

Part 5 Exodus 18.1-20.26 **"Excellence"** wrty **"Mission"**

INTROUCTION

This 5th part of Exodus is called after Metro, "Excellent" or "victorious" The name of this noble person characterises this part because he watched Moses as judge and prophet and proposed a more excellent way as did the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. He proposed that Moses specialise in counselling spiritually and others adjudge cases where possible.

*Here is the excellence of divine teaching; of Israel's national **MISSION**; of the commandments for neighbourly and godly conduct and the word of God to teach conviction and faith are presented. In furtherance of Israel's mission excellence in every area of life was sought as a testimony to the God who redeemed His people.*

READING NO.1 18.1-12

THE LORD IS EXCELLENT IN COVENANT LOVE

Exodus 18 .1-26

God is celebrated in victory. Moses teaches -showing the brilliance of God's Torah's

And Jethro the priest of Midian, father-in-law of Moses, heard of all that the Strong One had done for Moses and Israel His people because the LORD had brought His people from Egypt.

Jethro had taken Zipporah Moses' wife after Moses sent her back. And the two sons, the name of the first was Gershom, for he said, "I was a stranger in a foreign country. The name of the other was Eliezer for "the God of my Father has been my help and delivered me from Pharaoh's sword." And Jethro brought Moses his wife and two sons to the desert where he rested at the mountain of God. A happy family reunion now takes place as Moses and the people recover from the great battle with Amalek. It is at this point we realise the depletion of strength that this struggle involved. The time period that elapsed was several months Hort reckoned that the first series of plagues ran simultaneous with the annual July August Nile inundation and the last one was in March and in Exodus 19.1 we are told Israel took 3 months to reach Sinai so on this reckoning it is after a year's absence of leave that we find Moses and Zipporah reunited at Horeb. Jethro had announced, "I Jethro your father-in-law am coming to you with your wife and two sons". Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed and kissed him and they asked -each man from his caring shepherd like friend as to Shalom(the idea of "recompense" or "restoration" may be involved -seeing the attitude of Zipporah had been truculent on the way to Egypt and her dismissal is not recorded or the greeting may be simply fraternal and caring) and they came to the tent. Moses added to contr4act marriage affinity all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians on account of the burdens of Israel and all the weariness& exertion which they found on the way and how the LORD delivered them. And Jethro "united" on all the good things that the LORD had done for Israel whom He had save by His hand from Egypt.

The excellence of the LORD

And Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD who saved you from the hand of the Egyptians and Pharaoh and from under the hand of Egyptians. Now I know by personal experience that the LORD is "great" above all Strong Ones.(literally "wrestles" and "twists" or wins l dj) because in the house of the word which was "suspended" over them they were arrogant (Hebrew *wdz* they spurned the Word)Then Jethro father-in-law of Moses took a whole burnt offering and expiatory offerings for the Strong One and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came and ate bread with him before the face of the LORD What e are seeing here is Zipporah back not truculent but submissive. Jethro drawing the lesson of the humbling of Pharaoh's pride and he himself in utter humility submitting in full faith and penitence to the LORD. The "excellence of the LORD" is established in his heat.

READING No.2 18.13-23

EXCELLENT TEACHING GIVEN

The excellence o f God's teachings (Torahs)

And it came to pass next day that Moses sat to judge the people and they stood before him from morning till evening. Moses father in law saw all that was done for the people and said, "What is this thing you are doing? And why are you sitting alone and all the people standing like a monument from morning till eve? Moses said, "They are coming to me to seek God? When any matter happens among them they come to me and I judge between a man and his neighbour and give them a personal knowledge of the statutes of God and what he has pointed out Moses was spending time explaining the teaching of God's decrees in creation and Passover redemption and the need for substitution and sacrifice. This was time-consuming. Jethro said, "What you are doing is not fair or kind" The work was excellent but the method woeful. Both you and the people with you will be worn out for it is too heavy for you to do alone. You just listen and I will advise you and God will be with you. You shall be for the people before God and you shall bring the matters to God. You shall make the ordinances and the Torahs shine in brilliance for them and enable them to experience personally the way they should go and the things they should do or offer. And appoint from the people military men, who fear God, men of truth, men who hate prey and spoiling others over thousands hundreds fifties and tens. Let them judge the people round the clock and all great matters they shall bring to you and small matters they will judge and they will share the burden with you. If you do this and God commands you, you will be able to

stand to minister and all this people will go to their place in peace (mml v can means "their relational" or "marriage matters" sorted).

READING No.3 18.24-27 EXCELLENT WITNESS

Moses heeded all Jethro said. He appointed military leaders over thousands hundreds fifties and tens. They sorted smaller matters. They brought bigger affairs to him. Moses gave his father-in-law the send off of a messenger and he followed this way of life (Hebrew *Jlh* to walk the walk or "walk" with God) to the land that belonged to him

READING No.4 19.1-6 EXCELLENT MISSION

(SPEECH No.50)Exodus 19 .1-20.7(v.9) 

The excellence of Israel was to be the nation's holiness

In the third month from the going of the children of Israel from Egypt to the very day they came to the desert of Sinai. *It was the day of worship.* And they struck camp from Rephidim and come to the desert of Sinai and camped in the desert. There Israel camped before Horeb. And Moses went up to God and the LORD called to him from the mountain saying, "Thus say to the House of Jacob(*The ancient prophetic "Thus saith the Lord" promises a wonderful covenant relationship of care-symbolised by the eagle which swoops under her young and bears them up as she trains them to leave the nest and exercise faith and fly*) instruct the children of Israel, 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and seen me lift you upon eagles wings and bring you to myself. Now if you hear and obey (or constantly obey) my voice and keep my covenant you will be to me a special property (Hebrew *hlqs* meaning "possession") above all people for all the earth is mine. And you will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'"

These are the words of action you shall speak to the children of Israel.

READING No.5 19.7 -13 EXCELLENT REVELATION

Moses called the elders and placed before them all the words the LORD had commanded.

Holy Obedience is thorough

And all the people answered as one, "Everything the LORD commanded we will do." Moses brought back the people's business like words to the LORD.

(51)Exodus 19 .9 

And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold I am coming to you in a dark cloud on the opposite side of the valley -the people will hear my words with you and also trust in you for ever" And Moses proclaimed the words of the people to God *There are no new words here but there is a Haggidah on the words-an explanation. They were swiftly spoken -full of good intent. Moses gave the context of the commitment.*

(52)Exodus 19.10 -13 

The LORD said to Moses "Go to the people, sanctify them today and tomorrow and have them wash their garment. And Let them be ready before for the third day for in it the LORD will flow down before the eyes of all the people on Mt Sinai. *The third person style shows that the speaker is Christ and the Father is going to make His presence known on Mount Sinai.*

And there shall be limits for the people around the mountain-so say "guard against going up into the mountain and touching its lower base. Anyone who touches the mountain will gradually die. No hand will touch him but being stoned he will be stoned to death or being shot he shall be killed whether man or beast it will not live. Draw near to the mountain at the blast of the trumpet. *Ever after on the 50th year Jubilee was proclaimed (Lev.24)*

READING No.6 19.14-19 EXCELLENT PURITY

Exodus 19 14-20

Holy obedience allows no dross

Moses went down and sanctified the people. *In this context refraining from man-woman contact was demanded-this is not a fast track to holiness.* They washed their garments. He said, "Be ready the third day. No intercourse is allowed. And it came to pass on the third day there were thunderings (*literally "calling voices" lqq*) and lightning(*"glittering swords" associated with victory*)and a glory cloud over the mountain and a voice of a shophar increasing greatly(*human blasts peter out-this one increased*)so the people in the camp hastened to be ready. And Moses brought the people from the camp to meet God and they kept standing on and on. Mt. Sinai was completely in smoke from the presence of the LORD coming down in fire and its smoke went up like that of an iron smelting furnace-all the mountain trembled.

And when the voice of the trumpet went on and grew strong Moses spoke and the LORD answered in an audible voice. And the Lord came down on the top of the mountain and called Moses up and Moses went up. The trumpet again increased in sound and then a voice which distinctly called "Moses" and asked that he come to the summit. *This was the very first "Summit conference ever".*

READING No.7: 19.20-20.21 EXCELLENT TORAH REQUIRING OBEDIENCE

(53)Exodus 19 21-23 Holy Obedience is continuous

The LORD said to Moses "Go down, warn the people lest they break through to see God and fall dead. Likewise the priests who approach near the LORD let them keep sanctifying themselves lest the LORD separate them from Him. And Moses said to the LORD, "You warned us to set bounds lest any come near!"

(SPEECH No.54)Exodus 19 24 -25

And The LORD said to him, "Go down and come up-Aaron and yourself-but let not the priests or people break through the cordon to come up to the LORD lest He separate from them". And Moses went down to the people and said this to them

*This "up and down" the mountain session with Moses comments on God's original "bounds" is to tell us that if any one will continually live a sanctified life like Moses he may approach. That is why Moses has to re-think God's intentions. "Without holiness no man can see God" but "blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" are the exact words of God in Christ on the mount. God could see the priestly intent was a short-term holiness-not the settled purpose of their lives-not an inner work of His Spirit. Moses -and Aaron were men of a different Spirit. It was not that God now wanted a huge body of Israel to scale the mountain but God sought through the future of Israel priestly holiness and personal holiness of the same sort with that now being demonstrated. The whole future of approaching God was to be coloured by the thoroughness or **excellence** of obedient holiness. The Lord was teaching continual holiness in the priests not just these days but when they would come before God in future. They were not yet officially appointed but in Aaron they were even now known and considered to have been called. The serious warning to the people was that they would get no further-they clearly were indifferently prepared. The LORD knows the heart. Had they been well prepared the whole event may have had quite another outcome? Moses was initially surprised that God would allow others to come up-had they been ready.*

Chapter 20

The effect of the law holy just & good is to emphasise:

1. The excellence of the LORD

And Strong Ones (God) spoke all these oracles for enlightenment.

I am the LORD your Strong Ones who performed you're going forth from Egypt from the house of slaves.

The introduction sets a free people before its liberating loving Saviour and Protector

There shall be no lingering or hindering gods above me *The Hebrew word "above" [א] means that the LORD desires such a relationship as allows no other gods to be "with" (as in "relationship with" or "possessed" cf. marriage) or "above" in the sense of "near" or "from above"(in the sense that only God is sovereign in the heavens) This is the whole effect of the mighty illustration of God's coming down from on high with such power and glory at Sinai*

2. The excellence of the God of the covenant

You shall not make for yourself an image of any form that appears (*Hebrew hnmmt*) **which is in or from the house of heaven or which is from that elevating itself** *Hebrew [mm]* **in the house of the earth beneath or that is in the waters under the earth. You shall not worship or serve them for I the LORD your Strong Ones am a God burning with zeal (jealous), visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon sons to the third and fourth generations of those who belong to hating me as an enemy and engaging in covenant with thousands who belong to and love me and keep my commandments.** *This commandment divides mankind into those who choose to follow the "enemy" of the soul and those who are in covenant with the LORD who "love" Him and breathe after or delight in Him.*

3. The excellence of the Name of the LORD

You shall not lift up the name Yahweh(LORD) Strong Ones wickedly falsely emptily (*Hebrew anv*) **for the LORD will not keep free from punishment the one who links his name with wickedness lies or vanity(folly)** *This statement does not preclude forgiveness but it warns that those who into the future continue such practice will find no pardon. Cursing and swearing must cease from the tongue of the redeemed*

Exodus 20 .8-17

4. The excellence of weekly Rest

Remember the day of the Sabbath to keep it holy. Six days you shall serve and do all your prescribed work or service(*Hebrew hkal m -cf Joseph's prescribed work in Gen 39.11 or public work as in Esther 9.3*) **The seventh day is a rest belonging to the LORD your God. You shall not do any directed service; you or your son or daughter man-servant or maid-servant or the stranger within your gates; for six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them and He rested in the house of a day of the Sabbath; for that reason the LORD continually blesses the Sabbath day and will continually set it apart.** *Several major lessons are here for all of humanity. First, we are to count*

our service to others is not binding on the day of rest and worship-though that may be difficult of implementation as we are now organised. Second, God spoke these words and said specifically that He made all created things in 6 days. We should think carefully before we contradict Him. Third, God was thinking ahead to the time when Jews in cities would have responsibility for opening & closing gates and applying this principle for rest & worship in the face of perpetual trade. Fourth, God "blesses" or stoops as He stooped in Eden and on that first Sabbath to celebrate His creation. We should also stoop or certainly sit to receive His blessing as we worship. Fifth-man by constitution needs weekly rest and this provision is a command for all mankind. Finally, though we presently observe Sunday since the Resurrection of Christ as our day of joy and worship related to the "New Creation" of a purchased salvation the "sanctity" of the Sabbath can hardly be eclipsed without doing disservice to the will of God. The first Jewish church held the matter in tension giving due weight to both considerations-else would Paul not have spoken regularly in Synagogue. The Sabbath was instituted after Egyptian slavery with a view to placing man under God with his liberties entire. It must be that lands where the Sabbath is proscribed cannot maintain their God intended liberties.

5. The excellence of long life

Honour your father and mother that your days may be caused to be long upon the land which the LORD your God gives you There is something special about the Hebrew Hiphil tense. It brings into play similar grace as was shown to Hezekiah. The idea is that God can "prolong" our days or grant long life (cf. 1 Kings 3.14) In Psalm 91.16 as in Psalm 21.5 David was given in response to prayer just such long life. He did, however, care for his parents for he sent them to Moab in time of danger so he was in a position to request this mercy. The teaching here is that we should do honour to parents. This can be "by sacrifice" for them; by maintaining their faith testimony in our life; by holding their memory precious.

6. The excellence of self-control

You shall do no murder (Hebrew *jxr* means acting violently so as to "dash to pieces"-it is not the traditional word "to kill" *lfq* which means killing many or homicide-so the command is not to be fiercely angry go off the handle and more by sudden loss of control than by design do grievous bodily harm to someone from which that person will die. Jesus spoke of such an eventuality when He said, "Whoever is angry with his brother without cause is in danger of judgment)

7. The excellence of marital faithfulness

You shall not commit adultery (Hebrew *pan* refers to both male and female sin in consorting with the wife or husband of another person or another unpartnered person of the opposite sex whilst in a marriage relationship. It does not refer to fornication *huz*) The command seeks to advance faithfulness in marital relationships

8. The excellence of respect for property

You shall not steal (Hebrew *bnj* from the Arabic "side" hence "to take from the side"-Also "to deceive" used of Jacob deceiving Laban by stealing away secretly. The command seeks to establish the opposite-openness and respect for the property of others.

9. The excellence of truth/ integrity

You shall not testify or answer in the house of your neighbour a false witness. The witness is not necessarily in a legal setting. It is primarily to do with telling lies in domestic or neighbourhood situations. The word "false" means "coloured" so that the truth is doctored as we would say. This command is enhanced by our Saviour who said, "Let your "yea" be "yea" and your "nay" "nay".

10. The excellence of right pleasures

You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, manservant, maid, ox, ass or anything which belongs to your neighbour. Hebrew *dmj* means "to desire as the dearest thing". Job 20.20 "The wicked will not spare anything he desires"

Exodus 20 .18-21

The excellence of God's word and promise

And all the people were looking at the voices of thunder, the lightnings, the voice of the trumpet and the mountain smoking-the people saw and were moving to and fro and standing at a distance. And they said to Moses "You speak with us and we will make ourselves attentive. Let not God speak His affairs to us lest we die. And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear for belonging to the house of passing through God has come to test you and in the house of transition His fear will be before your faces that you may not sin" God was dealing with a people who were very susceptible to sin involving their neighbours in the huge tented city where they lived. The principle factor to dispose them to victory over sin would be a right love of God and their neighbour. The Old Testament reverence for God is called "the fear of the LORD" Moses gives reason why it applied. The people were in transition not so much from one land to another-but from one ownership to another (Hebrew *rwbl*) They had not come to LOVE the Lord and so this tangible lesson was necessary at this time. They compare with the sinner who is convicted of sin but not yet rejoicing in new life.) **So the people stood afar but Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.** The word *lgr* [blends "cloud" and "dark" conveying the notion of a frightening place-but to Moses, one who deeply loved Yahweh this was an inviting and special place.

SUMMARY 20 22-26 EXCELLENT WORSHIP

And the LORD said to Moses, "Speak thus to the children of Israel. You are watching because I have constantly been talking business to you from heaven. You shall not make gods of silver or gold for yourselves. You shall make me an altar of red clay and sacrifice on it burnt offerings and peace offerings sheep and oxen in every place where I cause my name to be remembered and I will come to you and bless you. *The people were on the move-during their transition they would stop. This Sinai experience would immediately come to mind as the most vivid experience of a lifetime. There they would build a simple altar and make the specified sacrifice to show total commitment and to testify to the peace in respect of sin that only Yahweh can give. Divine blessing would attend those who approached God in this manner of His choosing away into the future. This was a "Thus says the LORD" of old time-a prophetic statement.* **And if you build an altar to me you shall not build with cut stones for your cutting instrument has performed a threatening against it and it is profaned.** *The shaking of the hand and the venom of cutting is one and the same as if one were destroying the altar and setting up what pleases oneself not one's maker.* **And you shall not ascend by steps to my altar that your nakedness or uncleanness be not revealed** *This is another simple rule-but the LORD desires an altar which has a wholly spiritual purpose and is not prejudiced by yielding a view of the person or priest instead of a deep consciousness of the LORD.*

The End of Part 5 "Lightnings"