

God Teaches His People How to Worship

After the Hebrews crossed the sea, they traveled for a long, long time, looking for the land that God had promised them. On and on they went for many weeks through a land of hot, dry sand. The sun was scorching hot, and the dry desert wind blew all the time. Sometimes they had no water and no food. At those times the people would grumble: "In Egypt we at least had water and food." However, again and again God helped the Hebrews. In the morning they would find food lying on the ground. This food, which looked like white frost, was called manna. Manna could be gathered and eaten just like bread. Sometimes God sent them lots of small birds that were good to eat. One time when they had no water, God told Moses to strike a rock with his rod. A spring of fresh, clear water flowed from the rock.

Once the Hebrew people stopped to camp at the foot of a great mountain. Then Moses heard God speaking to him: "You shall be My people, and I shall save you from all dangers."

Moses told the people what he had heard, and they all answered together: "All that God says we shall do." Then Moses brought this promise to God, and God answered him: "I shall come to you in a great cloud, so that your people will hear My voice when I speak to you. Tell them to wait at the foot of the mountain and make themselves ready for Me."

So all the people washed their clothes in order to be clean and ready for God. Then they settled down and waited to hear God's voice. Moses told them not to go up the mountain, but to stay where they were.

In the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, and a thick cloud covered the top of the mountain. The mountain trembled and shook so that all the people in the camp were frightened.

Moses went up on the mountain. There he listened to God. And God gave him His law—ten rules that all people must obey

if they want to be God's people These rules were written on two flat stone tablets. Moses took the stone tablets with the Law and went down the mountain to bring God's Word to his people

But do you know what the Hebrew people did while Moses was up on the mountain speaking to God? They had waited and waited for Moses to come down. They became tired and frightened and wanted to do something to feel safe. So they took all the gold and silver they had, melted it, and made a golden statue for themselves. They said this statue was their god and they began praying to it.

When Moses came down and saw this, he was so angry that, he smashed the tablets of Law that God had given him. He spoke angrily to his people. He even punished them.

Then the people were very sorry indeed and became very much ashamed of themselves. Moses loved them even though they were very foolish, so he went up to the top of the mountain again. He spoke to God and begged Him to forgive His people. God told him to make two new stone tablets and again write on them the ten rules of the Law.

Now, when Moses came back from the mountain, he began teaching his people what to do to remember God and what was the right way to worship God. He taught them to make a beautiful chest, which was called the ark. In the chest he put the stone tablets with the Law. He then taught them how to build a church.

The Hebrews could not build a church of stone or wood for they were traveling all the time and had to live in tents; so the first church they made was a tent. Moses told them to bring all their very best things to make it beautiful. They gladly brought all they could: their rings, bracelets; their best linens, skins of animals, and woolen cloth that the women themselves had made so carefully. They also brought oils, spices, precious stones, and beautiful copper dishes. Everyone worked hard to build the church the way Moses told them.

At last everything was ready. Then a wonderful thing happened to show the people that God was with them and that he had blessed their church. A cloud covered the whole yard and tent. From this cloud came the light of God which filled the tent and made it bright. Moses could not enter the tent for a long time because of this bright cloud. Finally the cloud lifted, and the Hebrew people were able to continue on their journey. They were not afraid anymore. The bright cloud showed them that God cared for His people.

**Samuel Hears God's Call*