

Reformation Fellowship Notes • October 23, 2016
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Handout #18
Exodus 18:13 to 19:25

I. Introduction

- A. Last week's text contained three events that occurred at Rephidim.
1. Israelites ran out of water.
 - a) People became angry at Moses.
 - b) Moses appealed to God.
 - c) God directed Moses to strike a rock with his staff.
 - d) Water poured out.
 2. The Amalekites came against them.
 - a) Joshua fought against the Amalekites.
 - b) Moses stood on a hill with staff raised up.
 - c) Aaron and Hur helped Moses keep his arms raised.
 - d) Israelites routed the Amalekites.
 3. Jethro greets Moses.
 - a) Jethro wants to know all that happened in Egypt.
 - b) Moses told him everything that happened—good and bad.
 - c) Jethro was convinced that YHWH is the one true God.
 - d) Jethro joined Moses and the elders in worshipping YHWH.

II. Exodus 18:13-16

- A. This happened the very next day.
- B. Moses was judging the people.
1. Whoever had a grievance came to him for resolution.
 2. There were so many that it took him all day.
 - a) Why so many?
 - (1) Pent-up grievances
 - (2) Many people, including some non-Israelites
 - (3) Moses' eagerness to have the people learn
 - (4) Contentious people
 3. Jethro was surprised at the amount of time Moses gave to judging.
 4. People want God's decision, so they come to Moses.
 - a) Moses applies God's laws to the grievances.
 - b) Moses is both the legislator and the judge.

III. Exodus 18:17-23

- A. Jethro advises Moses to delegate power to others.
1. It will wear Moses out.

B. Specifics of proposal

1. Moses will remain the final court of appeal.
 - a) He presents complaints to God.
2. Moses will teach the people the laws.
 - a) What God has revealed to Moses or what Moses believes to be sound principles
3. Moses will select qualified men.
 - a) Fear God
 - (1) Men who recognize that they are answerable to God for what they do
 - b) Men of truth
 - (1) Men who care to ground their decisions in what is true
 - c) Hate dishonest gain
 - (1) Men who will not be swayed or influenced to compromise justice
4. A five-level system
 - a) More difficult decisions were to be judged by the more capable and experienced judges.

IV. Exodus 18:24-27

- A. Moses did just as his father-in-law had suggested.
 1. He delegated the responsibility to judge disputes.
 2. Moses continued to judge the difficult cases.
 3. Jethro went back to Midian.
- B. The initiative for delegating came from Jethro.
 1. The Israelites do not just wait for God to speak to them before acting,
 - a) They are on their own for much of what happens.
 2. Jethro is not an Israelite,
 - a) And yet his idea is adopted.
- C. This is one more way in which Moses is granting his power to a wider range of people.

V. Where is Sinai?

- A. Horeb and Sinai
 1. Sometimes used synonymously
 2. Horeb appears to be the range, and Sinai is a peak in the range.
- B. General criteria (This analysis is all according to Hoffmeier.)
 1. Not in Midian, but near Midian

2. About 150-200 miles from Yam Suph (estimated based on wilderness itineraries)
 3. About 165-220 miles from Kadesh Barnea (based on Deuteronomy 1:2)
- C. Various candidates
1. Northern and Central Sinai
 - a) Gebel Helal, Har Karkom, Gebel Sin Bishr
 - b) All are precluded by general criterion #3.
 2. Edom
 - a) Several references in poetry claim that God came from Seir.
 - (1) But this could refer to the glory of God in the tabernacle that came out of Edom before entering the Promised Land.
 - b) This location also struggles to meet general criterion #3.
 3. Northern Arabia
 - a) This location is preferred by those who think Mt. Sinai was volcanic.
 - (1) They think the narrative account is best understood as describing volcanic activity.
 - (2) There has been no volcanic activity in the Sinai Peninsula for millennia.
 - (3) Mt Badr is Humphries' candidate.
 - b) This location is precluded by all three general criteria.
 4. Southern Sinai
 - a) Traditional location
 - b) Has environmental advantages (Israelites were there for about one year)
 - (1) Cooler in summer (8,000 ft)
 - (2) Rain runs off and can be gathered in pools.
 - (3) Pockets of good productive soil
 - c) Gebel Musa and Gebel Serbal are both good candidates.
 - (1) About 30 miles apart
 - d) This appears to be the most probable location.

VI. Exodus 19:1-6

- A. Geographical and chronological context
1. They have been underway for three months.
 - a) It is now June or July.
 2. They have entered the wilderness of Sinai.
 - a) This is the third wilderness they have encountered.
 - (1) Shur, Sin, Sinai
 - (2) We don't know where any of these are for sure.
 - (3) Wilderness of Sinai is presumably the area where Mt. Sinai is located.

- b) They camped at the base of the mountain.
 - (1) The mountain is not named.
 - (2) This is where God had spoken to Moses.
 - (a) The Mountain of God in Exodus 3:1
 - (b) God told Moses he would bring Moses back here to worship (Exodus 3:12).
- c) Moses went up to God.
 - (1) Moses takes the initiative to seek out God.
- 3. God speaks to Moses and makes a proposal.
 - a) God speaks from the mountain.
 - b) The Israelites have seen how God miraculously saved them out of Egypt and brought them to his mountain.
 - (1) They witnessed this with their own eyes.
 - c) If they will be obedient and keep God's commandments, God will make them his special treasure.
 - (1) Kingdom of priests
 - (2) Holy nation
- 4. Moses is supposed to present this proposal to the people.

VII. Exodus 19:7-15

- A. Moses presented this proposal to the elders and all the people.
 - 1. The people said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do!"
- B. Conditions for the consecration of the covenant
 - 1. God will appear in a thick cloud.
 - a) God will not be visible.
 - b) God is too holy to be seen.
 - 2. People must prepare themselves for two days.
 - a) Wash clothes
 - b) Do not go near a woman.
 - 3. No one may touch the mountain.
 - a) Whoever does so will be killed—
 - (1) By stoning or with an arrow
 - (a) Person must not be touched
 - (2) Whether man or beast
 - 4. People will approach the mountain when the ram's horn sounds.
 - a) What does the sound of the trumpet signify?
 - (1) When the profane meets the holy

VIII. Exodus 19:16-17

- A. Natural phenomena announce the presence of God.
 - 1. The morning of the third day
 - 2. Huge thunder storm

- a) Thunder (literally “sounds” or “voices”)
- b) Lightning
- c) Thick cloud
- d) Very loud trumpet sound

- B. Everyone trembled.
 - 1. They approached the mountain.

IX. Exodus 19:18-25

- A. God descended on mountain.
 - 1. It sounds volcano-like.
 - 2. Lord descended in fire.
 - 3. Smoke is like the smoke of a furnace.
 - 4. Mountain quaked violently.
 - 5. Sound of trumpet grew louder.
- B. Three warnings not to go near mountain.
 - 1. Exodus 19:12-13; 21-22; 24
 - 2. Marks this as an important injunction

“The purpose (of the thrice repeated injunction) may be twofold: (a) to stress still further the thought that the boundary between the two spheres, the human and the Divine, is not to be effaced; (b) that it was necessary to repeat the warning at the crucial moment when the Revelation was about to take place.” (Cassuto p. 233)

X. Conclusion

- A. Festival of Weeks
 - 1. One of the seven festivals
 - a) Purpose is not made clear.
 - b) Originally an agricultural festival
 - 2. By the time of Christ, the festival was associated with the giving of the law.
 - a) Dead Sea scrolls
 - b) Chronologically, it corresponds with this event in Exodus.
 - 3. Today it is associated with the giving of the law.
 - 4. This corresponds with Pentecost.
 - a) I believe that there is a divinely intended connection that we are supposed to make between chapter 19 and the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 2.
- B. Holiness of God
 - 1. This chapter stresses the holiness of God.

- a) Prohibitions given to not approach God
 - b) Natural phenomenon that instill fear
2. This is all a physical exercise to help develop a spiritual truth.
- a) God is holy.
 - b) We are profane.
 - (1) We are contaminated.
 - c) The two are incompatible.
 - (1) We need to be purified.
3. God does not enforce the prohibition.
- a) Unlike the manna
 - b) Enforcement is delegated to man.
 - (1) To the extent that society enforces the prohibition, it has reality.
 - (2) To the extent that society does not enforce it, it has no reality.
 - c) This is what God has done with most of his principles.
4. God is easy to dismiss.
- a) He does not actively enforce his principles.
 - b) He is a patient and gracious God.
 - (1) It is easy to think he is our buddy.
 - c) God is a fearsome God.
 - (1) One day he will come in judgment.
 - (2) God will not be mocked!