

God's Purpose in Exodus 19-20

The solemn repetition of the moral Law.

§ 25. Based on this study, it is quite apparent that knowledge of the divine Law was not only naturally inherent in people's minds but also was, before Moses, repeated frequently by God's voice both immediately and through the patriarchs. In fact, the rewards given to the obedient and the punishments called down upon the transgressors of the Law are an obvious sign of the divine judgment by which God revealed that He is the author and defender of His Law. Even so, **it pleased divine Wisdom to establish the solemn, public promulgation of the Law on Mount Sinai and to give it to the people of Israel amid the blare of trumpets and roll of thunder after they had been led out of Egypt....**

The reasons the Law was given.

§ 26. The more significant reasons why that solemn promulgation and repetition of the Law occurred are these:

(1) **Because through sin the knowledge of the Law given to the minds of men in the first creation was erased and dimmed.** In fact, that full and perfect light of knowledge was part of the divine image. Therefore when man lost the image of God through the fall, that light of natural knowledge was also extinguished so that barely a tiny remnant and trace remains. Eph. 5:8: "For once you were darkness." Natural knowledge is aware that the more serious outward sins are forbidden by the Law. But it does not understand that the inner corruption of our nature and the first impulses of concupiscence are sin. Therefore God wanted to restore, so to speak, the full and genuine meaning of the Law and to repair the defectiveness of our natural light by that solemn publication of the Law. ...

(2) The second reason is that among the Canaanites and other peoples many depraved practices had been accepted into their bad behavior and had been confirmed by long custom. The people considered these as the law of nature. **Therefore it had to be made manifest by the public repetition of the moral Law so that natural ideas would be congruent with the eternal rule of righteousness, which is in God.** It also had to be shown that the norm of God-pleasing righteousness is not what pleases corrupt reason nor is it the example of the heathen. Rather, it is the Commandments of the living God. Lev. 18:3-4: "You shall not do according to the work of the land of Egypt nor according to the work of the land of Canaan. You shall not walk in their statutes. You shall do My judgments and observe My statutes."...

(3) It is because **a large crop of corrupt inclinations clings to human nature, which has been corrupted and depraved so wretchedly by sin.** By their assault, as if by a whirlwind, we are too often caught up and thrown headlong into very serious sins. As a result, God wanted a public testimony to exist that the natural knowledge of the Law has been engrafted divinely into our minds, so that the mind may be fortified thereby in resistance against those corrupt inclinations. In this way also one has a greater respect for the conscience. Rom. 7:23: "I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind."

(4) It is because **people do not recognize the inner filthiness of their nature but are fascinated by their admiration of outward discipline and "try to establish their own righteousness before God" (Rom. 10:3).** Therefore the solemn publication of the Law was to show God's judgment against sin "so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world be made accountable before God" (Rom. 3:19), and so that we, acknowledging our wretchedness, may hurry to Christ, the true Physician of the soul. Those are the more important reasons for that solemn publication; the other reasons coincide with them. (*On The Law of God*, Gerhard, p.24-25)

Nation Building

Genesis 12:2 I will make you **a great nation**; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall **be a blessing**.

Genesis 18:18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become **a great and mighty nation**, and all the **nations of the earth shall be blessed** in him?

Genesis 26:4 “And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and **in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed**; (also Gen. 28:14 “...the dust of the earth; ...and in you and **in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed**).

Genesis 35:11 And God said unto him {Jacob}, I *am* God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; **a nation and a company of nations** shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

Exodus 19:4-6, “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be **a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine**: ⁶ **And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation**. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”

What preceded the solemn promulgation.

... § 27. Therefore [the following] preceded that promulgation of the Decalogue: the long slavery of the Israelites in Egypt, the ten horrifying plagues with which God struck the Egyptians. ... Also: the miraculous and astounding exodus out of Egypt by God's strong hand and outstretched arm; the separating of the Red Sea, providing a crossing for the children of Israel; the column of smoke and fire as their guide along the way; the drowning of Pharaoh and his entire army when they pursued them into the Red Sea; the sweetening of the waters at Marah; the miraculous supply of quail; the quick destruction of those who murmured; the falling of manna like dew; water brought from the rock; the glorious victory won over the Amalekites.

God wanted these many great wonders to stir up the hearts of the Israelites to receive the teaching of the Ten Commandments. The memory of their former slavery and their current freedom ought to have stirred them up to **love so beneficent a Lawgiver**. Memory of the plagues against the Egyptians, the drowning of Pharaoh, and the destruction of the complainers should have struck them **with fear, lest they set themselves against the divine commands**.

The things that followed.

§ 30. In regard to the manner of the promulgation, there remains yet to be considered the things that followed [τὰ ἐπόμενα]. Certain miraculous occurrences followed the promulgation of the Law, as, for instance, the fact that **Moses climbed the mountain again** and stayed on it for forty days and forty nights without eating food or drinking water (Exod. 24:18; Deut. 9:9); the fact that God led the children of Israel around in the wilderness for **forty whole years** to test them and to learn what was in their hearts, as to whether or not they wanted to observe His commandments (Deut. [8]:2); that their clothing did not wear out that entire time, their shoes did not fall apart with age, nor did their feet swell with their constant travels (v. 4); and that the Israelites finally were led into the Promised Land which flowed with milk and honey (v. 7). **With each and every one of these things, God wanted to give a witness to His people of His goodness, power, and majesty and to invite them to observe His Law.** (*On The Law of God*, Gerhard, p.26, 31)