

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS 19

In this chapter we have an account of the coming of the children of Israel to Mount Sinai, (^{<1290>}Exodus 19:1,2), of the covenant made with them there, the proposal on the part of God, and their acceptance of it, (^{<1293>}Exodus 19:3-8), the previous notice God gave three days before of his appearance on the mount, the orders for their preparation to meet him, and the execution of them, (^{<1293>}Exodus 19:9-15), the awful and tremendous appearance of God upon the mount, (^{<1296>}Exodus 19:6-20) and the strict charge given, that neither people nor priests should come near and gaze, only Moses and Aaron with him were to come up, bounds being set to prevent the rest, (^{<1292>}Exodus 19:21-24), and the chapter is closed with observing, that Moses went down from the mount, and delivered to the people what the Lord spoke to and by him, (^{<1295>}Exodus 19:25).

Ver. 1. *In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt*, etc.] Which was the month Sivan, and answers to part of May and part of June:

the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai; which had its name from the mountain situated in it, and that from the bushes which grew upon it. Justin ^{f579} calls it Synan, which he says Moses occupied, and Strabo ^{f580}, Sinnan. Hither they came either on the same day they came from Rephidim; which, according to Bunting ^{f581}, were eight miles from it, or on the same day of the month, as to number, that is, on the third day of the third month; and so Jerom ^{f582} and others say it was on the forty seventh day after their coming out of Egypt, three days after which they received the law on Mount Sinai, it being a generally received notion that the law was given fifty days after the passover; hence the feast of weeks is called from thence the feast of pentecost, or fifty days: or rather this was the first day of the month, as Jarchi and R. Moses; with which agrees the Targum of Jonathan; and so was the forty fifth of their coming out of Egypt, five days after which they received the law; it being a tradition with the Jews, as Aben Ezra observes, that that was given on the sixth of Sivan, and may be accounted for thus; on the first day they came to Sinai, and encamped

there, on the day following Moses went up to God, (^{<293>}Exodus 19:3), on the third day Moses gathered the elders together, (^{<297>}Exodus 19:7), and declared to them the words of God, and on the third day after that, which was the sixth, the law was delivered to them.

Ver. 2. *For they were departed from Rephidim*, etc.] After they had fought with Amalek, and came to the western part of the mount to Horeb, where the rock was smitten for them; and they were come from that now, and encamped at Sinai, after Jethro had paid a visit to Moses:

and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in this wilderness; that is, of Sinai, as in the preceding verse:

and there Israel encamped before the mount; Mount Sinai, from whence the desert or wilderness was called. This, as Jarchi says, was on the east side of the mount; Horeb and Sinai were but one and the same mountain, which had two tops. Horeb was on the western side, near to which lay the plain of Rephidim; and Sinai was on the eastern side, on which the wilderness of that name bordered: so that the children of Israel, when they came from Rephidim, came from the western side, and took a circuit about and came to the eastern; which, according to a fore mentioned writer, was eight miles, and was the twelfth station or mansion of the children of Israel. This number twelve is taken notice of by some, as having something singular and peculiar in it; there were the twelve tribes of Israel, and at their twelfth mansion the law was given them; Christ had twelve apostles, and there are twelve foundations of the new Jerusalem, and 12,000 were sealed out of every tribe of Israel.

Ver. 3. *And Moses went up unto God*, etc.] Who was in the pillar of cloud upon the top of the mount; this was on the second day, according to the Targum of Jonathan: “the Lord called unto him out of the mountain”; or had called unto him, as Aben Ezra, since without his leave he could not have gone up. He called to him out of the cloud upon the top of the mountain to come up, and being come near him, he called to him, and spoke with an articulate voice, as follows:

saying, thus shalt thou say, to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; which are the same, and are described as descending from the same person, who was called by both names; the one was his name in the former and lower state of his life, the other in the latter and more prosperous one; and his posterity are called by these two names, as Bishop Patrick

observes, to put them in mind, that they who had lately been as low as Jacob, when he went to Padanaram, were now grown as great as God made him when he came from thence, and was called Israel.

Ver. 4. *Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians*, etc.] The plagues he brought upon them in Egypt, and the destruction of them at the Red sea; these things they were eyewitnesses of, and needed no other proof or evidence to convince and assure them of them, and therefore must be under obligation to attend to what he was about to recommend unto them, for which reason this is observed:

and [how] I bare you on eagles' wings; that is, as on eagles' wings, the note of similitude being wanting, but to be supplied; for it cannot be thought that they were literally bore on eagles' wings; but as that creature is reported to be very affectionate to its young, and careful of it, and, as is said, only to one; for, having more, it will cast away all but one, and reserve that, which it carefully nourishes; and being swift of flight, and strong of wing, it will in a remarkable manner take its young upon it, and safely and swiftly convey it where it pleases; of which ((see Gill on ^{“(f521)”}Deuteronomy 32:11)). The eagle excels other birds both in its strength and in the size of its body; and especially its pectoral muscles, by which its wings are supported; are very strong, so that it can carry its young, and other things, on its back and wings; and some such thing nature itself seems to have required, as naturalists observe ^{f583}; and there are some histories, which, if true, greatly confirm and illustrate this. Aelianus ^{f584} reports of Tilgamus, a Babylonian, and who afterwards was king of Babylon, and who seems to be the Tilgath Pilneser of the Scriptures, king of Assyria, that when a lad, being thrown down from the top of a tower, an eagle, which is a very quick sighted bird, saw him, and, before he came to the ground, flew under him, took him upon its back, and carried him into a garden, and gently let him down. So it is related of Aristomenes ^{f585}, that as he was casting headlong into a deep ditch by the Lacedemonians, where they used to throw condemned malefactors, an eagle flew under him, and bore him on its wings, and carried him to the bottom, without any hurt to any part of his body. Jarchi observes, that whereas other birds carry their young between their feet, for fear of those that fly above them, the eagle flying above all others, and so in no fear of them, carries its young upon its wings, judging it better that a dart should pierce that than its young. The Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem paraphrase the words,

“and I bore you on clouds, as on eagles’ wings;”

which covered, and protected, and sustained them, as the eagles’ wings do its young; the former adds, from Pelusium, a city in Egypt, supposed by the Targumist to be the same with Rameses; where Jarchi observes the people of Israel were very swiftly gathered together as the place of their rendezvous, and were as safely brought from thence to the place where they now were. Thus the Lord showed an affectionate concern for Israel, took them under his care and protection, stood between them and the Egyptians in a pillar of cloud, and secured them from their arrows, and swiftly and safely removed them from the land of Egypt to the place where they now were, distinguishing them from all other nations, having chosen them to be a special people to himself:

and brought you unto myself: to the mountain of God, where he had appeared to Moses, and given this as a sign and token of the truth of his mission, that he and Israel, when brought out of Egypt by him, should serve him on this mount; and now they were brought thither, where he was about not only to grant his presence in a very singular manner, but to deliver his law unto them, and enter into a covenant with them, and establish and settle them as his people; so that they were a people near unto the Lord, taken into covenant, and indulged with communion with him, and made partakers of various distinguished blessings of his: both the above Targums are, “I brought you to the doctrine of my law”, to receive it at this mount.

Ver. 5. *Now therefore*, etc.] Since they had received such marks of his favour, and were laid under great obligations to him:

if ye will obey my voice indeed; truly, sincerely, and heartily; or “in hearkening hearken”, or “in obeying obey”^{f586}; that is, closely and attentively hearken to what he should say to them, and thoroughly and constantly yield a cheerful obedience to his commands:

and keep my covenant; now about to be made with them, which would consist of promises of good things to be done to them on his part, and of duties to be performed by them on their part, and so would constitute a formal covenant by stipulation and restipulation:

then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; be as highly valued by him, and as carefully preserved as the richest treasure among men; even as the treasure of princes, consisting of gold and silver, precious

stones, pearls and jewels, and everything that is valuable; and of this he would give such proof and demonstration, as would make it appear that they were esteemed by him above all people upon the face of the earth; being chosen for his peculiar treasure, and redeemed out of the house of bondage and slavery to be his peculiar people, and distinguished from all others by particular favours and blessings:

for all the earth is mine; as it is, and the inhabitants of it, by creation, sustentation, preservation, and dominion, all being made, upheld, preserved, and governed by him; and therefore, as he had a right to all, could choose what part he pleased for his special use and service; or “though all the earth is mine”^{f587}, as Marinus in Aben Ezra, which yet the latter does not seem to approve of; and then the sense is, though the whole world was his, and all that is in it, yet such was his special affection, and peculiar regard to Israel, as to choose them, and esteem them as his portion and inheritance, his jewel, and peculiar treasure.

Ver. 6. *And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests*, etc.] Instead of being in a state of servitude and bondage, as they had been in Egypt, they should be erected into a kingdom, become a body politic, a free state, a commonwealth governed by its own laws, and those laws of God’s making; yea, they should be a kingdom to him, and he be more immediately the king of them, as he was not of others, the government of Israel being a Theocracy; and this kingdom should consist of men that were priests, who had access to God, served him, and offered sacrifice to him; or of men greatly esteemed and honoured, as priests were in those times. Jarchi interprets it, a kingdom of princes, as the word sometimes signifies: the subjects of this kingdom were princes, men of a princely spirit, and these princes, like those of the king of Babylon, who boasted they were altogether kings; and like the Roman senators, of whom the ambassador of Pyrrhus said, that he saw at Rome as many kings as he saw senators. And so here all the Targums render it, “kings and priests”: to which reference seems to be had not only in (~~6005~~ 1 Peter 2:9) but in (~~6006~~ Revelation 1:6), they were kings when they got the victory, as in the times of Joshua, over the several kings of Canaan, and had their kingdoms divided among them; and before the priesthood was settled in the family of Aaron, every head of a family in Israel was a priest; and they were all priests at the passover, as Philo^{f588} observes: and so the spiritual Israel of God are kings and priests; they are kings, having the power and riches of kings; having got through Christ the victory over sin, Satan, and the world; and being possessed of

the kingdom of grace, and heirs of the kingdom of glory; and priests, being allowed to draw nigh to God, to present themselves, souls and bodies, a holy and living sacrifice, to offer to him the sacrifices of prayer and praise through Christ, by whom they become acceptable to him: “and an holy nation”; being separated from all others, and devoted to the worship and service of God, having holy laws, and holy ordinances, and a holy service, and a holy place to perform it in, and holy persons to attend unto it, as they afterwards had. In allusion to this, the spiritual Israel, or people of God, are also called so, (~~and~~ 1 Peter 2:9) being chosen unto holiness, redeemed from all iniquity, called with an holy calling, sanctified by the blood of Christ, and made holy by the Spirit of God, and under the influence of his grace live holy lives and conversations:

these are the words thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel: what he would have them do, and they were bound to do in a way of duty to him, and what he in a way of grace would do for them, and they should be unto him,

Ver. 7. *And Moses came and called for the elders of the people,* etc.]

After he had heard the above words from the mouth of God, he came down from the mount into the camp of Israel, and sent for the elders or principal men of the tribes and families of Israel to come to him:

and, being gathered together,

laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him; expressed them in the plainest manner, set them in the clearest light to their minds and consciences; so that they thoroughly understood them, were fully convinced of the propriety of these things God required of them, and their obligation to observe them, and saw plainly the greatness and importance of what he promised unto them.

Ver. 8. *And all the people answered together,* etc.] By their heads and representatives, the elders, summoned before Moses, to whom he declared the whole will of God; or this being communicated by them to their respective tribes and families, they were all of one mind; there was not a contradicting voice among them, they all gave the same answer, or all united in returning for answer what follows:

all that the Lord hath spoken we will do; obey his voice in all things he directs unto, or commands to be done, and keep the covenant he should make with them, and observe whatever was required on their parts; which

was well spoken, if with the heart, and if, under a consciousness of their own weakness, they had expressed their desire of dependence upon the grace of God to enable them to perform, (see ^{<1163>}Deuteronomy 5:28,29). The Septuagint version adds, “and we will hear”, or be obedient, as in (^{<1247>}Exodus 24:7):

and Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord; not for his information, who knew very well what they had said, but for the discharge of his office as a mediator and messenger between God and them: this, according to Jarchi, was on the third day of the month.

Ver. 9. *And the Lord said unto Moses*, etc.] As the Targum of Jonathan, on the third day; though Jarchi says the fourth; which seems not so well to agree with his words on the preceding verse, since it seems to be at the same time that Moses returned the words of the people to the Lord, that he said what follows to him:

lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud; which was different from the pillar of cloud in which he went before the people, and now stood in it on the top of the mount; for he speaks not now of his present appearance to Moses, but of his appearance on the mount three days after; wherefore the Septuagint version wrongly renders it, “in a pillar of cloud”: there were appearances of the divine Majesty in a cloud frequently afterwards, both in the Old and New Testament, (see ^{<1248>}Exodus 40:34 ^{<11810>}1 Kings 8:10,11 ^{<1175>}Matthew 17:5) and so Christ, the mighty Angel, is said to be clothed with a cloud, (^{<611>}Revelation 10:1). And from such appearances as these, the Heathens have represented their deities, as Apollo ^{f589}, Venus ^{f590}, Juno ^{f591}, and others, coming in a cloud, or clothed with one:

that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever; they had believed Moses already, particularly at the Red sea, when they saw what was done there, but afterwards, as it seems, returned to their unbelief again; but now, as they would be eyewitnesses of the cloud in which the Lord would appear to Moses, so they would be ear witnesses of what he said to him; for though the cloud was a thick one in which he came, so that they could not see any similitude, any likeness at all, not so much as a brightness, a shining glory, as they had seen in the pillar of cloud, (see ^{<1247>}Exodus 16:7,10), yet, the voice of God out of it was so loud, when he spoke with Moses, that this vast body of people being placed around, at the lower part of the mount, heard plainly and distinctly all that was said; so that they were sure they were not imposed upon by

Moses, but that the law he delivered to them was from God, since they heard it with their own ears; and therefore they and their posterity believed it for ever, and never entertained the least distrust of the divinity and authority of it. This case was widely different from that of Numa or Mahomet, the one pretending to receive instructions from the goddess Egeria, and the other from the angel Gabriel; but all depended upon their own word, none were, nor did they pretend that any were eye or ear witnesses of what they declared; but such was the case here:

and Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord; the same which he is said to return to him in the preceding verse, and here repeated for the confirmation of it, and to lead on to what the Lord had to say further concerning them.

Ver. 10. *And the Lord said unto Moses*, etc.] On the fourth day, according to the Targum of Jonathan;

go unto the people; go down from the mountain, from the top of it, where he now was, to the camp of Israel, which was pitched before it:

and sanctify them today and tomorrow; the fourth and fifth days of the month; that is, he was, to instruct them how they were to sanctify themselves in an external way, by washing themselves, as after mentioned, their bodies and clothes, and by abstaining from all sensual pleasures, lawful or unlawful:

and let them wash their clothes; which the Jews understood not of their garments, but of their bodies also; teaching them by these outward things the necessity of internal purity and holiness, to appear before God: these outward rites were in use before the law of Moses, as appears from (^{GEN 35:2}) and the Heathens themselves have similar notions of the cleanness of bodies and garments, as well as the purity of mind, being acceptable to their deities ^{f592}.

Ver. 11. *And be ready against the third day*, etc.] Not the third day of the month, but the third day from hence, this being the fourth, and the morrow the fifth, and the third day, the day following that, the sixth, on which day it is generally agreed by the Jews that the law was given, ((see Gill on ^{EXOD 19:16}“Exodus 19:16”))

for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai; which must be understood, consistent with his

omnipresence, and is only expressive of some visible display of his power, and of some sensible token of his presence to the people; he was now upon it in the pillar of cloud, but then he would appear in another manner, and descend in a thick cloud and fire, which all the people would see, though they could not see the similitude of anything in it.

Ver. 12. *And thou shall set bounds to the people round about*, etc.] That is, round about the mountain, by drawing a line, throwing up a foss or ditch, or else by laying up heaps of stones or sand, which might be come at easily, or bushes and branches of trees, which grew thick on the mount, from whence it had its name; but be it what will that were used, these were to signify, that so far the people might go, but no further, which their curiosity might prompt them to:

saying, take heed unto yourselves that ye go not up into the mount; so far were they from being allowed to go up to the top of it, that they were not allowed to ascend it at all, or to go any further than where the ascent or rise began; it was at their peril to ascend, and this was what they were to take heed unto, lest they incurred danger:

or touch the border of it; it being the mountain of God, and relatively holy through his presence on it:

whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death; which severe law was made to deter them from any attempt to go up the mountain, since it was death even to touch it, (see ⁻⁸¹²¹⁸⁻Hebrews 12:18).

Ver. 13. *There shall not a hand touch it*, etc.] The mountain or the border of it, which is repeated that it might be taken notice of; and to show that it would be resented if they were to stretch out their hand and only lightly touch it, much more should they set their feet upon it and attempt to ascend it: or rather, “shall not touch him”^{f593}; that is, the man that shall touch the mountain; he shall be so detestable and abominable, whoever touches it or breaks through the bounds of it, and attempts to ascend it, that no man shall follow him to lay hold on him, in order to bring him back to justice, but shall dispatch him at once in one or other of the ways directed to:

but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; if near at hand, all about him shall rise upon him, and take up stones and stone him; but if he is got at a distance, then they were to shoot arrows at him; and in this way Aben Ezra interprets it; the words, says he, refer to the man that toucheth the

mount, who is not to be followed and apprehended, but those that see him, and are near, abiding in the place where they are, are to stone him immediately, and if afar off they are to throw darts at him: though the Targum of Jonathan seems to understand it, as if punishment would be immediately inflicted upon such a person, not by the hands of men, but by the hand of God; for it says, such an one shall be stoned with hailstones, and fiery darts shall be spread upon him; or, as the Jerusalem Targum, shall be shot at him:

whether it be beast, or man, it shall not live; that touches the mountain, and so it is explained, (<sup>^{S&O20>}Hebrews 12:20), the word beast comprehends all kinds of beasts, wild and tame, and all sorts of cattle, of the herd or flock; as the word “man” takes in women as well as men, as Ben Gersom observes; Aben Ezra thinks fowls are not mentioned, because they cannot be taken, but fly away immediately; but then they might be shot:

when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount; this, according to Jarchi, was a trumpet of a ram’s horn; the word used in the Arabic language signifying a ram; but it is a mere fancy and fable of his, that this was of the ram of Isaac which was sacrificed in his stead; it is much more likely that there was indeed no real trumpet, only a sound was formed like the sound of one; and, it is highly probable, was formed by the ministering angels; Aben Ezra observes, that the sound of a trumpet was never heard until the day of the decalogue, until the day that was given; and that there was not a greater wonder on Mount Sinai than this: the design and use of it was to gather, this vast body of people together, to come and hear what God had to say unto them; and when its sound was protracted to a great length, or was in one continued tone, and somewhat lower, as is usual when a trumpet is about to cease blowing, then the people were to take it as a token that they should approach the mountain; not to ascend it, but come to the lower and nether part of it, where bounds were set to direct them how far they might go, and no further: so the Septuagint version is,

“when the voices (or thunders) and the trumpets and the cloud departed from the mountain, they went up to the mountain:”

a certain Jewish writer^{f594} interprets this, not of the people in general, but of Aaron and his sons, and of the seventy elders, (see <sup>^{Q&O24>}Exodus 19:24).

Ver. 14. *And Moses went down from the mount unto the people*, etc.] The same day that he went up, the fourth day of the month:

and sanctified the people; instructed them and ordered them what they should do for their sanctification, in order to their hearing the law from the mouth of the Lord:

and they washed their clothes; as the Lord had directed Moses to enjoin them, and as he had commanded them, ((see Gill on “^{f590}Exodus 19:10”)).

Ver. 15. *And he said unto the people, be ready against the third day*, etc.] The third day from thence, the sixth of the month Sivan, against which day they were to prepare themselves, by washing their garments, and all other outward acts of sanctification and purity they were directed to, that they might be ready for the service of that day, to hear and receive the law from God himself: Aben Ezra has this note on the passage,

“perhaps not a man slept that night, that he might hear the voice of the Lord in the morning, as was the way or custom of the high priest on the day of atonement;”

that is, not to sleep the night before:

come not at your wives; or, “do not draw nigh to a woman” ^{f595}, to lie with her; meaning not with a strange woman, or one that was not his wife, for that was not lawful at any time; nor with a menstruous woman who was unclean, and so forbidden, but with a man’s own wife: what was lawful must now be abstained from, for the greater sanctification and solemnity of the service of this day, (see ^{f596}1 Corinthians 7:5), so Chaeremoh ^{f596} the stoic says of the Egyptian priests, that when the time is at hand that they are to perform some very sacred and solemn service, they spend several days in preparing for it; sometimes two and forty, sometimes more, sometimes less, but never under seven; when they abstain from all animals, and from all kind of herbs and pulse, and especially from venereal conversation with women; and to this latter Juvenal ^{f597} the poet has respect.

Ver. 16. *And it came to pass on the third day in the morning*, etc.] The sixth of the month, according to the Targum of Jonathan, and so Jarchi; on which day, as the Jews generally say ^{f598}, the law was given, and which, they also observe, was a sabbath day: yea, they are sometimes so very particular as to fix the hour of the day, and say ^{f599}, it was the sixth hour of

the day, or twelve o'clock at noon, that Israel received the decalogue, and at the ninth hour, at three o'clock in the afternoon, returned to their stations:

there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount; which were to awaken the attention of the people to what they were to hear and receive, and to strike their minds with an awe of the divine Being; and to add to the solemnity of the day, and the service of it; and to signify the obscurity and terror of the legal dispensation, and the wrath and curse that the transgressors the law might expect, even an horrible tempest of divine vengeance, (see ^{<8128>}Hebrews 12:18)

and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; or, "exceeding strong"^{f600}; being blown by the mighty angels, and by ten thousand them, with whom the Lord now descended:

so that all the people that was in the camp trembled, at the sound of it, it was so loud and terrible, and it so pierced their ears and their hearts: a different effect the Gospel trumpet the jubilee trumpet, the joyful sound of love, grace, and mercy, has upon sensible sinners, and on true believers: the law with its curses terrifies, the Gospel with its blessings comforts.

Ver. 17. *And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp,* etc.] Which was before the mountain and near it, when the above tokens were given of the divine Presence on it; as they were thrown into a panic upon the sound of the trumpet, it was, perhaps, with some difficulty that they were brought out of the camp, or persuaded to quit it; and nothing short of the presence of Moses at the head of them, to go before them, and lead them to the foot of the mountain, could have prevailed upon them to have done it:

to meet with God; who came forth in such an awful and solemn manner, as their King and lawgiver, to deliver a body of laws to them, to be the rule of their future conduct:

and they stood at the nether part of the mount; at the bottom of it, where bounds were set, and a fence made, that they should proceed no further, and yet near enough to hear what God said to Moses and to them.

Ver. 18. *And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke,* etc.] Not from nature, as volcanos, but for a reason after given; it seemed to be one large body of smoke, nothing else to be seen but smoke; an emblem of the darkness of the legal dispensation, which was full of obscure types and

figures, of dark shadows and smoky sacrifices, to which the clear day, of the Gospel dispensation is opposed, (see ^{<44812>}2 Corinthians 3:12-18)

because the Lord descended upon it in fire; in flaming fire, as the Targums, which set the mountain on fire, and caused this prodigious smoke; for if he, who is a consuming fire, but toucheth the hills and mountains, they smoke, (^{<19442>}Psalm 104:32)

and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace such an one as that which Abraham in vision saw, (^{<01517>}Genesis 15:17)

and the whole mount quaked greatly; to which circumstance Deborah refers in her song, when she speaks of mountains melting and flowing from before the presence of the God of Israel, and particularly of Sinai, (^{<00814>}Judges 5:4,5), and the psalmist, who makes mention of the earth shaking, and the heavens dropping, and of Sinai being moved at his presence, (^{<09818>}Psalm 68:8), it is probable there was an earthquake at this time, which sometimes attends thunders and lightnings, (see ^{<61618>}Revelation 16:18).

Ver. 19. *And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long*, etc.] Not in one continued tone, as before, (^{<02913>}Exodus 19:13), where a different word is used, and when it decreased, and was about to cease, which was to summon the people to attend; but now they were come to the foot of the mount, and this sounding was a preparation to the giving of the law unto them, and was not one continued even tone: but waxed louder and louder; or, “going, and exceeding strong”; or, “strengthening itself exceedingly”^{f601}; it went on to an high pitch, until it was exceeding vehement and strong, and so sonorous as scarce to be bore:

Moses spake; what he said is not here recorded; it is highly probable, as has been observed by some, that he uttered those words related of him in (^{<58121>}Hebrews 12:21) “I exceedingly fear and quake”: such an impression did this loud and strong voice of the trumpet make upon him:

and God answered him by a voice; a still and gentle one, in order to encourage and comfort him; and so the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases it,

“with a pleasant and audible voice, and with delightful words.”

Ver. 20. *And the Lord came down on Mount Sinai*, etc.] In the above visible tokens of his presence and power; otherwise he is the

incomprehensible Jehovah, that immense and omnipotent Being, who fills heaven and earth, and cannot be contained and circumscribed in either:

on the top of the mount; where the fire he descended in rested, and where the smoke and thick cloud were, as a token of his presence:

and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; who either was at the bottom of it with the people, or in a higher ascent of it between God and them:

and Moses went up; to the top of it, where the Lord was, as he ordered him: a certain traveller ^{f602} tells us that the top of this mount was scarce thirty feet in circumference.

Ver. 21. *And the Lord said unto Moses, go down*, etc.] As soon as he was got to the top of the mount he was bid to go down again to the bottom, with a message to the people:

charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze; to see if they could observe any similitude or likeness of God, that they might have an idea of it in their minds, or make an image like unto it; to prevent which, the Lord, knowing the vanity and curiosity of their minds, ordered Moses to give them a strict charge not to transgress the bounds set them, or to break down or break through the fence of stones and sand, or hedge of bushes, brambles, and branches of trees, or whatever was placed for bounds:

and many of them perish; or “fall” ^{f603}; by the hand of God; either fall by death, or into some grievous calamity, as the men of Bethshemesh perished through looking into the ark, (~~1~~¹ Samuel 6:19).

Ver. 22. *And let the priests also, which come near unto the Lord*, etc.] Either the firstborn, as the Jews generally interpret it, so Jarchi and Aben Ezra; who were sanctified to the Lord, and in whose stead afterwards the Levites were taken; or the sons of Aaron, who should be, and were potentially, though not actually priests, as Ben Gersom expresses it, from an ancient book of theirs called Mechilta; or rather some principal persons, as heads of families and the like, who, before the priesthood was settled in the family of Aaron, officiated as priests, and drew nigh to God, and offered up sacrifices for themselves and others, and were distinguished from others by this character, and therefore do not intend princes, as some interpret the word; for the description of them will not agree to them, but

plainly points to a sort of men, to whom it was peculiar to perform that office. These Moses is bid to charge that they

sanctify themselves; in the same manner as the people in general were before ordered, and keep themselves within the same bounds; not daring to transgress them, because they were persons that used to draw nigh to God in the performance of religious actions:

lest the Lord break forth upon them; and smite them, that they die, in like manner as he made a breach on Uzzah afterwards for touching the ark of the Lord, (~~1066~~2 Samuel 6:6-8).

Ver. 23. *And Moses said unto the Lord*, etc.] Upon his giving such strict orders both with respect to the people and the priests:

the people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; suggesting as if there was no need for him to go down on that account, to give them a charge not to break through and gaze; since, as he thought, there was no probability that they ever would attempt it, seeing such a solemn charge had been given, nor any possibility of it, since such a fence was made:

for thou chargedst us, saying, set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it; and accordingly bounds have been set, that the people may not go up it, and the place has been declared sacred, that so none will presume to do it, according to the solemn charge that has been given: some ^{f604} read the preceding clause by way of interrogation, “may not the people come up to Mount Sinai?” may not any of them? or, if any of them, who may? and there was the greater reason for asking such a question, since the priests that drew near to God might not, and so the next words are conceived to be an answer to it.

Ver. 24. *And the Lord said unto him, away, get thee down*, etc.] And prevent the people and priests from breaking through the bounds and gazing, to which their curiosity would tempt them; as the Lord knew better than Moses, and it was high time for him to be gone, the matter required haste, the people were under great temptations of indulging their curiosity, to the peril of their lives:

and thou shall come up, thou, and Aaron with thee; which is thought to be an answer to the question, who might come up? only himself and Aaron, who was his prophet and spokesman, and concerned with him in his

miracles, and in conducting the people of Israel; and who was to be chief priest as Moses was to be, and was the leader and governor of the people:

but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the Lord, lest he break forth upon them; it required the immediate presence of Moses below, and immediate care was to be taken by him, lest the priests and people, led by a vain curiosity, should attempt to ascend the mount, and come where God was, to see if they could observe any likeness of him; which would so provoke him, that in just retaliation, as they had broke through the bounds set, he would break forth on them by inflicting sudden death upon them.

Ver. 25. *So Moses went down to the people,* etc.] As the Lord commanded him:

and spake unto them: charging them to keep their distance, and not presume to pass the line he had drawn, or the foss or fence he had made: in the Jerusalem Targum it is added,

“come and receive the ten words;”

the decalogue or ten commands; and the Targum of Jonathan,

“come and receive the law with the ten words;”

the ten commandments of the law, which are delivered in the following chapter.