.
9. vs. 9: God announces that He will make a divine appearance in the form of a dense cloud
He did this in Ex. 13 to show they people that He was protecting them
Here, the purpose is to show the people that Moses has God's authority, is His messenger
God wants the people to trust Moses, now and in the future
10. vs.10-11: God instructs Moses to have the people prepare themselves for receiving His presence
To consecrate means to make holy—the people are to make themselves holy before God
Washings of various types are used in the OT as a way of consecration
Washing of clothes to show holiness is noted multiple times in the OT
They have two days to make the preparations; God will appear on the third day
11. vs. 12: Moses has a task to protect the people by putting a barrier around the mountain
If anyone touches the mountain, they will die
The people are not able to be in God's holy presence without it killing them
Only Moses can go up the mountain—showing Moses has God's authority
12. vs. 13: The warning is extended here—not a person or an *animal* is allowed to touch the mountain
If they do, they are to be stoned or shot with arrows
Both of these allow for distance, so people don't have to touch the mountain
The people are to approach the mountain only when they hear a blast from a ram's horn
It isn't said who blows the horn; it's possible that this is an angel of God
13. vs. 14: The verse says that Moses consecrated the people, but doesn't say how he did this
He obviously told them about the need to wash their clothing, to prepare themselves
This verse again highlights Moses as a faithful servant who does what God tells him to do

Application: By making Israel his “kingdom of priests” and a “holy nation”, God was laying the groundwork to bless the world through the children of Jacob. Israel was unable to keep the covenant perfectly, and fell victim to sin. But God always had a plan for a second covenant, a new covenant, which will be written in our hearts and minds (Jer. 31:31-32). For Christians, this has come true, in and through Jesus. He is the seed of Abraham, to whom the original promise was made that “all peoples on the earth will be blessed.” Christ as God’s Son, is the king of God’s kingdom, the permanent high priest to a kingdom of priests, and is the perfect mediator between God and humanity.

Prayer: Father God, we sometimes feel inadequate as representatives of Your holiness. May we be found to be faithful servants and a royal priesthood despite our shortcomings. We pray this in Jesus’ name, Amen.