

Dr. John Oswalt, Exodus, Session 10, Exodus 19-20 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Exodus, Session 10, Exodus 19-20, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a lecture by Dr. John Oswalt on Exodus 19-20, exploring the covenant between God and the Israelites at Mount Sinai. **He examines the covenant's structure**, comparing it to Near Eastern treaties, and **analyzes the preparation for the covenant**, including the Israelites' cognitive, volitional, and emotional states. **Oswalt then discusses the Ten Commandments**, interpreting their significance as a revelation of God's character and principles, emphasizing God's concern for both the spiritual and physical well-being of his people. The lecture highlights the commandments' implications for Israel's role as a holy nation and their relationship with God and humanity. Finally, the lecture emphasizes the profound truths found in the Ten Commandments about monotheism, the transcendence of God, and the importance of human relationships.

**2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Oswalt, Exodus, Session 10 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →
Pentateuch → Exodus).**



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3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 10, Exodus 19-20

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. John Oswalt's teaching on Exodus 19-20:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Exodus 19-20

Overview:

This session focuses on the pivotal moment in Exodus where God prepares the Israelites for the covenant at Mount Sinai. Dr. Oswalt frames this event within the context of ancient Near Eastern covenant structures, highlighting the unique nature of God's covenant with Israel as a relationship based on love and deliverance rather than conquest. He emphasizes the revelation of God's character through the covenant and the implications for the Israelites' identity and purpose.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Covenant Structure and Context:

- The biblical covenant follows a pattern common in the ancient Near East, featuring an introduction, historical prologue, stipulations, a place to keep the text, divine witnesses, and blessings/curses.
- However, the historical prologue in the biblical covenant is unique: instead of a king's military victory over a subjugated people, God's covenant is based on his deliverance of the Israelites from slavery. "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of slavery" - is the basis of the covenant, not military subjugation.
- Deuteronomy, as well as Exodus 20-24, conforms to this covenant pattern.
- The covenant serves as a revelation of God's character, purpose, and principles.

1. Preparation for the Covenant (Exodus 19):

- Chapter 19 is presented as a critical preparation for the covenant, where God has been working with the Israelites for hundreds of years, slowly leading them to a point of commitment.
- The covenant is distinct from paganism, which emphasizes manipulating the gods for personal gain. God invites them into a committed relationship where they both commit to each other.

- The arrival at Sinai on the third month after Passover (coinciding with the Feast of First Fruits/Pentecost) is significant: The Passover being about deliverance from death and the Torah being given at the time of what became Pentecost.
- Moses experienced deep affirmation at their arrival, a confirmation of God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promise in Exodus 3:12.
- God's purpose in delivering Israel from Egypt was to bring them to Himself as a treasured possession, desiring their fellowship: "I bore you to myself on eagle's wings."
- Israel's purpose in the world is to be a "holy nation" and a "royal priesthood," serving as mediators for the world, bringing others into relationship with God.

1. **Holiness:**

- The concept of holiness is explored in depth, starting with the holy ground in Exodus 3:5 and culminating in the idea of Israel as a holy nation (19:6).
- Holiness is initially associated with God's "otherness," His separation from creation. The ground was not morally excellent, but holy because of God's presence.
- However, the covenant calls the Israelites to also have a holy character, behaving differently from the world by displaying self-giving love and integrity. God desires them to be "other" in character as well.
- God wants to be with his people and that being in relationship with God makes them other.

1. **Three-Fold Preparation:**

- God prepares the people in three ways:
- **Cognitive Preparation:** (verses 5-6) God prompts them to think about His past actions and promises. "Remember what I've done for you" as a means of motivating future covenant compliance.
- **Volitional Preparation:** (verses 10-15) God instructs them to wash their clothes, build a boundary around the mountain, and abstain from sexual activity, symbolizing purity, separation, and the recognition that God cannot be controlled. These actions served as practice for the more significant covenant commitments to come.

- **Affective/Emotional Preparation:** (verses 16-20) The theophanic display of thunder, lightning, smoke, and a trumpet blast on Mount Sinai evokes awe and reverence for God.

1. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20):

- Verse 1 introduces the giving of the Ten Commandments, and verse 2 establishes the historical context of the covenant, that it is based on God's deliverance, not conquest, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of slavery."
- The commandments are a short form of the stipulations, with longer, more specific legal applications detailed later (e.g., in chapter 21).
- The Ten Commandments are principles that are rooted in the character of God. These are "absolute prohibitions or commands," in which he says, "You shall" or "You shall not".
- Four of the commandments pertain specifically to God, and the six to interpersonal relationships. God's character is revealed by his emphasis on the way people treat each other, not just their religious practices.
- **First Commandment:** Exclusive worship of God.
- **Second Commandment:** No idols - no representations of God in the form of creation.
- **Third Commandment:** Do not take the Lord's name in vain: do not make God's character, nature, or function empty - to include more than just casual oaths, but to include any way God's name is not given its full value.
- **Fourth Commandment:** Keep the Sabbath holy; one seventh of time is set aside to remind them of God as the source of life.
- **Fifth Commandment:** Honor your father and mother. God values family as a gift of love and the family as an institution necessary for understanding humanity.
- **Sixth Commandment:** Do not murder. God values human life.
- **Seventh Commandment:** Do not commit adultery. God values sexuality in the context of relationships and faithfulness.
- **Eighth Commandment:** Do not steal. God values individual possession.
- **Ninth Commandment:** Do not bear false witness. God values truth and not false impressions, particularly with reference to one's neighbor.

- **Tenth Commandment:** Do not covet, recognizing that "stuff" cannot provide true happiness.

1. **Monotheism and Transcendence:**

- The commandments teach monotheism (the belief in one God). Oswalt points out this is not a natural evolution of belief, but a revealed truth. Only three religions have this as a tenet: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- The prohibition against idols affirms God's transcendence, that He is not part of this world.
- God cannot be manipulated through worldly means.

Quotes:

- "I bore you to myself on eagle's wings." (Regarding God's purpose in delivering the Israelites)
- "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of slavery." (Emphasizing the historical prologue of deliverance)
- "Holy means set apart" (describing the essence of holiness)
- "If you're going to be in a relationship with me, the way you treat other people is the key to whether you are in a relationship with me or not." (Highlighting the importance of interpersonal relations in the covenant)
- "Anytime you feel good about a commandment, you don't understand it. Commandments weren't given to make us feel good, and they were given to drive us to the cross." (On the true purpose of the commandments)
- "I am complete in myself, and I don't need any woman...I am complete in myself, and I don't need any man." (Oswalt describes the prevailing current culture as one that rejects the need for relationship, which he states is central to God's overall vision of humanity.)
- "Sexuality is for the purpose of relationship." (Emphasizing the intended purpose of sexuality within the covenant framework)

Implications:

- The Israelites are called to be a unique people, reflecting God's character and fulfilling His purposes in the world.
- The covenant is not merely a set of laws but a framework for a relationship with God and each other.
- True worship and service to God are demonstrated in how one treats their neighbor.
- God values the whole person - thoughts, actions, and feelings – all must be engaged.
- The Ten Commandments provide an eternal standard of conduct reflecting God's character and priorities.

Conclusion:

Dr. Oswalt's lecture on Exodus 19-20 provides a rich theological understanding of the covenant at Sinai. He highlights the depth of God's love and purpose in choosing Israel and the transformative power of the covenant for those who embrace it. It provides important background and context to the core of the Old Testament, and sets the stage for understanding the rest of the book of Exodus.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 10, Exodus 19-20

Exodus 19-20 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to Oswalt, what is the significance of the timing of the arrival at Sinai in relation to the Passover and Pentecost?
2. What does Oswalt suggest was a sign of God's faithfulness to Moses when arriving at Mt. Sinai?
3. According to Oswalt, what was God's purpose in delivering the Israelites from Egypt?
4. What is the dual purpose of Israel, as described by Oswalt, and how does it relate to their role in the world?
5. What is the significance of the term "holy," according to Oswalt, and how does it apply to both the ground at Mt. Sinai and the people of Israel?
6. Oswalt describes three preparations for the covenant in Exodus 19: what are they, and what do they signify?
7. According to Oswalt, what is the difference between the historical prologue of Near Eastern covenants and the historical prologue of the biblical covenant?
8. How does Oswalt explain the relationship between the short-form and long-form stipulations in the covenant?
9. How many of the Ten Commandments relate to God, and how many relate to other people, according to Oswalt, and what does this reveal about the character of God?
10. According to Oswalt, why is adultery chosen as the example of broken relationships?

Answer Key

1. The arrival at Sinai occurred in the third month, following Passover, which celebrates deliverance from death, and coinciding with Pentecost, which became a celebration of the giving of the Torah. This timing is significant because the Law was given during Pentecost, after being delivered by God in the Passover.

2. Arriving at the mountain confirmed that God had fulfilled his promise in Exodus 3:12 to bring them there to worship; the arrival at Sinai was a powerful confirmation of God's faithfulness to Moses and his promises.
3. God delivered the Israelites from Egypt to bring them into a relationship with Him, making them His special treasure and allowing them to enjoy fellowship with Him; It demonstrates God's desire for communion with his people.
4. Israel was meant to be a royal priesthood, both God's possession and mediators to the world, demonstrating God's character. They were meant to intercede on behalf of the world, with their election being for the purpose of drawing the entire world to God.
5. Holy signifies "otherness," distinguishing God as unique and separate from creation. It applies to the ground at Mt. Sinai due to God's presence, and to the people of Israel, calling them to embody God's character.
6. The three preparations are cognitive (thinking about what God has done), volitional (physical actions such as washing clothes and abstaining from sex), and affective (experiencing God's power through thundering and lightning). These emphasize the need for holistic preparation—mind, will, and senses—for the covenant.
7. Near Eastern covenants begin with a king's defeat of a subject people, which leads them to accept the covenant for lack of any power. The biblical covenant, however, starts with God's act of deliverance from slavery, emphasizing an invitation into a relationship rather than forced servitude.
8. The short-form stipulations are absolute principles. The long-form stipulations (which will be discussed later in the series) are specific examples growing out of the eternal principles which show how they are to be applied.
9. Four of the Ten Commandments relate to God, and six relate to other humans. This reveals that God's character is inseparable from how we treat one another; it indicates our relationship with God affects how we treat others and vice versa.

10. Adultery is chosen because it is a breaking of faith within a relationship, representing a fundamental betrayal of a sacred trust. Oswalt notes that God is concerned about a lack of relationship, making adultery more than just a sexual transgression.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer the following essay questions in a well-organized, thesis-driven essay with supporting evidence from the text.

1. Discuss the significance of the covenant at Sinai in the context of God's relationship with the Israelites, drawing connections between the historical context and the unique features of this covenant as presented in Exodus 19-20.
2. Analyze the preparations for the covenant in Exodus 19, detailing how each preparation (cognitive, volitional, and affective) contributes to the Israelite's understanding and acceptance of the covenant.
3. Explore the implications of Israel's role as a "royal priesthood" in Exodus 19:6, explaining how this identity is both a gift and a responsibility, and how it relates to their purpose in the world.
4. Compare and contrast the short-form stipulations of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 with Oswalt's explanation of the principles behind them. Consider how those principles provide insight into the nature of God and the human relationship to Him.
5. Examine the tension between pagan and biblical views of the divine as described in Oswalt's lecture, particularly focusing on the concept of "holiness" and how the Ten Commandments challenge the pagan understanding of manipulating the gods.

Glossary of Key Terms

Affective: Relating to emotions or feelings. In the context of the lecture, it refers to the sensory experience of the Israelites at Mount Sinai.

Cognitive: Relating to the process of thinking, knowing, and understanding. In the lecture, it refers to God's method of getting the Israelites to think about their history and promise.

Covenant: A formal agreement between two or more parties. In the context of the lecture, it refers to the binding agreement between God and the Israelites.

Historical Prologue: A section of a covenant that provides a historical context for the agreement and highlights the actions of the superior party.

Holy: Set apart or sacred; in the context of the lecture, it refers to God's otherness and also the quality of character that God calls his people to embrace.

Monotheism: The belief in one God.

Paganism: A broad term that refers to religions characterized by polytheism, idolatry, and manipulation of the divine.

Pentecost: A Jewish festival that initially celebrated the harvest of first fruits, but later came to celebrate the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

Providence: God's care and provision for his creation.

Royal Priesthood: A term describing Israel's unique identity as both a nation of kings (representing God's authority) and priests (mediating between God and the world).

Stipulations: The terms or conditions of a covenant; the obligations required by each party.

Torah: The first five books of the Hebrew Bible, also known as the Law or the Pentateuch.

Volitional: Relating to the act of willing or choosing; in the context of the lecture, it refers to the actions that the Israelites were called to perform as part of their preparation for the covenant.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Exodus, Session 10, Exodus 19-20, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Exodus 19-20

1. **What is the significance of the covenant established at Mount Sinai, as described in Exodus 19-20, and how does it differ from typical Near Eastern covenants?** The covenant at Sinai is a foundational agreement between God and the Israelites, marking a shift from a relationship based on God's power to one of commitment and reciprocal relationship. Unlike typical Near Eastern covenants where a king establishes a pact with a subjugated people after conquering them, this covenant is based on God's prior deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. This demonstrates God's grace and initiative, inviting a willing relationship rather than imposing a forced one. The stipulations of this covenant, detailed later in Exodus, reflect the character, purposes, and wishes of the great king (God), providing a revelation of His nature. This makes the covenant unique, emphasizing a relationship based on love, faithfulness and obedience.
2. **How does the timing of the events at Mount Sinai, specifically the connection to Passover and Pentecost, contribute to the understanding of God's purpose?** The timing is highly significant. The Israelites arrive at Sinai in the third month after the Passover. Passover, which celebrates God's deliverance of Israel from death in Egypt, is followed by Pentecost, which was originally a harvest festival but evolved into a commemoration of the giving of the Torah, the law, which reveals God's character. This progression highlights a crucial aspect of God's purpose: He not only delivers his people from bondage and death (Passover) but also provides the means for them to live a life that honors Him (Pentecost). In the New Testament, this culminates in the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which empowers believers to follow God's word, addressing the inadequacy of the law.

3. **What does it mean for Israel to be God's "treasured possession," "a kingdom of priests," and a "holy nation," and what is their purpose in the world?** God's desire for Israel to be his "treasured possession" emphasizes the deep value he places on his relationship with them. The idea of a "kingdom of priests" and a "holy nation" highlights their role as mediators between God and the world. They were intended to be intercessors, demonstrating God's character to the rest of humanity, not just for their own benefit. Their election is not merely for their own sake, but for the sake of the entire world and ultimately for the purpose of bringing all of humanity into fellowship with God. They were to be a light to the world.

4. **What is the significance of the term "holy" in Exodus 19:6, and how does it apply both to God and to Israel?** The term "holy" in this context is defined as otherness - the idea that God is not like any part of creation. When applied to the ground at Mt. Sinai it means it is a place of special divine presence. When applied to Israel as a nation, it means that they were called to be different from the rest of the world, setting themselves apart by exhibiting God's character. While humans can't fully possess God's essence (e.g., omniscience, omnipresence), they are meant to share his character through their actions, living a life of self-giving love and integrity which will always be in contrast to the self-centered world. They become 'holy' as they reflect God's nature in how they live.

5. **What were the three specific preparatory actions that God commanded the Israelites to take before receiving the covenant at Sinai, and what do they symbolize?** The three specific actions were washing their clothes, building a fence around Mount Sinai, and abstaining from sexual relations. Washing their clothes symbolized the need to be clean, indicating that what was about to transpire was holy and needed respect. Building a fence was a visible separation, emphasizing God's otherness and transcendence, preventing people from trying to absorb Him or themselves into Him. The abstinence from sexual relations was meant to remind them that they did not control the life force, and in fact they depend on God as the source of all life. These actions show God is clean, separate and not controllable.

6. **How did God prepare the Israelites holistically for the covenant, engaging not just their minds but also their bodies and emotions?** God engaged the Israelites through cognitive, volitional, and affective means. Cognitively, God made them think about their history, what He had done for them, and the promises He had in store for them in the future. Volitionally, He asked them to do certain things (wash their clothes, build a fence, etc.) that showed obedience and built a sense of readiness. Affectively, He demonstrated his power through thunder, lightning, smoke, and a loud trumpet blast. These dramatic displays caused them to tremble, engaging their senses and emotions to create a heightened experience that emphasized the gravity and significance of their encounter with God. He was not only concerned about their thoughts or actions but also their sensory experience. This prepares them for the covenant by making it a holistic experience for them.
7. **How does the historical prologue of the covenant (Exodus 20:2) differ from that of pagan Near Eastern covenants, and what does this reveal about the nature of God and the covenant?** Unlike pagan covenants that begin with a king describing his military victories over subjugated peoples, the historical prologue in Exodus emphasizes God's role as the deliverer. He states, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." This highlights the covenant's foundation in God's grace and prior actions of redemption, rather than His power to dominate. This reveals God as a relational God who does not force obedience but invites His people into a willing relationship based on mutual commitment and love. He has liberated them not to become His slaves, but to be in a loving relationship with Him.

8. **What is the relationship between the Ten Commandments, the specific case laws that follow, and the character of God?** The Ten Commandments are foundational principles that reflect God's character, while the specific case laws that follow apply these principles to particular situations. The first four commandments focus specifically on how to relate to God (monotheism, no idols, do not misuse God's name, and keep the Sabbath), reflecting His nature and essence. The remaining six commandments focus on how to relate to other humans (honor family, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, and do not covet). These show how God values human relationships, life, individual worth, and honesty. Together, all ten reveal that God's love for humans is to be expressed through genuine relationship with Him and with each other. The case laws stem from these commandments and apply them to specific circumstances, illustrating how the principles should be lived out in daily life.