

• The story resumes from Rephidim

• 50 days to the law giving

• Sinai/Horeb

**Salvation by the blood of the lamb is only the beginning of God's purpose for His people**

• Passover to Sinai

• Passover to Pentecost – fulfilling the law by walking in the Spirit

• A covenant relationship

**Three types of covenant**

1. A covenant of generosity

• A mutual covenant

The story picks up from the last-mentioned location, Rephidim<sup>☞1</sup>. From Rephidim the Israelites travelled without any further stopping-places until they reached the uninhabited area around Mount Sinai. They arrived on the 'third new moon'. They had travelled from the 14th of the first month<sup>☞2</sup>, throughout the second month, and they arrived at the beginning of the third month, just under fifty days after the first and original passover. The Festival of Weeks<sup>☞3</sup> or 'harvest festival'<sup>☞4</sup> or 'Day of Pentecost'<sup>☞5</sup> was kept fifty days after Passover<sup>☞6</sup>. Fifty days after Passover became the traditional time for the anniversary of the giving of the law.

Verse 2 gives further detail. 'They set out from Rephidim and came to the wasteland of Sinai and they settled their camp in the wasteland. There Israel had their camp near the mountain'<sup>☞1</sup>.

'The mountain' is Mount Sinai, also called Horeb. It is probably in the south of what is now called the Sinai peninsula. As soon as they arrived 'Moses went up to God'<sup>☞1</sup>. He walks uphill to the lower slopes of the mountain. It is the place where the burning bush had been<sup>☞2</sup>, and where he had talked with God.

This is the next great lesson of the Bible: **salvation by the blood of the lamb is only the beginning of God's purpose for His people.** The newly redeemed people of God have been taken to Sinai. Redemption is with a view to worship. 'When you have brought the people out of Egypt you will worship God on this mountain', said God<sup>☞1</sup>. God saves us with a view to getting our lives to be under His guidance. The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed so that He might 'redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of His own who are zealous for good deeds'<sup>☞2</sup>. In fifty days God took Israel from Passover to Sinai. In fifty days God took the church from the shedding of Jesus' blood to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. God put Israel under His law. Applying Exodus 19–24 to ourselves, we shall see how God gives us the Spirit and we fulfil the law by walking in the Spirit. He takes us from Passover to Pentecost.

God is about to require that His people submit to a law-covenant. We shall learn some things about 'covenant' in this part of the Bible. 'God speaks: and Yahweh called to him from the from the mountain, "This is what you shall say to the family of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel..."'<sup>☞1</sup>. A covenant is a relationship between people where promises are given and are confirmed by the taking of an oath. There were different kinds of 'covenant' in the ancient world. In earlier parts of the Bible we have had covenants of generosity, in connection with the stories of Noah and Abraham. And we have seen a mutual covenant in connection with Abraham and Abimelech. Now we come to a covenant of imposed-obligation or a covenant of law.

In a **covenant of generosity** the senior partner is being generous and he swears to convey some blessing or benefit upon the other partner in the covenant. God's covenants with Noah and Abraham were 'covenants of generosity'.

In a **mutual covenant**, both partners take an oath. There is no 'mutual' covenant with God. God is always the senior in the covenant relationship.

☞1 17:1, 7

☞2 12:6, 29

☞3 34:22

☞4 23:16

☞5 Acts 2:1

☞6 Lev 23:16

☞1 19:2

☞1 19:3

☞2 3:1-3

☞1 3:12

☞2 Titus 2:14

☞1 19:3

• A covenant of law

God's covenant of law with Israel – four aspects

**1. The invitation to enter a covenant begins with a statement of God's generosity**

• Begins with a summary of what God has done

• There is much kindness and generosity in this covenant of law

• Eagles wings of protection

• Moving on – the life of obedience

In a **covenant of law** the senior partner imposes his will on the junior partner and the junior partner has to take the oath. In this case the oath is an oath of loyalty or an oath promising obedience.

In Exodus chapters 19–24 we are seeing a covenant of law being imposed upon the people of Israel. However it is being imposed in a very kindly way and Israel is happy to swear obedience to God.

Moses is to take a message to the people. God wants to make a covenant of law with them. He wants a treaty in which God promises to be their God, and they swear to obey Him.

1. **The invitation to enter a covenant begins with a statement of God's generosity.** Often in ancient covenants the covenant-maker would begin with summarising what good things he had done for the junior partner in the covenant. God begins: *'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself'*<sup>1</sup>. God had defeated their enemies and protected Israel in a powerful way. He had since met their every need as they had travelled to Sinai. Eagles were famous for protecting their young. God was protecting His people.


Although this is a 'covenant of law' there is a lot of generosity and kindness in it. The Bible contrasts law and grace<sup>1 2</sup> but even when God gave His law there was a lot of His graciousness in what He did! The Christian is under a different kind of covenant – the 'new covenant'. But every one of God's covenants begins with His generosity. In the ancient world eagles were famous for their strength, their beauty, their glory, their marvellous eyesight, their care of their young. God says to us: 'You have seen what I did to your old enemies, and how I carried you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself'

God is so merciful to us! He breaks the power of sin. He overcomes Satan and his powers. He overcomes the enemies of the Christian fellowship. He protects us, overshadowing us like an eagle spreads out her wings over her young. He carries us to where we need to be. He did that for Israel; He has done the same for us.

Above all He takes the initiative in bringing us to Himself. 'I carried you... I brought you to myself', said God to Israel, and He has done the same in the life of every Christian. Now He wants to introduce us to the life of obedience. In the case of Israel it was the life of obedience to the Mosaic law; with the Christian it is the life of obedience in the power of the Spirit. It is different, but it is parallel.

1 19:4

1 John 1:17  
2 Rom 6:14

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