



# One Page Sermon

## By Pastor Robb McCoy

### September 25, 2022

Worship Every Sunday at 9:30 AM

#### Moses: The Blood and Anger (Exodus 24:3-8 and 34:10-28)

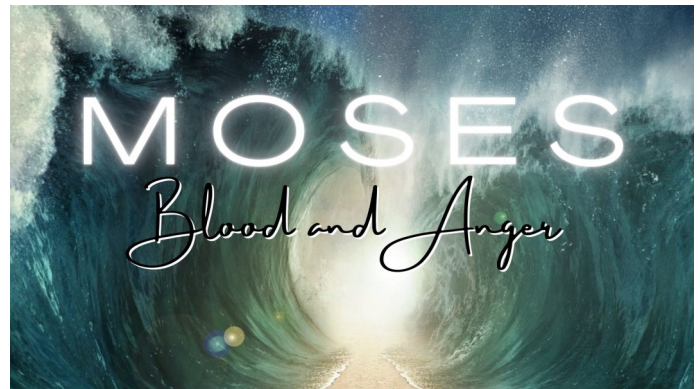
The covenant at Mount Sinai is the birth of Israel as a people. It is their defining moment as God's people. Until this moment the people were a loosely related family of fugitives. They were bound by common ancestors and stories of the Patriarchs, but when Moses took blood and scattered it on the 12 pillars and on the people, a covenant was formed. Sealed with blood, it was determined that God would be their God and lead them into the Promised Land. The people would worship only God and obey the Instruction that was written down by Moses.

The Instruction (or Torah) is more than the 10 Commandments which are listed in Exodus 20. The next few chapters (21-23) detail more instructions about social justice, property rights, Sabbath regulations, legal justice, and the three annual festivals. The Instructions of God were about how to live in community, how to be a unique people, and how to ensure justice within Israel and among their neighbors. It was a way to be God's people, and the covenant was simple: obey God and God will provide a Land for the people.

The problem is that the obedience didn't last. Very quickly, the people rebelled. While growing impatient with Moses' absence, the people took matters into their own hands, melted down their gold, forged a bull, and worshiped the idol. It was an act of betrayal and rebellion. It was an act motivated by fear, frustration, and a desire to return to Egypt. They wanted to go back into bondage rather risk the freedom that God had granted them in the Wilderness.

Both God and Moses were enraged at the betrayal. There were dramatic and deadly repercussions. The next few chapters detail an intimate conversation between God and Moses as the consequences of this great betrayal are debated, discussed, and negotiated. God will start over, wipe out the people and begin again with Moses. This plan is abandoned when Moses appeals to God's sense of honor and shame. "What would the Egyptians think?" Moses asks, "if you do all of that work just destroy the people in the wilderness."

God decides to let the people go without him. "You drive, I'm getting out," God says (more or less). Moses however, reminds God of the promise that was made. Then Moses and



God come up with something new. If the covenant was built on obedience, and the people have already disobeyed, something new must be added to the equation: Forgiveness.

The word forgive appears 138 times in New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Before this moment in the story however, it has been used only twice. The first was when Abraham tried to talk God down from destroying Sodom (which didn't work in the end). The other time is when Joseph's brothers wonder what he will do to them, and they hope he forgives them (he does).

This moment however, is the first time that forgiveness is used in the context of the relationship between God and God's people. Moses and God sit down, have a heart-to-heart and come up with a solution: God will forgive the people. Thus God reveals something new about God. God is forgiving. The covenant will endure—not because the people will always obey, but because God will always forgive.

The Exodus was the formation of the people of God. It is the story of how Israel went from a loose group of distantly related slaves into a "Kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). It is also the story of God revealing deep forgiveness, grace, and steadfast love. God delivers the people. God gives them a way to live in peace and justice, and God forgives them when they stray from that way.

Forgiveness is not an easy path. Even in the story, it is messy and painful. Forgiveness does not erase consequences. Forgiveness allows relationship to endure, and forgiveness is what marks the relationship between God and God's people.