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EXODUS 19:1 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that same day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.

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The children of Israel, having departed from Rephidim, come to the wilderness of Sinai in the third month, Exo 19:1, Exo 19:2. Moses goes up into the mount to God, and receives a message which he is to deliver to the people, Exo 19:3-6. He returns and delivers it to the people before the elders, Exo 19:7. The people promise obedience, Exo 19:8. The Lord proposes to meet Moses in the cloud, Exo 19:9. He commands him to sanctify the people, and promises to come down visibly on Mount Sinai on the third day, Exo 19:10, Exo 19:11. He commands him also to set bounds, to prevent the people or any of the cattle from touching the mount, on pain of being stoned or shot through with a dart, Exo 19:12, Exo 19:13. Moses goes down and delivers this message, Exo 19:14, Exo 19:15. The third day is ushered in with the appearance of the thick cloud upon the mount, and with thunders, lightning, and the sound of a trumpet! at which the people are greatly terrified, Exo 19:16

#### Verse 1

In the third month - This was called Sivan, and answers to our May. For the Jewish months, years, etc.

The same day - There are three opinions concerning the meaning of this place, which are supported by respectable arguments.

1. The same day means the same day of the third month with that, viz., the 15th, on which the Israelites had left Egypt.

2. The same day signifies here a day of the same number with the month to which it is applied, viz., the third day of the third month.

3. By the same day, the first day of the month is intended. The Jews celebrate the feast of pentecost fifty days after the passover: from the departure out of Egypt to the coming to Sinai were forty-five days; for they came out the fifteenth day of the first month, from which day to the first of the third month forty-five days are numbered. On the 2d day of this third month Moses went up into the mountain, when three days were given to the people to purify themselves; this gives the fourth day of the third month, or the forty-ninth from the departure out of Egypt. On the next day, which was the fiftieth from the celebration of the passover, the glory of God appeared on the mount; in commemoration of which the Jews celebrate the feast of pentecost. This is the opinion of St. Augustine and of several moderns, and is defended at large by Houbigant. As the word **שָׁדֶשׁ** chodesh, month, is put for new moon, which is with the Jews the first day of the month, this may be considered an additional confirmation of the above opinion.

The wilderness of Sinai - Mount Sinai is called by the Arabs Jibel Mousa or the Mount of Moses, or, by way of eminence, El Tor, The Mount. It is one hill, with two peaks or summits; one is called Horeb, the other Sinai. Horeb was probably its most ancient name, and might designate the whole mountain; but as the Lord had appeared to Moses on this mountain in a bush **סֵנֶה** seneh, Exo 3:2, from this circumstance it might have received the name of Sinai or **הַר סִינַי** har Sinai, the mount of the bush or the mount of bushes; for it is possible that it was not in a single bush, but in a thicket of bushes, that the Angel of God made his appearance. The word bush is often used for woods or forests.

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EXODUS 19:2 When they had departed from Rephidim, and had come to the wilderness of Sinai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the mountain.

EXODUS 19:3 Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "This is what you shall tell the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:

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#### Verse 3

Moses went up unto God - It is likely that the cloud which had conducted the Israelitish camp had now removed to the top of Sinai; and as this was the symbol of the Divine presence, Moses went up to the place, there to meet the Lord.

The Lord called unto him - This, according to St. Stephen, was the Angel of the Lord, Act 7:38. And from several scriptures we have seen that the Lord Jesus was the person intended; see Clarke's note on Gen 16:7; see Clarke's note on Gen 18:13; see Clarke's note on Exo 3:2.

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EXODUS 19:4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself.

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#### Verse 4

How I bare you on eagles' wings - Mr. Bruce contends that the word נשר neshar does not mean the bird we term eagle; but a bird which the Arabs, from its kind and merciful disposition, call rachama, which is noted for its care of its young, and its carrying them upon its back. See his Travels, vol. vii., pl. 33. It is not unlikely that from this part of the sacred history the heathens borrowed their fable of the eagle being a bird sacred to Jupiter, and which was employed to carry the souls of departed heroes, kings, etc., into the celestial regions. The Romans have struck several medals with this device, which may be seen in different cabinets, among which are the following: one of Faustina, daughter of Antoninus Pius, on the reverse of which she is represented ascending to heaven on the back of an eagle; and another of Salonia, daughter of the Emperor Galienus, on the reverse of which she is represented on the back of an eagle, with a scepter in her hand, ascending to heaven. Jupiter himself is sometimes represented on the back of an eagle also, with his thunder in his hand, as on a medal of Licinus. This brings us nearer to the letter of the text, where it appears that the heathens confounded the figure made use of by the sacred penman, I bare you on eagles' wings, with the manifestation of God in thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai. And it might be in reference to all this that the Romans took the eagle for their ensign. See Scheuchzer, Fusellius, etc.

Brought you unto myself - In this and the two following verses, we see the design of God in selecting a people for himself.

1. They were to obey his voice, Exo 19:5, to receive a revelation from him, and to act according to that revelation, and not according to their reason or fancy, in opposition to his declarations.

2. They were to obey his voice indeed, שמוע תשמעו shamo'a tishme'u, in hearing they should hear; they should consult his testimonies, hear them whenever read or proclaimed, and obey them as soon as heard, affectionately and steadily.

3. They must keep his covenant - not only copy in their lives the ten commandments, but they must receive and preserve the grand agreement made between God and man by sacrifice, in reference to the incarnation and death of Christ; for from the foundation of the world the covenant of God ratified by sacrifices referred to this, and now the sacrificial system was to be more fully opened by the giving of the law.

4. They should then be God's peculiar treasure, סגולה segullah, his own patrimony, a people in whom he should have all right, and over whom he should have exclusive authority above all the people of the earth; for though all the inhabitants of the world were his by his right of creation and providence, yet these should be peculiarly his, as receiving his revelation and entering into his covenant.

5. They should be a kingdom of priests, Exo 19:6. Their state should be a theocracy; and as God should be the sole governor, being king in Jeshurun, so all his subjects should be priests, all worshippers, all sacrificers, every individual offering up the victim for himself. A beautiful representation of the Gospel dispensation, to which the Apostles Peter and John apply it, 1Pet 2:5, 1Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; Rev 5:10, and Rev 20:6; under which dispensation every believing soul offers up for himself that Lamb of God which was slain for and which takes away the sin of the world, and through which alone a man can have access to God.

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EXODUS 19:5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own possession from among all peoples; for all the earth is mine;

EXODUS 19:6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

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#### Verse 6

And a holy nation - They should be a nation, one people; firmly united among themselves, living under their own laws; and powerful, because united, and acting under the direction and blessing of God. They should be a holy nation, saved from their sins, righteous in their conduct, holy in their hearts; every external rite being not only a significant ceremony, but also a means of conveying light and life, grace and peace, to every person who conscientiously used it. Thus they should be both a kingdom, having God for their governor; and a nation, a multitude of peoples connected together; not a scattered, disordered, and disorganized people, but a royal nation, using their own rites, living under their own laws, subject in religious matters only to God, and in things civil, to every ordinance of man for God's sake.

This was the spirit and design of this wonderful institution, which could not receive its perfection but under the Gospel, and has its full accomplishment in every member of the mystical body of Christ.

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EXODUS 19:7 Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD commanded him.

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#### Verse 7

The elders of the people - The head of each tribe, and the chief of each family, by whose ministry this gracious purpose of God was speedily communicated to the whole camp.

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EXODUS 19:8 All the people answered together, and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD.

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#### Verse 8

And all the people answered, etc. - The people, having such gracious advantages laid before them, most cheerfully consented to take God for their portion; as he had graciously promised to take them for his people. Thus a covenant was made, the parties being mutually bound to each other.

Moses returned the words - When the people had on their part consented to the covenant, Moses appears to have gone immediately up to the mountain and related to God the success of his mission; for he was now on the mount, as appears from Exo 19:14.

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EXODUS 19:9 The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever." Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

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#### Verse 9

A thick cloud - This is interpreted by Exo 19:18 : And Mount Sinai was altogether on a Smoke - and the Smoke thereof ascended as the Smoke of a furnace; his usual appearance was in the cloudy pillar, which we may suppose was generally clear and luminous. That the people may hear - See Clarke's note on Exo 15:9. The Jews consider this as the fullest evidence their fathers had of the Divine mission of Moses; themselves were permitted to see this awfully glorious sight, and to hear God himself speak out of the thick darkness: for before this, as Rabbi Maymon remarks, they might have thought that Moses wrought his miracles by sorcery or enchantment; but now, hearing the voice of God himself, they could no longer disbelieve nor even doubt.

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EXODUS 19:10 The LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments,

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#### Verse 10

Sanctify them - See the meaning of this term, Exo 13:2.

Let them wash their clothes - And consequently bathe their bodies; for, according to the testimony of the Jews, these always went together.

It was necessary that, as they were about to appear in the presence of God, every thing should be clean and pure about them; that they might be admonished by this of the necessity of inward purity, of which the outward washing was the emblem.

From these institutions the heathens appear to have borrowed their precepts relative to washings and purifications previously to their offering sacrifice to their gods, examples of which abound in the Greek and Latin writers. They washed their hands and clothes, and bathed their bodies in pure water, before they performed any act of religious worship; and in a variety of cases, abstinence from all matrimonial connections was positively required, before a person was permitted to perform any religious rite, or assist at the performance.

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EXODUS 19:11 and be ready against the third day; for on the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people on Mount Sinai.

EXODUS 19:12 You shall set bounds to the people all around, saying, 'Be careful that you don't go up onto the mountain, or touch its border. Whoever touches the mountain shall be surely put to death.

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#### Verse 12

Thou shalt set bounds - Whether this was a line marked out on the ground, beyond which they were not to go, or whether a fence was actually made to keep them off, we cannot tell; or whether this fence was made all round the mountain, or only at that part to which one wing of the camp extended, is not evident.

This verse strictly forbids the people from coming near and touching Mount Sinai, which was burning with Fire. The words therefore in Exo 19:15, אל תגשו אל אשה al tiggeshu el ishshah, come not at your wives, seem rather to mean, come not near unto the Fire; especially as the other phrase is not at all probable: but the fire is, on this occasion, spoken of so emphatically (see Deu 5:4, Deu 5:5, Deu 5:22-25) that we are naturally led to consider אשה ishshah here as האש ha-esh transposed, or to say, with Simon in his Lexicon, אשה faem, idem quod masc. אש ignis. So among other instances, we have אבר and אברה a wing; אור and אורה light; אמן and אמצה strength; and אמר and אמרה a speech - Burt. See Kennicott's Remarks.

Whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death - The place was awfully sacred, because the dreadful majesty of God was displayed on it. And this taught them that God is a consuming fire, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

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EXODUS 19:13 No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether it is animal or man, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come up to the mountain."

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#### Verse 13

There shall not a hand touch it - בו bo, Him, not the mountain, but the man who had presumed to touch the mountain. He should be considered altogether as an unclean and accursed thing, not to be touched for fear of conveying defilement; but should be immediately stoned or pierced through with a dart, Heb 12:20.

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EXODUS 19:14 Moses went down from the mountain to the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

EXODUS 19:15 He said to the people, "Be ready by the third day. Don't have sexual relations with a woman."

EXODUS 19:16 On the third day, when it was morning, there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain, and the sound of an exceedingly loud trumpet; and all the people who were in the camp trembled.

#### Verse 16

Thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud - and the voice of the trumpet - The thunders, lightnings, etc., announced the coming, as they proclaimed the majesty, of God. Of the thunders and lightnings, and the deep, dark, dismal, electric cloud, from which the thunders and lightnings proceeded, we can form a tolerable apprehension; but of the loud, long-sounding trumpet, we can scarcely form a conjecture. Such were the appearances and the noise that all the people in the camp trembled, and Moses himself was constrained to say, "I exceedingly fear and quake," Heb 12:21. Probably the sound of the trumpet was something similar to that which shall be blown by the angel when he swearth, by Him that liveth for ever, There shall be time no longer!

EXODUS 19:17 Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the lower part of the mountain.

#### Verse 17

And Moses brought forth the people - to meet with God - For though they might not touch the mount till they had permission, yet when the trumpet sounded long, it appears they might come up to the nether part of the mount, (see Exo 19:13, and Deu 4:11); and when the trumpet had ceased to sound, they might then go up unto the mountain, as to any other place.

It was absolutely necessary that God should give the people at large some particular evidence of his being and power, that they might be saved from idolatry, to which they were most deplorably prone; and that they might the more readily credit Moses, who was to be the constant mediator between God and them. God, therefore, in his indescribable majesty, descended on the mount; and, by the thick dark cloud, the violent thunders, the vivid lightnings, the long and loud blasts of the trumpet, the smoke encompassing the whole mountain, and the excessive earthquake, proclaimed his power, his glory, and his holiness; so that the people, however unfaithful and disobedient afterwards, never once doubted the Divine interference, or suspected Moses of any cheat or imposture. Indeed, so absolute and unequivocal were the proofs of supernatural agency, that it was impossible these appearances could be attributed to any cause but the unlimited power of the author of Nature.

It is worthy of remark that the people were informed three days before, Exo 19:9-11, that such an appearance was to take place; and this answered two excellent purposes:

1. They had time to sanctify and prepare themselves for this solemn transaction; and,

2. Those who might be skeptical had sufficient opportunity to make use of every precaution to prevent and detect an imposture; so this previous warning strongly serves the cause of Divine revelation.

Their being at first prohibited from touching the mount on the most awful penalties, and secondly, being permitted to see manifestations of the Divine majesty, and hear the words of God, subserved the same great purposes. Their being prohibited in the first instance would naturally whet their curiosity, make them cautious of being deceived, and ultimately impress them with a due sense of God's justice and their own sinfulness; and their being permitted afterwards to go up to the mount, must have deepened the conviction that all was fair and real, that there could be no imposture in the case, and that though the justice and purity of God forbade them to draw nigh for a time, yet his mercy, which had prescribed the means of purification, had permitted an access to his presence. The directions given from Exo 19:10-15 inclusive show, not only the holiness of God, but the purity he requires in his worshippers.

Besides, the whole scope and design of the chapter prove that no soul can possibly approach this holy and terrible Being but through a mediator; and this is the use made of this whole transaction by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Heb 12:18-24.

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EXODUS 19:18 Mount Sinai, all it, smoked, because the LORD descended on it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.

EXODUS 19:19 When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice.

EXODUS 19:20 The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. The LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

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#### Verse 20

The Lord came down - This was undoubtedly done in a visible manner, that the people might witness the awful appearance. We may suppose that every thing was arranged thus: the glory of the Lord occupied the top of the mountain, and near to this Moses was permitted to approach. Aaron and the seventy elders were permitted to advance some way up the mountain, while the people were only permitted to come up to its base. Moses, as the lawgiver, was to receive the statutes and judgments from God's mouth; Aaron and the elders were to receive them from Moses, and deliver them to the people; and the people were to act according to the direction received. Nothing can be imagined more glorious, terrible, majestic, and impressive, than the whole of this transaction; but it was chiefly calculated to impress deep reverence, religious fear, and sacred awe; and he who attempts to worship God uninfluenced by these, has neither a proper sense of the Divine majesty, nor of the sinfulness of sin. It seems in reference to this that the apostle says, Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with Reverence and Godly Fear: for our God is a Consuming Fire; Heb 12:28, Heb 12:29. Who then shall dare to approach him in his own name and without a mediator?

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EXODUS 19:21 The LORD said to Moses, "Go down, warn the people, lest they break through to the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.

EXODUS 19:22 Let the priests also, who come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break out on them.”

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#### Verse 22

Let the priests also - sanctify themselves - That there were priests among the Hebrews before the consecration of Aaron and his sons, cannot be doubted; though their functions might be in a considerable measure suspended while under persecution in Egypt, yet the persons existed whose right and duty it was to offer sacrifices to God. Moses requested liberty from Pharaoh to go into the wilderness to sacrifice; and had there not been among the people both sacrifices and priests, the request itself must have appeared nugatory and absurd. Sacrifices from the beginning had constituted an essential part of the worship of God, and there certainly were priests whose business it was to offer them to God before the giving of the law; though this, for especial reasons, was restricted to Aaron and his sons after the law had been given. As sacrifices had not been offered for a considerable time, the priests themselves were considered in a state of impurity; and therefore God requires that they also should be purified for the purpose of approaching the mountain, and hearing their Maker promulgate his laws. See Clarke's note on Exo 28:1.

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EXODUS 19:23 Moses said to the LORD, “The people can’t come up to Mount Sinai, for you warned us, saying, ‘Set bounds around the mountain, and sanctify it.’”

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#### Verse 23

The people cannot come up - Either because they had been so solemnly forbidden that they would not dare, with the penalty of instant death before their eyes, to transgress the Divine command; or the bounds which were set about the mount were such as rendered their passing them physically impossible.

And sanctify it - וקדשהו vekiddashio. Here the word קדש kadash is taken in its proper literal sense, signifying the separating of a thing, person or place, from all profane or common uses, and devoting it to sacred purposes.

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EXODUS 19:24 The LORD said to him, “Go down! You shall bring Aaron up with you, but don’t let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, lest he break out against them.”

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#### Verse 24

Let not the priests and the people break through - God knew that they were heedless, criminally curious, and stupidly obstinate; and therefore his mercy saw it right to give them line upon line, that they might not transgress to their own destruction.

From the very solemn and awful manner in which the Law was introduced, we may behold it as the ministration of terror and death, 2Cor 3:7, appearing rather to exclude men from God than to bring them nigh; and from this we may learn that an approach to God would have been for ever



impossible, had not infinite mercy found out the Gospel scheme of salvation. By this, and this alone, we draw nigh to God; for we have an entrance into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Heb 10:19. "For," says the apostle, "ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire; nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and to the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more, (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake): but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and to God, the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel;" Heb 12:18-24. Reader, art thou still under the influence and condemning power of that fiery law which proceeded from his right hand? Art thou yet afar off? Remember, thou canst only come nigh by the blood of sprinkling; and till justified by his blood, thou art under the curse. Consider the terrible majesty of God. If thou have his favor thou hast life; if his frown, death. Be instantly reconciled to God, for though thou hast deeply sinned, and he is just, yet he is the justifier of him that believeth in Christ Jesus. Believe on him, receive his salvation, Obey his voice indeed, and Keep his covenant, and Then shalt thou be a king and a priest unto God and the Lamb, and be finally saved with all the power of an endless life. Amen.

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EXODUS 19:25 So Moses went down to the people, and told them.

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