

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

February 24–March 2

Monday	Revelation 1:3-8 (We Are Priests)
Tuesday	Psalms 106:36-48 (Give Thanks to God's Holy Name)
Wednesday	Leviticus 19:1-10 (Be Holy)
Thursday	Leviticus 19:11-18 (Love Your Neighbor as Yourself)
Friday	Revelation 20:1-6 (Priests of God and Christ)
Saturday	Micah 6:1-8 (Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly)
Sunday	Exodus 19:1-14 (Treasured Possession)

A Kingdom of Priests, a Holy Nation

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 19

Focus Scripture: Exodus 19:1-14

Key Verses: "Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation." Exodus 19:5b-6a

EXODUS 19:1-14 (NRSV UE)

1 On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai.

2 They journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain.

3 Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the Israelites:

4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

5 Now, therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine,

6 but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites."

7 So Moses went, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him.

8 The people all answered as one, "Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do." Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.

9 Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after." When Moses had told the words of the people to the Lord,

10 the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes

11 and prepare for the third day, because on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Si-

EXODUS 19:1-14 (KJV)

1 In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.

2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him.

8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.

9 And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord.

10 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes,

11 And be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all

nai in the sight of all the people.

12 You shall set limits for the people all around, saying, ‘Be careful not to go up the mountain or to touch the edge of it. Any who touch the mountain shall be put to death.

13 No hand shall touch them, but they shall be stoned or shot with arrows; whether animal or human being, they shall not live.’ When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they may go up on the mountain.”

14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people. He consecrated the people, and they washed their clothes.

the people upon mount Sinai.

12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:

13 There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

14 And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

KEY TERMS

- **Consecrate** – Being separated (or set apart) to live holy lives, committed to our sovereign God and his service.
- **Mount Sinai** – Also known as Mt. Horeb; this is the place where God met with Moses, to give him the law and instructions for building the tabernacle.
- **Rephidim** – A wilderness site where the Israelites stopped just prior to reaching Mt. Sinai.
- **Sacrament** – Also known as an ordinance; a ritual or ceremony; a visual representation of beliefs in the special healing and saving power of Jesus Christ.
- **Wilderness** – Typically rocky,

uninhabitable geographical areas with little rainfall.

INTRODUCTION

The overarching theme for this quarter’s lessons is *Costly Sacrifice*. We will explore

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a total of three units that focus on worship, sacrifices, and offerings. As you will see, sacrifice in this case refers to the act of totally surrendering our lives to Almighty God. The first lesson gives an accounting of events that occurred exactly three months after Moses, under God’s direction, led the Israelites out of Egypt. Their first stop was

in the Rephidim wilderness. From there, they traveled to the Mount Sinai wilderness, and they are now encamped in front of the mountain (Exodus 19:19). Notably, this is the same site where God told Moses that

Israel would worship him after leaving Egypt (Exodus 3:12). Although the Israelites' 430-year existence in Egypt evolved into slavery, with despicable yet predictable life patterns, can you imagine how the Israelites may have felt about the uncertainties they faced here in the wilderness?

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

God Proposes Another Covenantal Relationship and Israel Responded, Exodus 19:3-9

As reflected throughout the scriptures, God reached out to Israel again, offering unprecedented aid and protection. Without nullifying his covenant with Abraham, God proposes another covenant, which will result in Israel being designated as his "treasured possession," and new life as a kingdom of priests, who will form a "holy nation." Moses, who serves as God's messenger or mediator between him and the people, has been summoned to climb up the mountain to receive God's message for Israel. Perhaps, to strengthen the people's confidence in him and the reliability of his promises, God uses the imagery of an "eagle's wing" to remind

Israel of the strength, love, and compassion he has already extended to them as he delivered them from Egypt. To receive the blessings of God's proposal, Israel is required to confirm their acceptance and loyalty to the terms and conditions of this new covenant and to pledge total obedience to God. Moses faithfully delivers God's message to the elders of the people. Their response is unanimous: "Everything that the

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Lord has spoken, we will do" (Exodus 19:8). God responds by informing Moses that he plans to appear in the physical form of a dark cloud. He will speak audibly with Moses, in the presence of the people. As a result, Israel should no longer doubt or disbelieve Moses. Based upon the totality of the wilderness experiences, how would you rate Israel's confidence in Moses?

Life "as a holy nation and priestly kingdom" is totally different from Israel's life in Egypt. Hence, the covenantal relationship with God is absolutely essential. Before meeting with God to hear and receive the covenant, which includes the Ten Commandments and other laws (Exodus 20-23), the people must be consecrated! God instructs Moses on how

the people are to prepare themselves. The specifics are clearly stated in our text (vs. 10-11). In addition to detailed instructions on how the people are to prepare for the meeting, God also establishes strict boundaries to be observed throughout the meeting. Stiff penalties, up to and including death, may be incurred by those who disregard or violate God's instructions (v. 12).

SANKOFA

As is often the case with biblical history, it is easy to see events, such as those at Mt. Sinai, as relevant only to Moses and ancient Israel. However, we are benefactors of a new covenant of grace, instituted by Jesus Christ to establish a new relationship between God and humankind. As members of the African Methodist Episcopal

Church, we are regularly encouraged to consecrate ourselves for two sacraments, ordained by Jesus Christ. They are Baptism and the Lord's Supper/Holy Communion (*The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 2021, p. 27). Both rituals are explained as "not only badges or tokens of Christians' profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace,

and God's good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him" (p. 27).

To fully appreciate parallels between Israel's meeting with God at Mount Sinai with similar faith-confirming experiences in our lives, you are encouraged to focus on the prescribed rituals for Holy Communion (pp. 652-658). Both sacraments are equally

important to our faith. However, we engage in Holy Communion services most often. With the more frequent occurrences of Holy Communion services, greater familiarity is a natural outcome. So, let's focus briefly on parallels between Holy Communion and the Israelites' preparation for meeting with God at Mt. Sinai. As with the

Israelites, penalties for "unworthily" partaking of the Holy Communion elements are also clearly articulated. Lest we forget, we are expressing gratitude for our salvation while also memorializing all of Jesus' blessings and sacrifices as well as the benefits of abundant living that only he provides. As you review and contemplate the rituals for Holy Communion that are referenced above, you

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are urged to consider this question: “How do you prepare mentally and physically for Holy Communion services?” Also, “What boundaries are you careful to observe?”

CASE STUDY

Moses’ faithfulness to God’s instructions and the effectiveness of his leadership are poignantly portrayed in today’s scriptures. These scriptures also highlight God’s faithfulness to Moses and Israel. We can rejoice over the fact that God has continually used ordinary people to bring hope and deliverance to believers. Parallels between Moses’ successes and those of Harriet Tubman (1820-1913) are easily recognizable. Ms. Tubman became known as “the Moses of her people.”

Harriet Tubman’s story is well-known, and many references to her story can be located on numerous websites. Most relevant to today’s discussion is the fact that Ms. Tubman attributed her personal success with escaping slavery and her success with leading as many as 300 other slaves to freedom to her faithfulness with “following the voice of God.” Tubman’s route, known

today as the Underground Railroad, required traveling through many miles of wilderness. Yet, Ms. Tubman reported that she never lost a passenger.

Many more contemporary instances of leaders who, through faith and obedience to God, have facilitated deliverance and greater protections for all. The (late) Representative John Lewis (1940-2020) is an excellent example. His desire to serve God as well as his preparations for ministry are often less well known than his activism and significant contributions to effect social change, equity, and justice for all citizens. He is reported to have been preaching to chickens on his family’s farm at age 11. Later, he majored in Religion and Philosophy at Fisk University, and he attended the American Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee. In

spite of what may be seen as dual career paths, Representative Lewis is remembered as an activist minister whose pulpit extended beyond the walls of the church to the United States Congress and beyond. He is believed by many to have become “a sermon,” an embodiment that was visible to the whole world as opposed to having only delivered

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sermons.

LIFE APPLICATION

As we reflect more on the events at Mt. Sinai, it becomes obvious that God was nation-building in human and heavenly realms. He was preparing Israel to enter and possess Canaan, “The Promised Land.” Simultaneously, he was preparing them for residence in his “priestly kingdom and holy nation.” We are blessed beyond

measure as God offers us the same inheritance, but under a new covenant. Without abolishing either the Abrahamic or Mosaic covenants, Jesus instituted a new covenant of grace and mercy. This new covenant symbolizes God’s promises to forgive our sins and restore communion with those of us who believe and confess Jesus Christ to be his Son and the Savior of the world. Each

Communion service memorializes Jesus’ “costly sacrifice.”

QUESTIONS

1. What role does consecration play in your life?
2. What does life in a priestly kingdom and

holy nation mean to you?

3. What attitudinal or behavioral changes are you likely to make in regards to partaking of the Lord’s Supper/ Communion services?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Song: “Let Us Break Bread Together” (*AMEC Hymnal #530*)

Closing Prayer: God, our Father, you are

holy, and so merciful to us! You bless us in so many ways! We thank you for Jesus and his sacrifices for humankind. We praise you for the new covenant. Otherwise, our chances for abundant life and eternal salvation would be lost. Please bless us with determination to earnestly and frequently confess our sins, consecrate ourselves, and renew

determinations to follow Jesus, not just for formal communion services but as often as we possibly can. Let these changes be reflected in closer walks with you and greater love for other people. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

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beyond measure as
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HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**March 3-March 9**

Monday	Ezekiel 14:1-11 (God Is Our Sanctuary)
Tuesday	Psalm 26 (Desire for God's Presence)
Wednesday	Ezekiel 43:1-12 (God's Glory Fills the Temple)
Thursday	Ezekiel 44:15-27 (Who May Draw Near?)
Friday	John 2:12-22 (The Temple of Christ's Body)
Saturday	John 4:13-26 (Worship God in Spirit and Truth)
Sunday	Exodus 25:1-9; 26:1, 31-37 (Prepare a Sacred Space)