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God Lays Down the Law

Exodus 19:3-24:18; 32:1-34:35

Introduction

It would be impossible to measure the impact of the Ten Commandments on human history. They have formed a model for morality and ethical living in every culture where they have been known. The Ten Commandments are without parallel. Yet they are but a part of the larger framework of the covenant which God made with Israel at Sinai. This whole section, which continues through 24:18, is different from the narrative passages that precede it. This lesson will serve to place the Ten Commandments in the context of the Book of Exodus. Serious consideration of the Commandments themselves is a study in its own right. Therefore it will not be the aim of this chapter to deal exclusively with the Ten Commandments.

Period of Preparation, 19:3-25

God was about to give the most significant revelation of His character and will that man had ever received. But it was made clear that man is never to rush into the presence of God without a sense of His holiness. Before the exposition of the covenant, there was a necessary period of preparation where the holiness of God is stressed over against the humanness and sinfulness of man. There are at least ten basic assertions which unfold in chapter 19 to emphasize the preparatory requirements for the giving of the covenant.

1. The requirements for preparation were God's demands, not Moses' (19:3).
2. The people were to call to remembrance God's past blessings and deliverances (19:4).
3. The promises of the covenant were to be conditional based on the people's obedience to God (10:5-6).
4. The promises and preparations must be confirmed by the positive commitment of the people (19:7-8).
5. Three days were required for preparation to stress the need for personal holiness (19:9-11).
6. The mountain was considered off limits to anyone but Moses and Aaron (19:12-13).
7. Purification rites, including ritual washing and sexual abstinence, stressed the need for holiness (19:14-15).
8. God revealed Himself in mystery and majesty (19:16-18).
9. God proposed to communicate His covenant through Moses (19:19-20).

10. No one was to come directly to God but Moses (19:21-25).

This time of preparation was solely for the purpose of preparing the people for the special revelation of the covenant. The people needed to know that these words were directly from God, they were extremely significant, and they were for their benefit.

It is clear from the outset that this is a covenant agreement. In fact, there is general agreement among commentators that this is an example of a typical covenant often made between a sovereign lord and a vassal or under lord. Lesser kings or servants would make such covenants pledging their loyalty to a sovereign king or overlord. These covenants were common in the Ancient Near East and they had a certain format. This covenant formulary may be observed in the exposition of God's covenant to Israel. This means that God was clearly making a covenant with the Hebrews, and He was using a format familiar to the culture to leave no doubt about His intentions. Each such agreement included the following:

- 1) The overlord or king offering the covenant would identify himself.
- 2) The overlord would list all past benefits bestowed on the vassal recipient.
- 3) The larger portion of the treaty stated obligations demanded by the overlord.
- 4) Absolute loyalty of the vassal to the overlord was demanded. There could be no other foreign alliances, treaties, covenants, or other commitments.
- 5) A list of consequences, usually in the form of curses, was given as applied to those who broke the covenant.
- 6) A list of blessings and benefits was given to encourage obedience for those who were enjoined to keep the covenant.
- 7) The covenant was written as a continual reminder so it could be preserved.
- 8) The covenant was renewed by a ceremonial re-reading or reenactment in order to remind adherents of their obligations.
- 9) A list of divine witnesses to attest and affirm the covenant was given.
- 10) The covenant finally was sealed with a sacrificial offering.

Such treaties were a common part of life in the time of the exodus. Many of the Hittite covenants have been discovered by archeologists in recent years. These covenants follow the same pattern outlined above and show the cultural relevance of the covenant promises of Sinai. The covenant that God made with Israel favorably compares with these early law codes in form, but it goes beyond them in content. Yahweh's covenant set Israel apart as His special elect nation. This special status of being a "holy nation" was based on commitments on man's and God's part.

Every part of the covenant was important and interdependent, just as faith and election are independent yet inseparable. All believers are elect. Faith does not force God to save a believer, and election does not compel man to believe. Trust produces

obedience, and election produces a sovereign rule by God. All leads man to holiness, faith, election, service, and divine sovereignty so that they are bound together inseparable but independent. Unfortunately for Israel, the matter of election became a point of pride. They understood the part of the covenant regarding their being a specifically chosen people. They never did learn their corresponding responsibility to be a kingdom of priests. Jonah presents us with a good example of this pride of heritage with a lack of responsibility or even feeling for the gentile world (see Jonah 4:10-11). From this background, we shall move to the consideration of the basic terms of the covenant itself. The Ten Commandments are the basic stipulations, but the covenant also includes the so-called "Book of the Covenant" (20:22-23:33) which gives additional specific amplifications of the Ten Commandments.

Record and Revelation of the Ten Words, 20:1-21

The purpose of the consideration of the Ten Commandments in this study is to set it in the context of the book of Exodus. There will be no attempt at a thorough exposition and application for the commandments, for this would be a study in itself. It will be impossible, however, to consider these commandments without making some observations with regard to their moral and spiritual purpose. This is the purpose of this section. The Ten Commandments are also called "The Ten Words," based on this statement in Exodus 20:1, "and God spoke all these words...."

There is some division of opinion regarding the exact numbering of the commandments. The Jewish faith, for example, makes "I am Yahweh your God" (20:2) commandment number one. Commandment two includes: no other gods, no other images, no bowing down, and no serving images (20:3-4). Commandment three is no misuse of the name of Yahweh (20:7); Commandment four, remember the Sabbath (20:11); Commandment five, honor your parents (20:12); six, there shall be no killing (20:13); seven, there shall be no adultery (20:14); eight, there shall be no stealing (20:15); nine, there shall be no false witness (20:16); ten, there shall be no covetousness (20:17). The usual order followed by evangelicals is as follows:

20:1-2	I am the Lord	Preamble
20:3	no other gods	1
20:4-6	no images	2
20:7	no misuse of the name	3
20:8-10	remember the Sabbath	4
20:12	honor father and mother	5
20:13	no killing	6
20:14	no adultery	7
20:15	no stealing	8
20:16	no false witness	9

20:17

no coveting

10

The essential truths are there no matter how the commandments are numbered. Page Kelly notes three essential truths in the preamble, which set the pattern for all the commandments. First, Yahweh alone is the Lord God. Second, He alone speaks to mankind. Third, He alone gives guidance to mankind in their daily living.

There is a balance of **religion morality** in the Ten Commandments. The first five have to do with man's relation to God. The second five have to do with human interrelationships (the table included with the notes on this lesson, entitled "THE TEN WORDS," shows the content of the two tablets of the Ten Commandments).

The Ten Commandments represent a summary of the principles behind the laws of God, J. Phillip Hyatt, *Exodus*, p. 207. It is these principles by which He expects His people to live. Jesus made this very clear in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1-7:29. These principles were given to Israel as an offer of grace. The Hebrews accepted them freely and their response was based on gratitude for what God had done for them. When the Bible refers to the "law," it is usually referring to the *torah*, which is the first five books of the Bible, also known as the "law of Moses."

While the Ten Commandments have a negative form, they do not represent a negative attitude. The negative form is a universal form of law which allows the most freedom. It limits one's actions only in a certain area. Positive law forms, however, limit action to a specific area and, as a result, freedom is limited. All the commandments were given in the second person singular, "you shall not...." This gives their application a wide but balanced scope, combining corporate and individual aspects of Hebrew life and thought. They thought in terms of the corporate responsibility of the nation as a collective singular as well as individual responsibility.

The First Commandment, 20:2-3. The Ancient Near East was noted for varied forms of worship and the multiplied number of gods in every culture. Recall that the number in Egypt alone was about twelve hundred during one period. Yahweh was Israel's god and He demanded exclusive worship and confession that there were no other gods, see Deut 32:39. The Hebrews were not just to worship Him, but they were specifically prohibited from the worship of any other god.

The reasons for this prohibition are obvious. There was only one true god. To allow worship of other gods would only invite confusion. Israel's belief in the exclusive worship of Yahweh was the feature that distinguished her from her neighbors. It was a unifying factor in theological and cultural life.

The Second Commandment, 20:4-6. The unique nature of Yahweh worship was further emphasized by the prohibition of images or any physical representation of God. It was to be made clear that Yahweh was not just another deity. No physical likeness would be adequate to represent the power, majesty, and holiness of God. Israel was careful to obey His commandment. No image or physical representation of any kind has ever been found in archaeological excavations.

The Third Commandment, 20:7. Names were extremely significant in Hebrew life. A person's name was chosen to declare the content of the character of an individual. Also, knowledge of a name was considered intimate information. For one to disclose his name to another was to convey an attitude of trust and friendship. Knowledge of the name of a deity was thought to give the enlightened person power over that deity.

Taking the name of God in vain refers to careless, frivolous, or irreverent use of the divine personal name of Yahweh. The name Yahweh was written in the text without vowels as YHWH. The Hebrews were so careful with the divine name that it was never spoken audibly. When the name was encountered in reading, it was pronounced *Adonai*, which is the Hebrew word for Lord. The sacred name was spoken once a year by the high priest when he gave the blessing on the Day of Atonement. All other spoken usage of the divine name was forbidden. Use of the divine name as an epithet or a profane curse word was considered the height of blasphemy.

The Fourth Commandment, 20:8-11. The Sabbath, as a regular weekly observance, is mentioned in Exodus 16:23. The law of the Sabbath provided a day of rest and relaxation for those who had worked hard for six days. The implications of the Sabbath grew out of Genesis 2:1-2 when God rested on the seventh day. There, the institution of the Sabbath as a perpetual observance teaches the following important lessons:

- 1) God has provided the Sabbath rest as an act of grace for all people.
- 2) Rest is a needed and valuable activity.
- 3) The need for rest also implies the need for work.
- 4) God has personally blessed and sanctified the Sabbath (Gen 2:3).
- 5) Claiming our rest from God becomes a matter of faith. There is a limit to what man can accomplish by his activity and moral earnestness (Matt 11:28).
- 6) Since rest is an act of God's grace, it must be accepted as such in response.

The Sabbath had three distinct meanings in Jewish worship. It was a weekly observance to commemorate the conclusion of God's creative work. It was associated with the sabbatical year observed every seventh year (Exod 23: 9-11; Lev 25:1-7;

Deut 15:1-6). It was also associated with the Year of Jubilee observed at the end of seven sabbatical years (Lev 25:8-17).

Remembering the Sabbath was an act of faith as well as an act of rest. It was a demonstration of obedience to the command of God. It was affirmation of the fact that God blessed and hallowed the Sabbath and those who faithfully observed it. The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, Saturday. Today the Christian community worships on Sunday, the first day of the week. It is the Lord's Day. It is not correct to assume that the New Testament Christians merely transferred their observance of the Sabbath to that of the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day is the day of worship for New Testament Christians in the first century AD and now (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:1-2). What happened to the Sabbath? Just as Christ became our universal sacrifice for sin (Heb 10:10-18; Gal 3:13; Matt 20:28; Rom 5:10-11), He is also our Sabbath rest (Heb 4:1-13).

The Fifth Commandment, 20:12. Following the relationship of a person with God, his/or her relation to their parents also was of vital importance. Respect for parents is one of the cardinal rules of stable family life. It places great responsibility on the parent to act in a manner worthy of respect, although this is not a pre-condition for the validation of the command. Our relation with our parents will reveal something of our relation with God. They perform the same roles and functions on a physical level that God does on a spiritual one.

One mistake often made with this commandment is the conclusion that it only applies to small children. Some people incorrectly conclude that once they reach adulthood, they are no longer bound by this command. It is very likely that the commandment was written to apply primarily to elderly parents who, at that time, had nowhere else to live but the home of a son or a daughter.

This commandment is very important for youth. One's ability to relate to his parents always reveals something of his ability, or lack of it, to relate properly to God. Later when a young person has a home of his own, his attitude toward his parents will be a great factor in determining the attitude of his own children toward him.

The Sixth Commandment, 20:13. Human beings are created in the image of God. This basic fact demands a reverence for life. We are not surprised therefore that malicious taking of life is expressly forbidden. The word translated "kill" may also be translated "murder". This is not to say that some killing is permitted as long as it is accidental. We must maintain a sense of the sacredness of all life. At the same time, the Bible made provision for the use of the death penalty for crimes which were a threat to society and all life in general (Exod 21:15, 17, 22, 23, 29; 22:19). Reverence for life includes the responsibility to take the life of those who destroy life.

The Seventh Commandment, 20:14. One wife is the high standard which the Scripture holds forth. Adultery was expressly forbidden. It is true that many of those in the Bible who had multiple wives were committing adultery. They cannot be excused by saying they were faithful only to the wives that they married. We can understand, however, that in a society where polygamy was the normal situation, it was hard to break from this tradition. They had many wives, but this does not mean it was right or good. Remember, the Bible gives us the faults and failures of many of the heroes of faith as well as the victories. Sexual purity in marriage has always been the tension under which the scripture places man.

The Eighth Commandment, 20:15. This commandment endorses a man's right to own property as a God-given right. No one is to take by stealth that which is not his own property. Stealing should be replaced by honest work (Eph 4:28). Stealing may apply to people as well as objects. It is just as wrong to steal another person's mate as it is his car.

The Ninth Commandment, 20:16. This commandment forms the basis of the right of every man to a fair trial. Every person has the right to defend himself against malicious abuse of untruths and false accusation. If accused, one should have his day in court to have the opportunity of clearing his name. Also, we have the responsibility to report only that which is the truth in regard to our neighbor. This applies out of the courtroom as well as within.

The Tenth Commandment, 20:17. Covetousness is the seedbed of many other sins. It may result in taking property that is not our own. It may result in adultery. It may result in bearing false witness. One cannot harbor the desire for that which belongs to another without beginning to plot ways to take those things from him. Covetousness is not just wanting what someone else possesses. At its root, it is the failure to be satisfied with the blessings God has provided for us.

Purposes of the Law. The law was never intended to be a means of obtaining salvation. The New Testament exposed Jewish misuse of the law and clarifies its true purposes. First, it was God's means of exposing man's sinfulness (Rom 3:19-20). Second, it shows man the hideous nature of sin (Rom 7:8-13). Third, it illustrates the holiness of God. Fourth, it shuts us up to faith and causes us to come to Christ (Gal 3:24). Fifth, it is a restraint of immoral behavior and protection of the moral, social, and religious institutions of Israel.

In addition, Bernard Ramm in *His Way Out*, pp. 126-131, makes seven significant observations concerning the law:

1. The terms of the covenant and its moral tone is based on redemption (Exod 20:2).
2. The commandments have a universal character. They are not based on local custom or a certain culture.
3. The commandments are simple but absolute principles that form the basis for all moral law.
4. These commandments are without equal. No other moral or religious ethic has anything which parallels them.
5. The negative form of the commands allows a greater freedom. It allows those things outside the scope to be permissible and within the intent of the prohibition.
6. The commandments began by affirming belief in only one God. This made them timeless and worthy of consideration as part of Christian ethics.
7. The commandments assert the futility of any attempt to separate morality from religion. Although attempts have been made to set up a system of ethics or morality divorced from religion, the existence of the Ten Commandments shows us the futility of such an attempt. The Ten Commandments cannot be replaced with any other ethical or moral code.

The People's Request, 20:18-21. The immediate reaction of the people was fear in response to the physical phenomena. They saw the lightning, heard the thunder, and were afraid. This is a repeat of 19:16-17 with the addition that they requested Moses to be their mediator before the Lord. Perhaps the prohibitions and warnings that they should not even come near the mountain under penalty of death became full blown fears when they witnessed the physical rumblings.

Moses assured them that there was no need to fear. They needed to fear God by demonstrating their reverence, respect, and obedience of His commands. Moses announced that God had come to prove or test the severity of their faith and call the people to affirm His covenant.

The Book of the Covenant, 20:22-23:33

This section of Exodus is called the Book of the Covenant based on Moses' statement in Exodus 24:8. It is not a commentary on the Ten Commandments. It is a homogeneous whole which deals with specific cases which might be encountered in the society of the Hebrews of the period. Its purpose was to present situational illustrations of the application of the Ten Commandments. This section differs both in style and in content from the Ten Commandments. While the commandments are brief and comprehensive, this section is more elaborate and detailed. It was probably written to serve as a handbook of legal rulings to guide judges and elders who had the responsibility of administering justice.

The Book of the Covenant includes various regulations that apply to religious, domestic, and interpersonal relationships. Note the following sections:

1. Demands for exclusive worship of Yahweh (20:22-26)
2. Laws regulating Hebrew slaves (21:1-11)
3. Regulations concerning crimes of violence (21:12-36)
 - a. Homicide (21:12-14)
 - b. Violence to parents (21:15, 17)
 - c. Quarrels with injury (21:18-19)
 - d. Injuries to servants (21:20-21, 26-27)
 - e. Injuries to pregnant women (21:22-25)
4. Regulations concerning domestic animals (21:28-36)
5. Regulations regarding theft and restitution (22:1-17)
6. Evils of immorality discussed (22:18-31)
7. Ethics of neighborly conduct (23:1-9)
8. Warnings and exemptions of judgment (23:20-33)

Confirmation of the Covenant, 24:1-18

In this section of Exodus we are given the general reaction of the Hebrews to the ideas expressed in the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant. Moses presented the covenant by way of a ceremony that was very elaborate and deeply significant. Note the following:

1. Moses was clearly set forth as the mediator of the covenant (24:2). He alone was to come before the Lord to receive the terms of the covenant.
2. The covenant was made with all the people of Israel. They were all involved in the ceremony of ratification (24:3).
3. The covenant was sealed with a sacrificial offering (24:5-8).
4. The covenant was also sealed with the eating of a sacrificial meal (24:11).
5. The covenant terms were to be taught to all the people (24:12).
6. The covenant was to be preserved. God wrote them on two tablets of stone (24:12).

There are three times in the exposition of the covenant when the people promise to do all that God had said and to be obedient (Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7). In addition to this verbal affirmation, sacrifices were offered. Recall that Abraham made such an offering in connection with the covenant that God presented to him in Genesis 15:9-21.

It is stated two times that the seventy elders that Moses took up on the mount for ratification ceremonies saw the Lord (24:10, 11). What they actually saw is not related other than the sapphire stone under His feet. We can say that in spite of

this statement, there is no contradiction of 33:20 which says, "...there shall no man see me, and live." Perhaps this observation from Keil and Delitzsch says it best:

We must go beyond the limits drawn in 33:20-23 in our conceptions of what constituted the sight . . . of God; at the same time we must regard it as a vision of God in some form of manifestation which rendered the divine nature discernable to the human eye. Nothing is said as to the form in which God manifested himself.

This is the extent of our knowledge. The elders and Moses saw something that convinced them God was present. Beyond that, we are unable to say specifically what they did see (33:12-23).

A meal shared with another person was evidence of trust and friendship. The communion meal that is described in this chapter was God's way of sealing His relationship between Himself and Israel. Nothing is said as to what they drank or what they ate. But, the fact that they ate and drank was one of the strongest ways in ancient culture of expressing the unity of God and man.

A Golden Calf, Broken Tablets, and a New Covenant, 32:1-34:35

Just how many times Moses went up to Sinai in the process of the giving of the law is not clear. It does seem evident that he went up more than once. The episode of the golden calf came at the end of the exposition of the covenant when Moses was gone up to receive the tablets of stone. It is ironic that this breaking of the covenant followed the threefold affirmation to do all the words which God had commanded the people (19:8; 24:3, 7).

Moses was gone for forty days and the people wondered if he would ever return. They called for Aaron to make gods, visible gods which could be handled. The Hebrews wanted gods like the gods of their neighbors. The calf or young bull was a typical figure used in idol worship. The bull was a symbol of vigor and strength among cultures of the Ancient Near East. It was used in Canaanite worship as a representation of the god Baal. It is clear therefore that we may trace Israel's later problems with Baal worship to this very incident. The bull was used in Egyptian worship of the god Apis. So this whole episode is both a throwback to the past and a precursor of the future.

The episode with the golden bull seems so out of place. In the midst of the revelation of the covenant and in light of all the miraculous ways God had sustained them, it seems hard to believe they would so easily turn to idols. Perhaps it is best stated by George A. F. Knight.

It is both curious and sad that human beings may at times become so irrational that they believe what they want to believe even when they know it to be false.

Exodus 32-34 is a unit. The first part of this unit (32:1-10) illustrates some important spiritual lessons.

1. It shows us the Hebrews were spiritually immature. As we observe them, we should remember that none of us is far from our own Egypt. Let us guard against the temptation to associate idol worship with images. The world is one immense idol which beckons to all of us. Let us take care to guard against neo-idolatry which replaces God with anything considered more important.
2. It shows us that a decline in faith is also accompanied by a decline in morality. The statements "rose up to play" (v. 16) and "broken loose" (v. 25) suggest the removal of all moral restraints.
3. It shows us the captivating power of idolatry. Is it not ironic that people can become so excited and enthusiastic in worship of those which are not gods?
4. It shows us that no one is immune to this grave sin. Aaron followed the directions of the people when we would have hoped he could have asserted a positive influence for purity in worship. Our position will increase our responsibility but not our immunity to temptation.

One of the great examples of intercessory prayer is that of Moses on behalf of the Hebrews (32:11-18). He presented three arguments against God's proposal to destroy the people and start a new nation with Moses (32:10). First, he affirmed that in spite of their sin, they were still the people of God (32:11). Second, he observed that the Egyptians will say that God brought them into the wilderness to destroy them. The accusation would be a reproach against God as well as the nation (32:12). Third, he called on God to remember the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (32:12).

The Bible says in 32:14 that God "repented" or some translations say He "relented" of His actions. The word used here is not the normal word for repent, which is *shuv*, it is the word *nacham*, which carries with it the root idea of compassion. The meaning is not that God changed His mind or that He regretted something that He previously determined to do, but that based on Moses' appeal, He would show them compassion. The repentance of God is a difficult subject in the Old Testament. To understand this aspect of Old Testament doctrine, we must remember that God's promises and warnings are always conditional on man's response. When man repents or changes directions, it is not so much that God has changed His mind, as it is that man has changed his mind. The Bible states unequivocally that God never "repents" or changes His mind in the same sense as do humans, see Mal 3:6-7.

Moses offered to let God blot him out of His book (32:32). It is unclear what the meaning of this may be. The issue at hand is that there was no provision whatsoever in the covenant on what to do if it were broken. Three times the people affirmed the covenant and agreed to obey it. Moses was gone forty days so they took matters into their own hands and promptly broke the covenant. The meaning of verse 32 is difficult to grasp. It may mean that Moses was asking God to count him as lost or as one who had never existed. Or, it may be a reference to a list of all living or a list of members of the Kingdom of God, and a request that if they were judged, blot him, not them from the Kingdom roster. The former suggestion seems to be the most likely, but this is a difficult passage to understand (32:35). It is clear that Moses was willing to offer himself if the covenant could not be restored.

Chapter 33 deals with one of the crucial issues of the Book of Exodus, the presence of God. The tent that is mentioned is not the tabernacle but the "tent" of meeting. It was not an assembly tent for the people, but the place where Moses went to consult Yahweh (33:11). The significance of its removal from the camp was to show that God does not abide where sin is allowed. It is the same issue that is raised in Ezekiel 10:1-22 when the glory of the Lord left the temple. When God departs, His presence must be renegotiated in repentance and confession of sin.

Another great prayer of Moses occurs at the end of chapter 33. This time he prays for his own spiritual renewal (33:12-23). Moses wanted to know the ways of God (33:13), and he wanted to know that God would be present (33:18). The request to see the glory of God was only granted in part, for no man can see God's face and live (33:20). So Moses was allowed to see the backward parts (*ahorim*) of God. While man can know something of God, the ultimate mystery of His nature is concealed from man's knowledge.

Chapter 34 relates the details of the renewed covenant. The first tablets of stone were broken by Moses (32:19-24), indicating that the covenant had been broken. With the renewal of the covenant came the renewal of the tablets of stone (34:1-9). The first covenant was conditional on the obedience of the people (19:5-6). The covenant as renewed by God was based on citizenship alone (34:6-7). This passage also represents a glorious exposition of the covenant name, Yahweh. The name is a synonym for God's moral perfection. It stands for the love, faithfulness, and righteousness of God. It reveals to us His holiness and His mercy.

The covenant revealed in 19:5-6 was for believers and was based on voluntary trust and obedience. The covenant in chapter 34 is for all Israelites, believers or not (33:10-28). It was unconditional, based on His mercy and steadfast love. This covenant came in answer to the crucial issue which Moses had raised. Will God still be with Israel? The covenant came as a resounding yes!

The central focus of the passage is Exodus 34:1-10. Here God reveals the meaning of the divine name, Yahweh, and explains the content of His own character. Note especially verses 5 and 6. The personal name, Yahweh, is used to say that *Yahweh descended and proclaimed the [meaning] of the name of Yahweh*. This is a marvelous revelation that follows in verses 6-7. *Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands [of generations], forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing or excusing the guilty, visiting [the consequences] of the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation.*

After the statement of the renewal of the tablets (34:1-5) and exposition of the covenant name (34:6-8) came the stipulations of the renewed covenant. It is not surprising to discover that stress was placed on the first four commandments. Israel was encouraged to put God first and be done with idols, images, and people who used them (34:11-17). Also, there is the exposition of specific details of the feast days of Israel (34:18-26).

The disclosure of the radiant countenance of Moses (34:29-35) is indeed intriguing. Moses had been with God forty days and nights. When he came back to the people, he radiated with the glow of glory. It was a witness to the people that he actually talked to God. Paul makes a curious use of this incident in 2 Corinthians 3:7-16. He states that Moses covered his face because the people could not look upon his radiance. The reason is that their minds were blinded because of their sin (3:14). In Christ we have the same opportunity Moses had to come and experience the glory of God (3:18). It should indeed be an experience that changes our countenance and reveals the radiance of our faith and our commitment to the Christ who came to reveal to us the glory and majesty of the Father (Heb 1:1-4). The account of Moses' transfiguration is also a forerunner of Jesus' transfiguration (Matt 17:1-8). Is it not ironic and very interesting that Moses was one of the two who appeared with Jesus at that time? Moses' earlier transfiguration on Sinai was prophetic of his meeting with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

CONCLUSION

There is so much that could be said with regard to the relevance of the law revealed at Sinai. It speaks to us most profoundly about the nature of the God who gave the commandments and stipulations of the law. It should be constantly remembered that the exposition of the covenant was not for God's benefit but for man's. Man was commanded to keep the commandments, not because God derives some moral good from their being kept, but because they are intended for the benefit of man (Deut 10:13) that he may reach his ultimate potential. That potential will only be reached in relationship to God. God took the initiative of offering the covenant to man. This

itself speaks of the immeasurable love of the Father. That love is shown in His mercy, grace, longsuffering, and forgiveness when the covenant was broken. The whole episode is reminiscent of the affirmation of the Apostle Paul who tells us that nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:35-39).