

Exodus 19

Verses 1-3

On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. ² When 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. ³ Moses 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:

On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt

See chart 1905 The 4th month

Exodus time line

Exodus	Event	Year 1 - 1446	Place
12:2	New Calendar	1-1-01	Egypt
12:3	Select a lamb	1-10-01	Egypt
12:37	The Exodus from Egypt	1-15-01	Rameses
14:21-22	Crossing of the Red Sea		Red Sea
15:23	Bitter water		Marah
15:27	12 springs and 70 palm trees		Elim
16:1	Manna and quail	3-15-01	The Desert of Sin
17:1	no water, Amalekites defeated		Rephidim
18	Judges appointed		Near the Mountain of God
19:1	Camped in front of the mountain	4th month	The Desert of Sinai
20	The ten commandments		The Desert of Sinai
21-23	Laws and regulations		The Desert of Sinai
24	Covenant confirmed	40 days and nights	The Desert of Sinai
25-31	Tabernacle envisioned		The Desert of Sinai
32	Golden Calf	Month 5 or 6	The Desert of Sinai
34	New stone tablets	Month 6 or 7	The Desert of Sinai
36-39	Building the Tabernacle	5 to 6 months	The Desert of Sinai

Israel left Egypt on 1-15-01

Determining the date of when Israel first came to Sinai will depend on which version of the bible you read or trust the most.

See chart 1907

Exodus 19:1		
Version	Scripture	Date
NAS	In 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.	4-15
RSV	On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone forth out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.	4-1
KJV	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.	4-15
NIV	On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt— on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai.	4-1
Septuagint	And in the third month of the departure of the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came into the wilderness of Sina.	4-15

As you can see, two modern versions imply a date of 4-15 and the other two suggest a date of 4-1.

The Septuagint (transcribed from the oldest manuscripts) implies a date of 4-15.

So who is right?

The people who translate are often quite educated and know at least 4 or 5 languages and they don't agree on this matter.

This is why I choose to use a date of the 4th month.

Whether it is the 1st or the 15th of the 4th month is not worth spilling a lot of ink over.

Nevertheless, we should all keep our eyes open to other scriptures that might help us nail down this date.

Sometimes clues pop up in unlikely places.

They came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness;

See pic 1910



The wilderness of Sinai was east of Mount Sinai

It was a massive area with plenty of room for the 2.5 million Israelites

The Israelites were comparable to the city Chicago in numbers (2018)

Their camp may have been 20 miles long by 10 miles wide

And they would stay in this area for almost 11 months

And there Israel camped in front of the mountain

Sinai tops out at around 7200 feet

See Pic 1915 Sinai



God had told Moses that Israel would worship God on this mountain

This was promised as a sign that Moses was sent by the Lord

See Exodus 3:12

Moses 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:

God has a message that he wants Israel to hear, however, that message will come through Moses

The message centers on God’s desire to make a covenant with Israel

But a covenant (contract) has to be agreed upon by both parties and both parties have a responsibility to do their part or the contract is broken

Verses 4-6

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; ⁶ and 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.”

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings

Israel became a nation because of what God did.

God performed the 10 Plagues that made it possible for the slaves to leave Goshen and then He split the Red Sea at the Gulf of Aquabah so they could leave Egypt

Now then, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant

Then you shall be my own possession among all the peoples

The covenant between God and Israel was conditional

If --- Then

If they do what God says and they keep the covenant

Then they will be God's people

The Jews as a nation broke the covenant in many ways

But God would discipline them and they would return to Him for a while

However, 1400 years later the Jewish nation, in a final act of rebellion lost its privileged status as God's people when they rejected the Messiah

At that time a God made a New Covenant with his church, faithful Jews and Gentiles that accepted Christ as their Messiah

See 1 Peter 2:9

You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation

This is what God had hoped for concerning Israel

Unfortunately, Israel was not ready or willing to do this and they will soon rebel by worshipping a golden Calf

So God will give the priesthood to the tribe of Levi and only a remnant in Israel will become a Holy Nation

When it comes to mankind as a whole, one should always hope for the best but not be too surprised or shocked when things don't work out.

Verses 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.

⁷ So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the Lord had commanded him.

With the people spread out over a huge area (10 by 20 miles) the communication went through Moses, to the elders, to the people

Most likely there were additional links between the elders and the people.

Otherwise, each of the 70 elders would have to get the message to 36,000 people

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.

The terms of the covenant were given to the people and they agreed.

However, as we all know, saying we will do something and actually doing it is often two very different things

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

God wanted everyone to know that the law came from Him and that God was using Moses as the link between Him and them

God also wanted everyone to believe in Moses as the leader of His people

When things get difficult in life, people have to know that their leader(s) are trustworthy.

Otherwise things break down and anarchy ensues

Verses 10-15

¹⁰ The Lord also said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; ¹¹ and 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. 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.” ¹⁴ So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people, and they washed their garments. ¹⁵ He said to the people, “Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.”

Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; ¹¹ and let them be ready for the third day

This was a very special event for Israel and God wanted them to be ready for it

Part of this meant wearing clean clothes since they were going to stand in the presence of God

When people attend a wedding or a funeral they usually wear clothing appropriate for the occasion

It’s the same reasoning here

See Genesis 35:2

You shall set bounds for the people all around

The people were warned about not touching the Mountain

No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through

Any violators were to be executed, but no hand was to touch them.

The execution was to be by stoning or shooting with arrows

When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain

The people that were spread out over the 200 square miles came together as close as possible to the mountain

Do not go near a woman

In the culture of those days, there was a good reason for this injunction.

Throughout Canaan their religious services included acts of sexual promiscuity, and God wanted to make sure that no such thing would be associated with this Holy Day

Verses 16-20

¹⁶ So 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. ¹⁷ And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Now 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. ¹⁹ When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. ²⁰ The 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.

Thunder and lightning flashes, a thick cloud, a very loud trumpet sound, smoke, fire, and the whole mountain quaked violently

God knew how to get their attention and this generation should have remembered this experience for a long time.

But we know that was not the case for many of them. Because in 40 days many of them will forget this experience of standing in the presence of God and worship a golden calf that was crafted by the hands of Aaron.

How did they also experience the miracles of the 10 plagues and the dividing of the Red Sea and then complain about water and food as though God was not with them?

When we think about how far mankind has fallen it is hard to comprehend.

Verses 21-25

²¹ Then 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. 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.

Warn the people, so that they do not break through to the Lord to gaze

It's a natural reaction to edge forward to get a closer look, but in this case it could have been deadly.

Also let the priests who come near to the Lord consecrate themselves

Who were these priests?

Abraham gave honor to Melchizedek, the priest of Salem (Jerusalem), long before God instituted the Tabernacle and the priesthood

During his journey to Haran, Jacob promised to give God 10% of his increase if God looked after him until he returned.

See Genesis 28:20

Who did he give this 10% to?

The Bible is a book of history, but it doesn't give us every detail of what took place in the lives of the people it covers.

The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for you warned us

Moses let's God know that he already took care of this issue but God tells Moses to get going and do what he said

God knows “a little more” about human nature than Moses knew. 😊