

image: paperstreet



CONCORD
SUNDAY SCHOOL

LECTIONARY
LESSON 8

SUNDAY,
FEBRUARY 23,
2020

Exodus 24:12-18 NRSV

12 The Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” 13 So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. 14 To the elders he had said, “Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them.”

15 Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. 17 Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. 18 Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

Background

In the passage before this, God shares a list of expectations for the people. Among them, “you shall not spread a false report,” “you shall not join hands with the wicked,” and “you should not oppress a resident alien.” There are a host of expectations in chapter 23. Moses comes to God after this explicit set of expectations. In your own devotional period, spend some time in chapter 23. What is God saying to you about a heart for freedom through this passage?

Today’s lesson will focus on creating a worshipful posture.

Read the scripture out loud together.

Discuss with a partner. What are your routines on Sunday Morning? How do you prepare for church?

What’s happening during this passage?

God tells Moses to come for a meeting on the Mountain. So Moses told the elders to wait until they return. Moses also delegated responsibilities so that anyone who had a dispute would come to Aaron and Hur. When Moses went to the mountain, a cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day, Moses was called out of the cloud. Moses was on the mountain for over a month.

How was it possible that Moses could spend so much time elsewhere?

Moses learned early on that he couldn’t be the only leader. His father-in-law, Jethro of Midian, warned that Moses’ propensity to take on every issue himself was going to kill him. Jethro said you will “wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.” Moses had leaders who would handle disputes in his absence. This is instructive for us because we have to remember that we are not God. We can ask for help. We can have co-laborers. We can appoint trusted people to take over. If the work cannot be done while we are not around, we have to evaluate our choices.

What do you think happened there at the mountain?

We don’t really have an idea from this passage about what happened. We don’t see much dialogue. We don’t know what God told Moses from this passage alone, although we can make inferences based on later chapters. Perhaps what is most impor-

tant about this passage is the length of time that Moses is on the mountain. Forty days and forty nights is a period often used in Biblical stories. It rained for this amount of time during the Great Flood. Jesus fasted for this amount of time. It is a significant chunk of time.

How does God appear?

God appears like “a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.” God’s glory was so big and magnificent that people could see from a distance. This is the kind of power that Moses was intimate with. It may be that Moses needed this amount of time up on the mountain to recover from such great power.

What questions do you still have of this scripture? How will you commit to journeying with this text this week?

Encourage students to highlight parts of the passage that still make them curious. Be sure to check in with them next Sunday about what they’re still curious about.



Connection to Today’s World

A few months ago, Rev. Howard John Wesley announced to his church that he would be taking a sabbatical. The pastor of the Alfred Street Baptist Church shared intimate details about feeling far from God and being obsessed each morning with a thought about “something I had to do for the church, that I have to be available for a call.” So, starting early this past January, he took a pause from church-related duties. The break will last about 3 1/2 months. The headlines in many newspapers and articles focused on these few words: “I feel so far from God.”

Sabbaticals are not just for pastors. All people benefit from having intentional time to seek the face of God. There are different kinds of leaves, too. Parental leave, family leave, a leave of absence, family vacations and meditation retreats are all ways that people take time to focus on what is important.

Journal: If you had forty days and forty nights where money was no object, where would you go to seek God? What questions would you have? What would you hope to hear?

Closing: Sing “Sweet Hour of Prayer.”

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father’s throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.
In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief,
And oft escaped the tempter’s snare,
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer!

Prayer:

Dear God,

You are the God who bids us to come to the mountain every so often. We thank you for weekend getaways, family reunions, block parties and other opportunities to get away.

It is so hard to focus on worshipping you when we are otherwise distracted. We ask that you give us even this hour today to leave our burdens at the altar. We pray that we are able to be fully present in the worship hour this morning, so that we can see you in your full glory.

In Jesus’ name we pray,

Amen