

The Torah at Sinai

Scripture Reading — Exodus 19:1-8

Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. — Exodus 19:5-6

We don't often use the word *Torah* anymore. And it can be used in a few different ways. Generally it refers to the law given by God to Israel at Sinai, including the Ten Commandments on stone tab-lets (Exodus 20:1-17). But *Torah* can also refer to the five books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy) in the Old Testament. At its root, *Torah* simply means God's instruction to his people for living in a way that honors him.

If we read today's story wrong, we might think of it as a business transaction: If you do this, I'll do that. But that would miss the central point: before God gives his people the Torah and calls them to obedience, he is already doing the things he promises to do. In other words, God acts *first*, showing his love and care long before the people commit to follow him. That's the way it is with God's grace. Because God has already chosen and blessed the people, they can live in faithful obedience, as outlined in the commandments, and be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Thinking of God's initial love and faithfulness is the best way to think about the commandments for our lives today. They are simply instructions for joyful, faithful living.

Ultimately, our heavenly High Priest, Jesus, writes the law on our hearts. He has made us a priesthood and a holy nation to serve him in his world.

Prayer

Your instructions for living, O God, give us life in you and in your Son, our Savior, Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

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Printed on May 27, 2019

