

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

EX. 34:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon *these* tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.

2 And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount.

3 And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.

4 And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.

5 And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon

the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*.

8 And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.

9 And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it *is* a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.

10 And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou *art* shall see the work of the LORD: for it *is* a terrible thing that I will do with thee.

11 Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

12 Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:

13 But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:

14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God.

NOTES

God Renews His Covenant

Lesson Text: Exodus 34:1-14

Related Scriptures: Exodus 32:1-6, 15-35; Nehemiah 9:1-25;
Deuteronomy 5:1-10; 7:1-11; Judges 1:27—2:5

TIME: 1445 B.C.

PLACE: Mount Sinai

GOLDEN TEXT—“And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exodus 34:6).

Lesson Exposition

A SECOND CHANCE —Ex. 34:1-4

The Lord's commands (Ex. 34:1-3). After the golden calf incident, Moses angrily smashed the two tablets of the covenant God had just given him on Mount Sinai (32:19). The broken stones reflected the broken covenant. After Moses' intercession, the Lord determined to repair His covenant.

At the covenant renewal, that last command was even stricter. Aaron had been allowed to go partway up the mountain with Moses at the first ceremony (19:24), and the people had observed from the base of the mountain (vs. 11). But now no people or animals were even allowed to show their faces near the mountain (34:3).

Moses' obedience (Ex. 34:4). Moses obeyed God's instructions in every detail (vss. 2-4). Just as God commanded, Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first ones and went up in the morning to Mount Sinai.

The text includes a refrain often repeated throughout the Pentateuch: “as the Lord had commanded him” (cf. Ex. 40:32; Lev. 8:4).

That single repeated phrase validates the summary statement about Moses in Hebrews 3:2 that he was

faithful in all God's house. We know Moses was imperfect, but he was also faithful to the Lord. In contrast to the faithless Israelites, who quickly cast aside the words of God when they worshipped the golden calf, Moses carefully followed all God's instructions; this is the very essence of biblical discipleship.

THE LORD'S MERCY IN THE RENEWED COVENANT—Ex. 34:5-9

The Lord's proclamation (Ex. 34:5-7). As Moses went up to the mountain (vs. 4), the Lord came down to meet him (vs. 5), signifying the distance between heaven and earth that the covenant was connecting—the exalted Lord is high above the heavens. The Lord appeared in a cloud, as He did whenever He spoke with Moses in the tent of meeting (cf. 33:9).

In Exodus 33:19, the Lord had promised to proclaim His name to Moses, which He hinted was associated with His grace and mercy. Now He fulfilled that promise. The text first states that the Lord proclaimed the name of Yahweh (the Lord's covenant name in 34:5). It then goes on to flesh out the content of that proclamation in verses 6 and 7.

The name or identity of Yahweh, then, is equivalent to the attributes described in those verses. This was God's condensed description of His full identity, making it one of the most significant passages in the Old Testament. Other Old Testament writers affirmed that significance by their many quotations and allusions to the passage (cf. Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8).

At least three noteworthy considerations jump out when we read this list of God's characteristics. First, the emphasis is on God's mercy. God used different descriptors to refer to His nature: "merciful," "gracious," "long-suffering," "abundant in goodness and truth," and "forgiving." God's loving-kindness, or steadfast love, frequently appears in the context of covenants, which has led some to translate it as "covenant love" or "covenant faithfulness."

Second, the last characteristic does not seem to belong with the others, but it is essential to understanding who God is. After the long list describing God's merciful nature, it may be surprising to read of God's commitment to judging the guilty. To many, such an idea is offensive. If God is love, why would He judge anyone? Yet if we stop for a moment and think about what a world without judgment would look like, we would see the necessity of that characteristic in God.

That brings us to the third point. Even though the description ends on a note of judgment, it does not present God's judgment as equal to His forgiveness. The judgment lasts for only three to four generations against those who hate the Lord (cf. Ex. 20:5). God's covenantal love, however, lasts for thousands of generations for those who love Him. Although we know from other passages that God judges and forgives people on an individual basis independent of what their parents did (cf. Ezek. 18), the reference to future generations tapped into a key aspect

of God's covenant relationship with His people. The point in Exodus 34:7 is not that the next four generations of a wicked family will never receive mercy; the point is the contrast between God's brief anger and His everlasting covenantal love.

Moses' response (Ex. 34:8-9). Moses reverently bowed at God's revelation. His worship turned to another petition—that the Lord would forgive Israel and send His presence with them. Although Moses had already made a similar request and the Lord had agreed, Moses now appealed to Him based on the words God had just spoken. He asked to find favor—or grace—in God's eyes, using the same Hebrew root word that described God as gracious in verse 6. He also asked the Lord to pardon Israel's sins, using two of the three terms for "sin" from verse 7. Based on God's grace and forgiveness, Moses wanted the Lord to take possession of Israel or take Israel as the Lord's inheritance.

THE LORD'S JEALOUSY IN THE RENEWED COVENANT— Ex. 34:10-14

The Lord's victory (Ex. 34:10). God answered Moses' request by declaring that He was making a covenant before all the people of Israel. The heart of God's covenant with Israel was that He would be their God, that they would be His people, and that He would dwell among them (cf. Ex. 29:45-46; Lev. 26:12). By renewing His commitment to that covenant, then, the Lord was essentially granting Moses' request that He would take possession of Israel as His own people and go in their midst.

God then promised to drive out the Canaanites so that Israel could possess their land. That statement seems to reflect God's covenant with Abraham more than His covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai (cf. Gen. 12:7). God's

covenants in the Old Testament are not disconnected from one another.

God said He would create marvels or wonders on behalf of Israel (Ex. 34:10), using the same word that described the plagues on Egypt in 3:20. He would not merely do these wonders; He would *create* them, just as He had created the universe. He would be the one driving out the Canaanites, not the Israelites (cf. Ex. 23:28; Deut. 7:20; Josh. 24:12).

The Lord's expectation (Ex. 34:11-14). God also set expectations for Israel's role in the conquest of the land. They were to guard or observe certain commands (vs. 11). Although the first overt command comes in verse 12, the first thing they were to observe was the statement in verse 11 that God would drive out the people before them. It was disobedience to that command that kept the first generation of Israelites out of the Promised Land.

God also gave the Israelites specific instructions on how to avoid idolatry once they were in the land. This was especially relevant given their immediate fall into idolatry after the first giving of the Ten Commandments. The Lord gave Israel one action to avoid and one action to pursue.

They were to avoid making covenants with anyone else in the land. Their one covenant was with the Lord, and any other covenant would inevitably compromise them and become a stumbling block to them. At the same time, they were to actively seek out all the worship structures in the land and destroy them.

God did not give these commands with an arbitrary prejudice. He gave them so that the land would forever be rid of wicked practices like child sacrifice, witchcraft, adultery, and incest (Lev. 20:1-23) and so that Israel would remain His treasured possession (Deut. 7:1-6).

Ultimately, those reasons fall under one overarching reason: the Lord's jealousy. He knew that any influence from the Canaanites would lead Israel to worship other gods.

Like a marriage contract, Israel's covenant with the Lord was exclusive. Worship of any other god constituted spiritual adultery. That is why God depicted Himself as jealous, even declaring that His name (already defined in Exodus 34:6-7 as gracious and forgiving) is "Jealous" (vs. 14).

God's jealousy should motivate faithfulness to Him. He will fight for them, forgive them, and restore them.

—Matthew Robinson

QUESTIONS

1. What did Moses do after Israel worshipped the golden calf?
2. How was the covenant renewal stricter than the first giving of the covenant?
3. What phrase, repeated several times in the Pentateuch, is prominent in this account?
4. What did the Lord do as Moses climbed the mountain?
5. What makes Exodus 34:5-9 one of the most significant passages in the Old Testament?
6. What is emphasized in the list of God's characteristics?
7. What is the point of mentioning the third and fourth generation (Ex. 34:7)?
8. What were the grounds of Moses' request?
9. What was the heart of God's covenant with Israel?
10. How was Israel called to avoid idolatry?

—Matthew Robinson

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. God gives second chances, even though sinners die in His presence apart from His mercy (Ex. 34:1-3).
2. A true servant of God follows all His instructions precisely (Ex. 34:4; cf. Heb. 3:5).
3. To imitate God's character, we must prioritize compassion over judgment (Ex. 34:5-7).
4. Our prayers should stem from worship and be rooted in God's promises (vss. 8-9).
5. We have no power in ourselves to gain victory over spiritual enemies; God alone defeats them on our behalf (vss. 10-11).
6. God expects believers to be fully committed to Him, actively ridding themselves of anything that competes for our worship (vss. 12-14).

—Andrew Rudolf

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. How can we imitate God's attributes (Ex. 34:6-7)? How can we imitate His commitment to justice?
2. How did God display the attributes of verses 6 and 7 in the golden calf incident (cf. chaps. 32—33)? How would He do so in the conquest of Canaan (cf. 34:10-13)?
3. Does jealousy seem like an odd attribute to be ascribed to God? Why might He have chosen to emphasize that attribute in verse 14?
4. What does spiritual adultery look like today? In light of that, what steps can you take to remain faithful as part of the Lord's bride?

—Andrew Rudolf

Golden Text Illuminated

“And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exodus 34:6).

The consequences of Israel's unfaithfulness were severe and extensive. In Exodus 32, we witness the tragic episode of the golden calf, where the Israelites turned away from the true God and embraced idolatry. That rebellion provoked God's righteous anger and brought about the threat of judgment upon the nation. Yet, amid this crisis, we discover a powerful revelation of God's merciful character, as proclaimed in the golden text from Exodus.

Acting as a mediator between God and the people, Moses interceded on Israel's behalf, pleading for God's mercy and forgiveness. In response to Moses' earnest prayer, God graciously invited him to return to Mount Sinai, where He would renew the covenant with His people. This invitation itself was an act of mercy, demonstrating God's willingness to restore the broken relationship despite Israel's grievous sin.

As Moses ascended the mountain, God descended in a cloud and proclaimed His name, revealing His essential character. The golden text captures this profound self-revelation: “The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” These words stand as a powerful testimony to the depth of God's mercy and the extent of His patience toward His people.

For believers today, the golden text serves as a powerful reminder of the mercy we receive in Christ. He restores us to a right relationship with God.

—Gene Kissinger