

The Story of Salvation

Chapter 8 - Israel in Training



Exodus 13-34

Opening Prayer:

O LORD, Thou Helper and Deliverer of all that trust in Thee, who by Thy mighty arm brought the children of Israel out of the land of their oppressors, sending a pillar of fire to guide them on their perilous way, we pray Thee, make Thy holy Word beam forth its blessed light upon us, so that we may be safely led by it past the many dangers and pitfalls of this life. Hear us, Thou precious Light, for Thy mercy's sake. **Amen.**

Kramer, Wm. A. (1949). *Devotions for Lutheran Schools* (p.37). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

An important event took place as soon as the march out of Egypt was well underway. God took over the control of His people's journey. He led the Israelites in a pillar of cloud by day that changed into a pillar of fire by night. When the cloud stopped, the people stopped, when the cloud moved, the people broke camp. In this extraordinary manner God visibly assured them of His presence and protection. Thus began the training of a people that were not willing to be trained.

WHY THE SEA ROUTE

The route headed south along the west coast of the Red Sea. There was a double reason for this route. If God had led them to the north where they had land all the way, they would have been attacked by the Philistines. The other reason had to do with the Egyptians.

Pharaoh soon changed his mind. He was not willing to lose all those slaves. So his army rushed after the Israelites to bring them back. The people became panicky and accused Moses of having led them into a trap. Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid. Stand still and see how Yahweh will save you today." Moses then prayed to Yahweh, and Yahweh told him to stretch out his hand with his staff over the sea. Moses did, and a strong wind from the east sprang up, causing the sea to go back, and the sea became dry land. Led by the pillar, the people started to cross. When the last Israelite had left shore, the pillar moved to the rear and stood between the people and the oncoming Egyptian army. When the Israelites were across, God told Moses to stretch out his staff again over the sea. He did. The wind shifted, and the sea rolled back and drowned Pharaoh's army. In this way the LORD saved Israel from the Egyptians that day. The Israelites saw the Egyptians conquered by God alone, and they could understand why the sea route had been chosen. The Egyptians would cause no more trouble.

A SONG OF GLORY TO GOD

After the crossing, Moses composed a song, and the people had a service of praise and thanksgiving to Yahweh (Exodus 15). We read refrains of this song repeated again and again in the Old Testament (ex. Isaiah 12:2-6), and the Book of Revelation tells us that the song of Moses is part of the ongoing liturgy of God's saved children (the saints) in glory before the Lamb upon His throne (15).

GOD PROVIDES AND THE PEOPLE GRUMBLE

Israel was now in the wilderness where food and water were scarce. The people acted like irresponsible children who are enthusiastic when everything goes well but complain when they face hardship. From week to week and from month to month Moses had to listen to more grumbling and complaints than probably any other man.

God provided food by sending manna (literally "what is it?"). It covered the ground in the morning like frost and it was the main food of the Israelites during the forty years they spent in the wilderness. More than once God furnished water in a miraculous way, as when He told Moses to speak to the rock and it gave water. Even so the people's faith in God's ability to take care of them lasted only until new difficulties faced them. Then the complaints and the bitter accusations against Moses filled the camp again.

GOD SPEAKS TO THE PEOPLE

Mount Sinai was the first goal of their journey. In the valleys between the mountains were enough pastures and water for a long stay. After about three months' journey, Israel made camp at the foot of Mount Sinai.

God told Moses to come up into the mountain to receive a message for Israel. This was the message he should bring the people: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if you will obey My voice, and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own treasured possession from among all peoples; and you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Moses brought the message to the people and instructed them to clean up and put on their best clothes and be ready to listen to God.

The third day a heavy cloud covered the top of the mountain. Lightning flashed and thunder rolled and God descended upon Mount Sinai. Out of the cloud God's voice spoke the Ten Commandments to the awestricken people.

THE "CONSTITUTION OF ISRAEL" (Exodus 20)

1. "I am Yahweh, Your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods. Do not make any images to worship that look like something in heaven or on the earth or something that lives in the waters of the earth. Do not bow down to them or serve them because I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments."
2. "You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your God."
3. "Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy. Work for six days, but on the seventh day, the rest day of Yahweh your God, do not do any work. Do not let your son, your daughter, your servants, not even your cattle or a stranger visiting you do any work. In six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them; then He rested on the seventh day. That is why Yahweh has blessed the Sabbath Day and hallowed it."
4. "Honor your father and your mother so that you may live a long time on the land that Yahweh your God is giving you."
5. "You shall not murder."
6. "You shall not commit adultery."
7. "You shall not steal."
8. "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."
9. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house."
10. "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, his servants, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

ISRAEL BECOMES GOD'S COVENANT PEOPLE

In days gone by God had made covenants with individuals, such as Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now God made a covenant with the whole nation. It was not a new covenant, but the old covenant in a new form. God pledged Himself to bring Israel into the land He gave to Abraham. If the people would obey His words He would destroy their enemies and use Israel to bring salvation to all nations. With one voice the people pledged themselves to serve Yahweh and do all He commanded.

The covenant was written in a book called the book of the covenant. Oxen were sacrificed, and Moses took the blood and sprinkled half of it on the altar and half on the people while he said, "Behold the blood of the covenant." So Israel was set apart (sanctified/"made holy") by God for the work of bringing His salvation to the world. And by its pledge Israel dedicated itself to be God's servant in this work.

THE WRITTEN LAW

Israel was gifted with a good memory. They preserved their history by retelling the stories from generation to generation. But, the wording of God's law could not be left only to the memory. It was too important. God called Moses to come up to Him into the mountain. Moses stayed there forty days. God gave him the Ten Commandments written on two tablets of stone. Then He gave Moses a detailed plan of the tent that was to be their church building. The tent was called the tabernacle. Moses also received detailed instructions about the different parts of the services for worship.

THE PEOPLE BREAK THE COVENANT

While Moses was on the mount, the people again showed their fickleness. As the weeks passed and Moses did not return, they began to wonder. Had something happened to him? Rumors spread and the camp became agitated. A group who did not like Moses began to agitate the people of Israel, and more and more people joined them. "It is necessary to do something," they said. "Moses is not coming back, and we cannot stay here forever. Let us do as the Egyptians and make a calf to represent Yahweh. Then we are sure that Yahweh always will stay in our midst, and we will go back to Egypt. With Yahweh among us everything will be well." They enticed Aaron to make them a golden calf from the gold Yahweh had provided for them as plunder when they left Egypt. When they built it Aaron said, "This will be your god, Israel. The God that brought you out of the land of Egypt. Tomorrow we'll have a feast to Yahweh." Everyone got up early in the morning and brought sacrifices to it, worshiped, ate, drank, and played.

In the mountain God said to Moses, "Your people have corrupted themselves. They have made a golden calf and worshiped it. How quickly they have turned away from doing what I commanded them! I will destroy them and make of you a great nation." But Moses pleaded with God to spare the people for Abraham's sake *and for the sake of His own promises*. And God heard this prayer.

When Moses came down far enough to see the people of God dancing around the calf idol, he smashed the two tablets against the mountain. He walked into the camp and called the Levites. They came, and he ordered them to go through the camp and slay the ring-leaders of this rebellion. Three thousand were killed. Then he ordered the calf to be ground into powder and strewn upon the water in the creek that came down the mountainside. And he made the people drink it. He gave the people a realistic demonstration of the uselessness of their idol.

The next day Moses returned to the mountain and said to God, "The people have sinned greatly. Yet forgive their sin. If You won't forgive them, blot me out of the book You have written." Yahweh said to Moses, "Whoever sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. As for you, go and lead the people to the place I have spoken of with you. My angel will lead you." Then Yahweh descended in the cloud and proclaimed, "Yahweh your God is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. Yet He will not clear the guilty; He will punish the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the fathers." Moses bowed his head, worshiped, and said, "O Yahweh, pardon our iniquity and our sin and take us as Your inheritance." Yahweh made a covenant that He would lead the people into the Promised Land.

MOSES' SHINING FACE

Moses was there with Yahweh 40 days and 40 nights. Yahweh wrote on two new tables of stone the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in his hands, he did not know that the skin of his face was shining because God had talked with him. When Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, they were afraid to come near him. When Moses called to them, Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them. He gave them the commandments that Yahweh had spoken. All the while Moses was speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. Whenever Moses went before Yahweh to speak with Him, he took the veil off until he came out, when he put the veil on again because his face shone so brightly.

CATECHETICAL CONNECTION:

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household

LORD'S PRAYER - THE FOURTH PETITION

Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean? God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

Luther. (2017). [Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation](#) (p.21). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Prayer: O God of our Salvation, as it seemed to the children of Israel that they were forsaken in Egypt and the wilderness, even so we have moments in this life when our hearts faint and despair because of griefs and temptations which we must suffer and which overwhelm us. Teach us to be patient and to wait for Your salvation, O God. Grant us grace to trust in Your glorious promise "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor Me (Psalm 50:15)." Therefore, deliver us from all evil, especially from the evil of sin, even as you have taught us to pray, **Our Father, who art in heaven...**

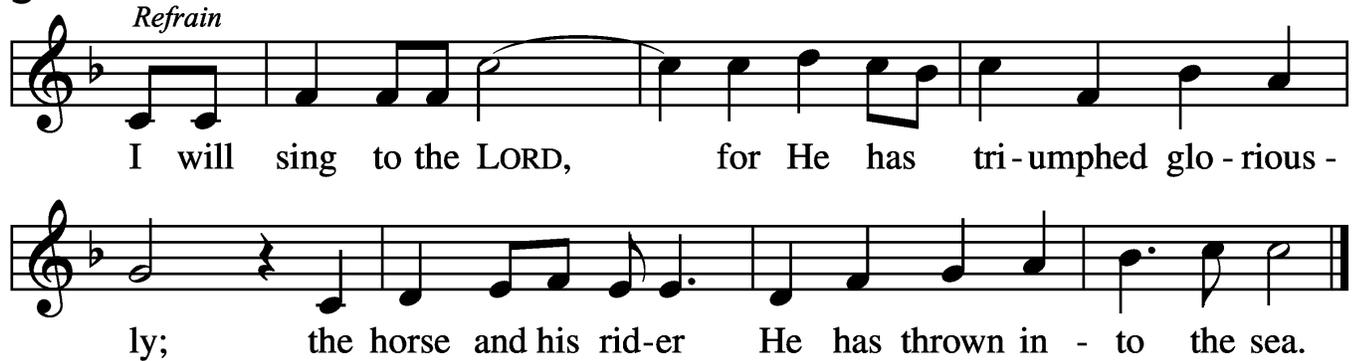
Reading for the Next Bible Class 11 August 2021:

- ➔ Exodus 23, 25, 26, 28, 34; Leviticus 1-4, 15, 11, 23; Numbers 3, 6; Deuteronomy 6, 23, 25
- ➔ 3rd Commandment

“Song of Moses and Israel”

LSB 925

Refrain



I will sing to the LORD, for He has tri-umphed glo-rious -
ly; the horse and his rid-er He has thrown in - to the sea.

¹The LORD is my strength | and my song,*
and He has become my sal- | vation;

²this is my God, and I will | praise Him,*
my father’s God, and I will ex- | alt Him.

Refrain

³The LORD is a | man of war,*
the LORD | is His name.

⁴Pharaoh’s chariots and his host He cast in- | to the sea,*
and his chosen officers were sunk in the | Red Sea.

⁵The floods | covered them;*
they went down into the depths | like a stone.

⁶Your right hand, O LORD, glorious | in power,*
Your right hand, O LORD, shatters the | enemy.

Refrain

⁷Who is like You, O LORD, a- | mong the gods?*

Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing | wonders?

⁸You stretched out Your | right hand;*

the earth | swallowed them.

⁹You have led in Your steadfast love the people whom You | have redeemed,*
You have guided them by Your strength to Your ho- | ly abode.

¹⁰You will bring them in and plant them on Your own | mountain,*
the place, O LORD, which You have made for | Your abode,

¹¹the sanctuary, O LORD, which Your hands have es- | tablished.*
The LORD will reign forever and | ever.

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

Refrain