

Final Reflection

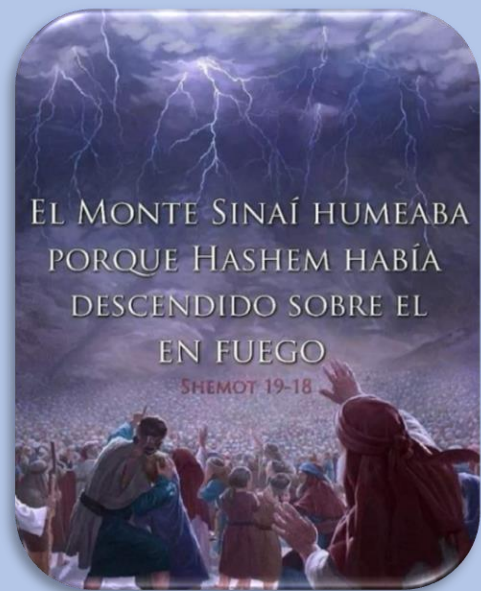
Ten Commandments

The Law is handed down

Part I

After God released His people from years of slavery in Egypt, they crossed the Red Sea and about three months later arrived at Sinai, where they camped in front of their mountain.

Before Yahweh appeared, those people had to consecrate themselves for three days (Exodus 19:10-11). This is how it happened: *“And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.”* (Exodus 19:16-20)



I can imagine that moment as something imposing, majestic and at the same time a feeling of awe. In the midst of that shocking revelation, God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses (Exodus 20:3-17) at Mount Sinai as part of the covenant between Him and Israel. In that set of laws and ethical principles, God promised Israel, His chosen people, that through obedience they would become His special treasure, *“... a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation...”* (Exodus 19:6), something very different from the pagan and idolatrous nations that surrounded them. Israel was meant to be a nation of clerics, prophets, and missionaries to the world, a holy nation in charge of going out to teach others about Yahweh.

However, as God's exclusive property, there was one condition: *“And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on*

high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.” (Deuteronomy 28:1-2)

In the same way, as consequence of disobedience, God promised curses: *“If you will not obey the Lord your God or be careful to do all His Laws which I tell you today, all these curses will come upon you”.* (Deuteronomy 28:15-25)



This tension between the promises of blessings and curses develops in Israel under what is known as the “Mosaic Covenant”.

Israel would become God's personal people, set apart from the other nations for His service, in the same way that the priests (the *Kohanim*) from the tribe of Levi were separated from the rest of the men to serve in the temple. This condition was marked by a quality of life commensurate

with the holiness of the covenant God. They would be a holy people, set apart to be of God, whom they would serve, worship, and make known (Exodus 19:5-6).

To be continue...

Translation: E.G. Monteagudo