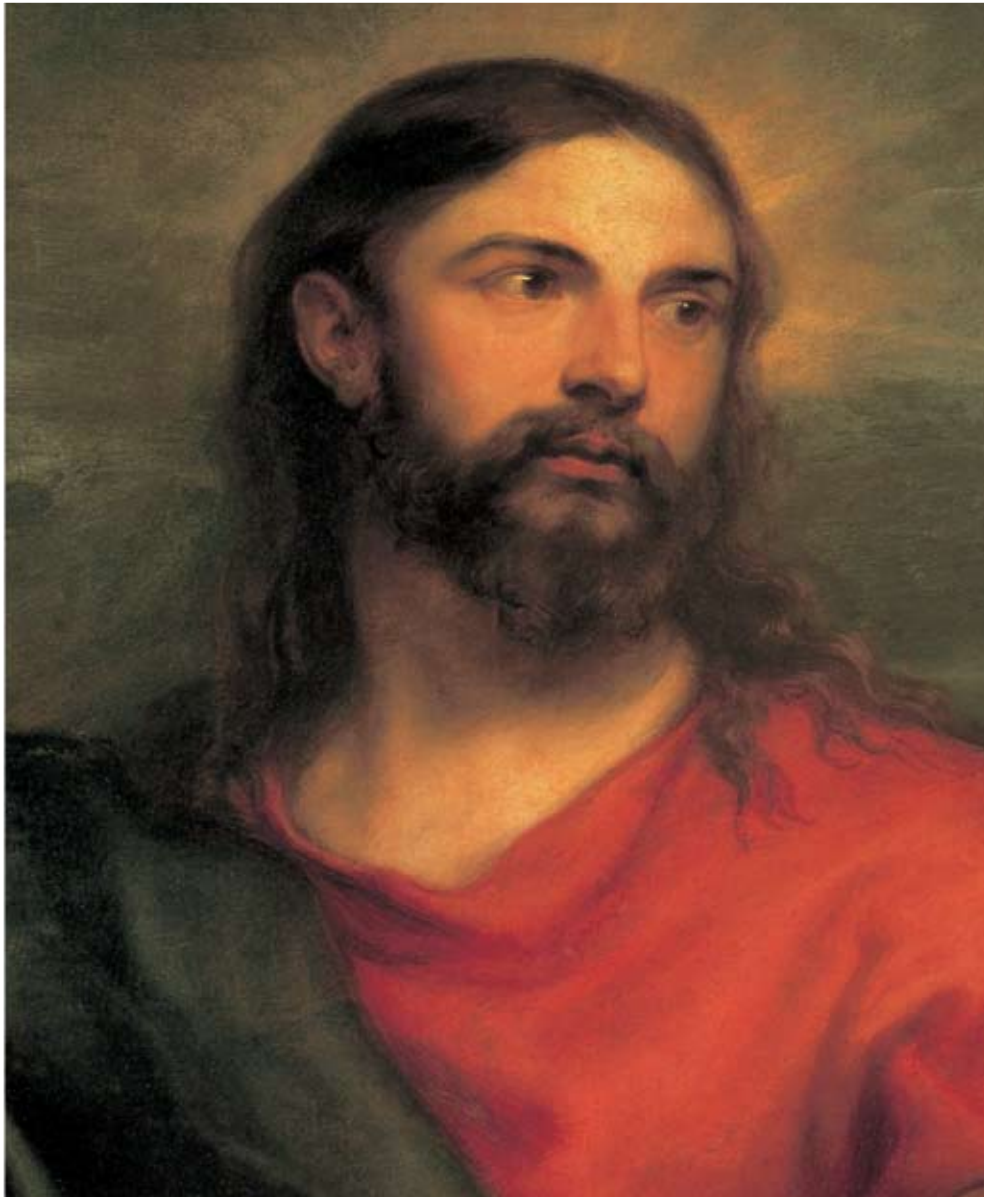


JESUS OUR GUIDE



Faith and Life Series

4

Revised Edition

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Great Things Happen on the Way to the Promised Land

And the LORD said to Moses, “Lo, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you for ever.” Then Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

Exodus 19:9

Bread from Heaven

On the way to the Promised Land, the Hebrew people wandered for a long time in the desert and they often ran into difficulties. Through all the preceding events, God was preparing the chosen people for very great and important **revelations**. God always provided for them, but still they did not trust him enough. Every time something went wrong, they would complain about how they never should have followed Moses and Aaron.

The day came when all the food that they had brought with them ran out. The next morning, God sent a heavy dew to cover the ground. And when the dew evaporated, it left behind white flaky bread that tasted of honey; they called it “**manna**.” What is more, God provided fresh manna each morning for the rest of the time that the Hebrews were in the desert.

The Ten Commandments

After three months the Hebrews arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai. God called to Moses from the mountain saying, “Tell the people of Israel, ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession. You shall be a kingdom of priests and a **consecrated** nation.’”

When Moses spoke these words to the people everyone answered, “All that Yahweh has said, we will do.”

Then Moses climbed to the top of the mountain. A dense cloud covered it. Yahweh descended in the form of fire and spoke to him so that all people would hear and believe Moses. The whole mountain shook violently. The peo-



ple were not allowed to go near it, but they saw lightning flashes on Mount Sinai and heard peals of thunder and loud trumpet blasts, the sound of which made them tremble. To their eyes the glory of Yahweh seemed like a great fire on the mountaintop. Moses was gone for forty days and forty nights.

Then, one of the most important events in the history of the world took place. God gave Moses the **Ten Commandments** carved on stone tablets.

The Golden Calf

Meanwhile God’s stubborn people became impatient and again doubted him. They went to Aaron and said, “Make us a god who will lead us. Moses is gone. We do not know what has become of him.”

And so Aaron had their gold jewelry melted down and made into a statue of a calf.

“Tomorrow will be a feast in honor of the Lord,” Aaron announced.

The next day, the people worshipped and sacrificed to the **golden calf**. God was angry to see that these people, for whom he had done so

much, could forget him so quickly. He told Moses to go down from the mountain.

When Moses saw the people singing and dancing before the golden calf, he was so angry that he hurled down the tablets with the Ten Commandments that God had given his people, and the stone was shattered. Moses rebuked Aaron for letting the people get carried away. The golden calf was melted down and the people were punished for their sin, which was a grave sin of idolatry. Moses then wanted to make atonement for their sins, and he begged God to forgive them.

The Covenant Is Renewed

Once more, Moses climbed Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments on stone tablets. He ate and drank nothing for forty days. This time God renewed the covenant that he had made so long ago with the descendants of Abraham. He said, “Go to the land that I swore I would give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and to their descendants. I will send an angel on ahead of you.” God also gave the people of

Israel many other laws to protect them and to be a sign that they were his chosen people.

When Moses finally came down the mountain, his face was radiant. It was shining so brightly from having spoken to God that he had to put a veil over it because people did not dare go near him. The mystery of God's greatness is impenetrable and his majesty is a thing of awe. God called his people to enter into a covenant with him.

The Ark of the Covenant

Under God's instructions, the people made a chest of fine wood called an ark. It was covered both inside and out with pure gold, and it had golden poles so that it could be carried. Inside the ark, they placed the stone tablets containing God's Ten Commandments. They called it the **Ark of the Covenant**.

The ark was kept in a portable tent called the **tabernacle**. God's presence dwelt in the tabernacle and there the priests would pray to God on behalf of the people. In addition to these, the people also made two beautiful altars and fine clothing for the priests.

The ark, the tabernacle, the vestments, and the altars were very carefully made following the instructions Moses received from God. These were all **sacred**. God also told Moses the

"The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure,
making wise the simple;
the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure,
enlightening the eyes."

Psalm 19:7–8

exact way in which the holy rituals of sacrifices were to be performed. An animal victim was to be offered as atonement for sins. Only Aaron and his descendants, the Levites, were allowed to be priests. They were especially chosen and consecrated for this.

The people of Israel continued travelling through the desert toward Canaan. The men carrying the Ark of the Covenant led the way, following a cloud which guided them.

Forty Years in the Desert

Finally one day, the Hebrews came to the edge of Canaan, the Promised Land. Moses sent out scouts on a secret mission. They were to see what Canaan looked like and who was living there.

The scouts came back with the report that the countryside was full of good fruits and vegetables. It really *was* a beautiful land. But the people living there, the Canaanites, were strong and fierce. Again, the people grumbled. "Let us get someone to lead us back to Egypt," they said.

God was so displeased with them that he decided that not one of these grumblers would enter the Promised Land. The people would wander in the desert for forty years until the last of them was dead, and then their children would enter Canaan. So for forty years the Jews remained in the desert and could not enter Canaan, the land that had so long ago been promised to the descendants of Abraham.

The Death of Moses

One day, God called to Moses, "Climb up into these mountains and look at the land I am going to give to the children of Israel. And after you have looked at it, you will die."

So Moses went up and looked at the Promised Land. And then he died up there on the mountain. Although the Hebrews had so often complained about him, they really loved him and

they were very sad that he had left them. They cried for a month.

Moses was a very great **prophet**. A prophet is someone whom God uses to speak to his people. Moses was very close to God, and God worked great miracles through him. Dramatic new revelations of God and the moral law were given through Moses to the Jewish people.

Words to Know:

revelation manna consecrated
Ten Commandments
golden calf Ark of the Covenant
tabernacle sacred prophet

- Q. 36** *Why did God call the people of Israel to enter into a covenant with him?*
God called the people of Israel to enter into a covenant with him, so that they could come to know him and serve him as the one true God. God gathered his people to give them hope of salvation (CCC 54–64).
- Q. 37** *What did the people of Israel have to do to keep the covenant?*
To keep the covenant, the people of Israel had to obey the Ten Commandments (CCC 62, 2061–62).
- Q. 38** *Who must obey the Ten Commandments?*
All people must obey the Ten Commandments. God revealed them to Moses for all people (CCC 2072).
- Q. 39** *What was manna?*
Manna was a bread rained down from heaven. God provided manna for his people in the desert so they would live (Ex 16:4–32).
- Q. 40** *Why can we believe what Moses said and what God revealed through Moses?*
We can believe Moses because God descended upon Mount Sinai so all could see him in a dense cloud and hear him when he spoke to Moses. God did this so that all would believe in him forever (Ex 19:9).
- Q. 41** *What was the Ark of the Covenant?*
The Ark of the Covenant was a chest lined with pure gold, in which the Ten Commandments were kept. In the Old Testament, God's presence remained with the Ark (Ex 25:8–10, Deut 10:5).
- Q. 42** *Who were the priests of the people of Israel?*
Aaron and the Levites were the priests of the people of Israel (Ex 28:43–29:9).