

That the World May Know: With All Your Heart – Session 4: By Every Word – Striking the Rock

Changing the Hebrew's Perception of God

In ancient cultures, people often believed that the natural phenomena they could see—stars, moon, sun, rivers, sea, sky, animals, birds, fish, reptiles, plants—were either divine or represented certain deities. In contrast, the God of the Bible created all of these things. Let's look at what God did at Sinai to help them experience him with their ears instead of their eyes.

1. When the Hebrews arrived at Mount Sinai, they had seen the power of their God demonstrated in the plagues and his provision for them on their journey. But the memories of Egypt's great temples and images of their gods remained fresh in their minds. What astonishing revelation of his presence did God provide at Mount Sinai?
Exodus 19:1 – 22
Exodus 20:18 – 21

What impressive visual phenomena were part of this experience?

2. Which of God's commands shaped how the Hebrews would know and experience him?
Exodus 20:1 – 4
Exodus 34:17
Deuteronomy 4:23 – 24
Deuteronomy 5:4 – 22

How different would the Hebrew's experience of God be from that of the visual gods of other nations?

What would be the consequences if Israel disobeyed this command?
Deuteronomy 4:25 - 29

Learning to Live by the Word

In the desert, far from the visual “noise” of Egypt's gods, the God of the Hebrews spoke his words to his people. Like a desert shepherd, he taught them to listen for his voice. He impressed his people to remember his words and teach them to their children to ensure that future generations would continue to live by them.

1. As God led his flock to sanctuary and pasture in the desert, what did he begin training them to do?
Deuteronomy 6:1 – 4

What was God's purpose in doing this?

What did God desire for his flock?

2. Desert shepherds lead their flocks by voice and by word, and God chose to lead his people in the same way. He first spoke his words from Mount Sinai, but his people were going to move on toward the Promised Land. How would God continue to speak his words to his beloved people as they traveled in the desert?
Exodus 25:22
Numbers 7:89
Deuteronomy 10:5

When God gave these instructions, what was he communicating about his presence with his people and the importance of the words he would speak to them?

After spending forty years teaching the Hebrews how to live on every word that came from his mouth, what did God tell them to wear? Why?
Numbers 15:37 – 41
Deuteronomy 22:12

God's Leaders Keep Learning Too

Moses grew up in Pharaoh's household, led sheep in the desert, and then became a great leader who led the Hebrews out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. Moses was a great and admirable leader, but he was far from perfect. Moses needed to keep learning so he would not lose sight of how God accomplishes his work through the words of his mouth and how tenderly he cares for his flock.

1. From the moment God assigned Moses his mission, he began training him in the importance of his word. In what way did God's communication differ from that of the gods Moses had known in Egypt?
Exodus 3:4
Jeremiah 10:3 – 6
2. How did God instruct Moses to lead the Hebrews? What role were God's words to have in that process?
Exodus 3:13 – 15
Exodus 4:1 – 12

What concern did Moses have about speaking God's words, speaking on God's behalf, to other people?
Exodus 3:13
Exodus 4:1

What signs did God provide to help Moses authenticate his message? What impact do you think they had on Moses experience of God?
Exodus 4:2 – 9

What would be the main tool God would have Moses use to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt—the signs or his words?
Exodus 4:10

Hear and Obey Every Command

God and Moses had quite a relationship. From the time God spoke to Moses at the burning bush until the Hebrews were poised to enter the Promised Land after forty years in the desert, God had spoken to and through this humble shepherd—Moses. Despite all that Moses had seen and heard in his relationship with God and in his role as shepherd, he also had a moment when he failed to obey God's words.

1. After following God's voice for forty years and learning to live by every word from God, what crisis did the Hebrews face at Kadesh Barnea?

Numbers 20:1 – 2

Although this generation of Hebrews had heard God's words, experienced his shepherd leadership, and were poised to enter the land God had promised, what terrible things did they say to Moses (and God) about their experience?

Numbers 20:3 – 5

In what ways was their response similar to their ancestor's reactions during a similar crisis about forty years earlier?

Exodus 17:3

2. How did Moses and Aaron respond to the people's anger? What does this reveal about their commitment to lead by every word that came from the mouth of God?

Numbers 20:6

3. When God told Moses what to do, what was he to take with him, what was he to do, and what would be the result?

Numbers 20:7 – 8

Flawed but Not a Failure

During the years God led his people through the desert, Moses was the unsurpassed example of *hearing* God's voice. But even Moses had a moment of failure. At a crucial point in his leadership of God's people, he did not "hear" God's instructions and rebelled against the power of God's spoken word. Moses reverted back to the ways of Egypt and failed to care for God's flock and to honor God's words.

1. The Hebrews had been to Kadesh Barnea before the account in Numbers 20—forty years earlier. What serious sin did the Hebrews commit the first time they were there? What penalty did God impose?

Numbers 13:1 – 27

Numbers 14:10 – 33

What serious sin did Moses and Aaron commit the second time the Hebrews were in Kadesh Barnea? What penalty did God impose?

Numbers 20:1 - 12

2. Although one of Moses' last acts was sinful and cost him dearly, what does his epitaph reveal about God's forgiveness and desire to use his people to accomplish his purposes and bring about his kingdom?

Deuteronomy 34:10 - 11

References

Exodus 3	Exodus 4
Exodus 7	Exodus 13
Exodus 17	Exodus 19
Exodus 20	Exodus 25
Exodus 33	Exodus 34
Leviticus 9	Numbers 7
Numbers 11	Numbers 13
Numbers 14	Numbers 15
Numbers 20	Numbers 27
Deuteronomy 1	Deuteronomy 3
Deuteronomy 4	Deuteronomy 5
Deuteronomy 6	Deuteronomy 8
Deuteronomy 10	Deuteronomy 11
Deuteronomy 22	Deuteronomy 31
Deuteronomy 32	Deuteronomy 34
Psalms 115	Isaiah 55
Jeremiah 10	Zechariah 4
Zechariah 12	Matthew 13
Mark 12	Romans 3
1 Corinthians 10	Ephesians 2
Ephesians 6	Hebrews 4
1 Peter 1	1 Peter 2
1 John 4	