

WHEN GOD SPEAKS!

(Scripture. Exodus 19:1-9)

Introduction:

Sometimes, God speaks very softly. But there are times, His voice comes out very loud and clear. Most of the time He speaks only through His Word. Other times, He speaks through others, even through animals like donkey. But in this passage, God speaks very loud as though through a heavenly mega phone! When God speaks we must listen, and obey. Let us hear what the Lord has to say today.

Exodus 19:1, 2. 1In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. 2When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain.

In the third month? The second month itself they arrived close to the Sinai mountain range. But now in the third month, they moved very close to the Sinai Mountain, literally in front of the mountain itself. Actually this could be within the fifty day range. The Pentecost feast was instituted on the fiftieth day of Passover, and it is likely that the Law was given from Mt. Sinai on the fiftieth day from Passover!

Exodus 19:3-6. 3Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: 4'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. 5'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

Mt.Sinai picture

The same mountain where Moses saw the burning bush, now he climbed up again to meet the Lord. God made the promise that He would be with Moses, and Moses will bring the Israelites to this same mountain, and that promise was fulfilled! First, it looked like a fantasy for Moses. How could he go to Pharaoh, and tell him to let the Israelites go. Of course, the tough guy, Pharaoh would not listen. Moses reluctantly went thinking that this mission was impossible! But God made it possible through His mighty power! What a joy it must have been for Moses to meet this awesome God who keeps His promise always!

The Lord spoke to Moses. He reminded about the way He brought Israelites out of Egypt. He bore them on Eagle's wing and brought them out of Egypt. While the Egyptians experienced tremendous, unbearable punishment, the Israelites were kept in perfect peace! They saw the real salvation when the Red Sea split and how God snatched the Israelites from the jaws of Egyptian sharks! It was God who provided manna, water, meat, and sustained them in the desert, and brought them to Mt.Sinai! Now God wanted to make a covenant with them! But please remember always, this old covenant was a conditional covenant with a promise:

"if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; **6**and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

The most important word here is 'if'. They were supposed to meet these two conditions: They must obey His voice, and keep His covenant. If the Israelites do adhere to these two demands, then they shall become His people, and they shall be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation! Not all Israelites who call themselves are Israelites. Only those who do according to His will can be His people. From now on the reference is not by genealogy, **but through obedience!**

They will not only be the people of God, but will be a kingdom of holy nation and holy priests. Yes, all those who obey His Word are the real priests. Note, that includes everyone that obeys! Priesthood for all believers who obey His Commandments. This is what Peter refers to as: *"a chosen génération, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9).*

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ gave the same commandment!

John 14:21. 21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

Jesus' commandment is very simple! Love one another as I have loved you! Can we obey that law of love?

Exodus 19:7-9. 7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. 8 All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. 9 The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever." Then Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

Now Moses came down to convey the message to people. I want you to count how many times Moses went up and down the mountain! Terrific exercise for an eighty year old man! When the people heard about the conditional covenant, they agreed wholeheartedly and promised that they will obey everything what the Lord asked them to do. That was to obey the voice of the Lord, and keep His conditional covenant! Moses took their words back to the Lord. We are not sure if Moses climbed up the mountain to speak to the Lord, or he conveyed the message from where he was,

Then the Lord says something very interesting! *9 The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever."*

We are not sure if thick cloud is dark cloud or white cloud. God will come in a thick cloud, and the people will hear Him when He speaks to Moses. God needs a thick cloud around Him. People cannot stand before His bright light. This is something awesome. Now everyone could hear His voice. In the New Testament, only in three places we come across such incident. After Jesus' baptism (Mark 1:8-11), in John 12:28, 29, when Jesus said, "Father, glorify thy name, and Father replied," I have both glorified it and will glorify it again, and during the transfiguration on the mountain!

Mark 9:7. 7 Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!"

The Transfiguration was almost like Sinai experience. But Moses and Elijah were present with Jesus, along with three disciples, Peter, James, and John!

What an honor to hear the voice of the Lord directly, rather than through somebody else. God has given us the same access through the presence of the Holy Spirit. He can speak to every one of us directly. Then what is the need for preachers and prophets? They play the role of confirmation of what you already heard from the Lord. This is the beauty of preaching the Word. While we preach the Word, God can be confirming those words in your situation, and speaking to you in your situation. Remember, if you are indeed a believer, and have the Holy Spirit, God is speaking to you all the time. Just put away your earthly toys, calm your mind from worldly thoughts and pay attention to His Word. He will speak to you directly!

God was going to speak to all the people so that they may not only believe in God, but also may believe in Moses, and follow his leadership. God was actually going to speak with Moses only, but this time others would hear it also!

Exodus 19:10, 11. 10The LORD also said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; 11and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

Here in Exodus 19:10, 11, God told Moses to consecrate the people for two days. They had to wash themselves, and wash their clothes also. On the third day, they needed to be ready, for on the third day, the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all people! One day fasting and prayer may not be enough. We may need at least 2 full days to prepare ourselves to meet the Lord!

Exodus 19:12-15. 12"You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 13'No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain." 14So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people, and they washed their garments. 15He said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman."

God told Moses to set the boundary around the mountain. No one was to come near the mountain nor touch the mountain. Any man or beast touches or attempts to climb the mountain ought to be put to death. When the ram's horn or shofar sounds a long blast, they shall come near the mountain.

Only when God says, come, we ought to go. We cannot enter His holiness just like that. We ought to prepare our hearts first, confess, examine ourselves, be baptized, be washed in the blood of the lamb, and then only should take part in the communion with God. Let us come to Him with reverence, fear, and trembling. Let us not make it a casual affair as though we are going to visit our next door neighbor. Beware!

Moses went and told people to sanctify themselves. But He adds something that God did not tell him! "Do not go near a woman!" Did God really say that or Moses added that Law? In David's story 1 Sam. 21:4,5 the priest tells David that he does not have the regular bread, but only the holy bread that was

kept in the tabernacle. He could give it only if they had not touched any women. The priests are to be set apart from women for certain time. We cannot say for sure if this law came from man or from God.

Exodus 19:16, 17. 16So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. 17And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

On the third day, as promised, God showed up in the midst of thunder, lightning flashes, and a thick cloud. Then a very loud trumpet sound was heard, and all the people trembled!

Paul says the same thing:

1 Thessalonians. 4:16-18. 16For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The Lord will descend with a loud shout!
Then with the voice of the archangel,
and with the trumpet of God!

There are three different sound before our rapture. All flesh will see and melt. It is a big lie the modern evangelical community is spreading, that the rapture is going to be secret. No everyone will hear and see that event.

- The righteous ones who were dead will be raised,
- and the righteous ones who are living will join them, and they will be caught up in the clouds, in the air,
- and the wicked will be left behind to be punished. They will see this event and cry,

Let us come back to the previous passage

Exodus 19:16, 17. Please note carefully! **The trumpet sounded just once, and all the people trembled.** How much more the people will tremble when our Lord shouts with lot of anger, when the arch angel also shouts, and then the heavenly trumpet blows very loudly! This Sinai experience was just a shadow of things to come!

All the people came out and stood before God. Now God is the king of Israel nation, and Moses was just His prophet!

Exodus 19:18-21. 18Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. 19When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. 20The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. 21Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down, warn the people, so that they do not break through to the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.

Now the mountain behaved very much like a volcanic activity. But it was not due to volcano. It was due to the presence of the Lord. The whole mountain was filled with smoke and fire. The mountain trembled! The trumpet sound grew louder and louder! Again, God told Moses to go down again and warn all the people one more time!

Exodus 19:22-25. **22**“Also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, or else the LORD will break out against them.” **23**Moses said to the LORD, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for You warned us, saying, ‘Set bounds about the mountain and consecrate it.’” **24**Then the LORD said to him, “Go down and come up *again*, you and Aaron with you; but do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, or He will break forth upon them.” **25**So Moses went down to the people and told them.

Lord told Moses to warn the priests especially to consecrate themselves or else Lord will break out among them?? There were no priests designated yet by the Lord. **Aaron and his children were not ordained yet. Who are these priests then?** But one important point we can infer from this passage i.e., God’s judgement will be much severe for the priests than the common people!

The Lord tells Him to go down one more time to warn the people and the priests. He warned especially those curious Georges who wanted to see God up close and personal. But this time, God told Moses to bring Aaron with him! Why Aaron? By the witness of two, God wanted to establish His covenant.

Can you imagine? No one could even go near the mountain, but only Moses and Aaron could come up! **What a privilege!**

Conclusion:

Our God is a God of promise. He keeps His side of promise! Moses returned to his burning bush area with the Israelites, and was talking to God!

Our God wants us to trust, obey and honor His covenant.

Our God is a consuming fire.
Prepare yourself before meeting God.

We cannot come near God with our own works. We need His grace and mercy, and we need to be washed in His sinless blood.

Keep your end of the bargain! If we promise, we will live for Him, let us live for Him.

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