

Exodus 24

Moses has gone up (19:3) and down (19:7) Mount Sinai several times. His second trip was at 19:8 & 9. His third trip was in 19:10 & 14. His fourth trip was at 19:20 & 25. Now he goes to Jehovah God (24:1) and back down to the people (24:3). He goes back up for a sixth time at 24:9 and further up at 24:12. At this point, Moses stays for 40 days and 40 nights as he receives the detailed pattern for a place to worship Jehovah God. He will not come down again until 32:15.

This chapter basically records the ratification or confirmation of the covenant between Jehovah God and Israel.

TRANSLATION - 24:1-8:

1 Then to Moses He said, "Come up to Jehovah: you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy from the elders of Israel and let them worship at a distance." **2** And Moses drew near alone to Jehovah and they did not draw near and the people did not go up with him.

3 And Moses came and related to the people all the words of Jehovah and all the judgments and all the people answered with one voice and they said, 'All the words which Jehovah spoke, we will do.'

4 And Moses wrote all the words of Jehovah and he arose early and built an altar behind the mountain and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. **5** And he sent out young men of the sons of Israel and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings to Jehovah, bulls.

6 And Moses took half the blood and he put it in basins and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. **7** Then he took the book of the covenant and he called in the ears of the people and they answered, "All which Jehovah spoke, we will do and we will submit."

8 And Moses took the blood and he sprinkled [it] on the people and he said, "Behold, the blood of the covenant which Jehovah cut with you all, on the basis of all these words."

HEBREW WORDS:

"To worship" (ver. 1) was used earlier at 4:31. This word always means to worship, either God or false gods. "To draw near" (ver. 2) was used earlier at 19:15, 22. "To relate" (ver. 3) is a verb related to the noun "book" (used in verse 7). It was used earlier at 9:16. "To write" (ver. 4) was used earlier at 17:14. "Altar" was seen earlier at 17:15. The "pillar" was used earlier at 23:24. "Young men" (ver. 5) was used earlier at 2:6; 10:9. "To offer" is the verb related to the noun "burnt offerings" (used earlier at 10:25; 18:12). "To sacrifice" (used earlier at 3:18) is the verbal form of the noun "sacrifice" (used earlier at 10:25). "Peace offerings" is a plural form of the word "peace." It was used earlier at 20:24.

The word "blood" (ver. 6) was used earlier at 4:9, 25-26. This word for "basin" is only used here; Isa. 22:24; and Song of Solomon 7:3. "To sprinkle" was used earlier at 9:8, 10. "Book" (ver. 7) was used earlier at 17:14. "Covenant" was used earlier at 2:24. It will be used extensively in chapter 34. "To submit, obey, hear" was used earlier at 2:15, 24. "Behold" (ver. 8) is one of the most used words in the OT (used almost 1,000 times); it was used earlier at 1:9; 2:6, 13. The expression "blood of the covenant" is only used here in the OT; it will be used four times in the NT: Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Heb. 9:20; 10:29.

REFERENCES (REFERIRI) AND ALLUSIONS TO GENESIS:

Eating together was often a part of a covenant ratification ceremony: Genesis 26:28-30. Pillars are found in Genesis 31:45-54 as a witness in the covenant (not as a religious symbol) between Jacob and Laban. A similar pillar for a similar purpose is found in Joshua 24:27.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

While skeptics use to criticize the Bible because writing “had not been invented” by Moses’ time, secular archeology has proven that contention to be false. Also, we have record here that Moses wrote: 17:4; 24:4; 34:27-28. Jehovah God also wrote: ver. 12; 32:15-16. The medium of the writing is not known; it may have been leather, papyrus, or clay.

COMMENTARY:

After giving these laws from chapter 20 through chapter 23, on this occasion, God is going to call Israel to join into the covenant with Him by means of some rituals, but especially their heart-felt commitment verbalized in verses 3 and 7. Israel has already sworn its devotion to obedience to God’s commandments: 19:8.

Jehovah God calls Moses to ascend Mount Sinai into His presence (ver. 1). Aaron, his sons Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel (chosen back in chapter 18), will accompany them to a certain height on the mountain. The other men will worship where God directs them; Moses will continue to ascend, closer to God’s presence. The 70 elders are mentioned again only at Numbers 11:16, 24-25 and Ezekiel 8:11.

Moses rehearsed all the message (likely going back to chapter 20) which God had shared and the people verbally commit themselves to the covenant (ver. 3). They answered in unity, “with one voice.” Moses wrote the law so there would be a permanent record for future reference (ver. 4). Early the next morning, Moses set up an altar and twelve pillars for memorials (not for worship, which was condemned at 23:24). Each tribe had a pillar; perhaps it served as a focal point at which each tribe (at least their elders) assembled.

Then, the nation of Israel engaged in a worship service (ver. 5). Moses sent young men, since priests had not been appointed yet, to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings. The details for these offerings have not yet been revealed but they will be revealed (in written form) in the book of Leviticus. The “burnt offering” was totally consumed on the altar and symbolized the worshipper’s total dedication to Jehovah God. The “peace offering” included part of its meat eaten by the worshipper and part was burned on the altar. This offer symbolized fellowship between the worshipper and God. As a part of this worship service, Moses took the blood from the animals (ver. 6), preserving half the blood in a basin while sprinkling the altar with the other half. This action symbolized the sanctifying of the altar so that it could be used in worship to Jehovah God. Then Moses took the “book of the covenant” which he had written in verse 4, and he read it to the people of Israel. Again, we believe this “book” refers to the whole law of Moses, at least what has been recorded so far, going back to 20:1. Based on this student’s reading speed, it would take about 12 minutes to read chapters 20-23.

Once Moses finished reading, all the people once again verbalize their agreement to be committed - to fulfill, to obey, to submit to - the law and covenant of Jehovah God (ver. 7). Then Moses took the other half of the blood, what had been preserved in the basin, and sprinkled it toward (perhaps not “on”) the people, thus sanctifying them to be used in service to Jehovah God. This symbolized the “blood of the covenant” which Jehovah had made with Israel, in accordance with all the words that Jehovah God had spoken (ver. 8).

APPLICATION:

Later Jewish writers - There will be other ceremonies to renew the covenant between Jehovah God and Israel: Joshua 24:25-27; 2 Kings 23:2; Nehemiah 8:5-9. For another effort of man to see God, see Judges 6:22-23.

NT writers - When Jesus begins the Lord’s Supper, He takes the cup and says that it is the “blood of the new covenant” (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; 1 Cor. 11:25). This new covenant will fulfill - bring to its proper completion - the old covenant.

The Hebrew writer will compare the (temporary) cleansing that sprinkled blood brought to Israel (Heb. 9:7, 12; 10:19; 13:11-12) with the (permanent) cleansing that Christ’s sprinkled blood brings to us today: Hebrews 9:13-15; 19-22; 10:22. This latter verse (10:22) shows that the blood of Christ is (metaphorically) sprinkled on our hearts - thus cleansing us from sin - when we are immersed into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (see Acts 2:38; 22:16).

For the role of blood in the salvation of sinners under the Covenant of Christ, see: Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:19-20; Rev. 1:5. This cleansing takes place when one is immersed into water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16).

The NT is also emphatic that if we are to approach God, whether in worship or to be saved, we must obey Him in all the details He gives. Jesus is our only mediator (1 Tim. 2:5).

TRANSLATION - 24:9-18:

9 And Moses went up and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy from the elders of Israel.

10 And they saw the God of Israel and under His feet as the work of stones of sapphire and the essence of heaven for purity. **11** And to the noblemen of the sons of Israel he did not stretch out his hand but they saw God and they ate and they drank.

12 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Go up to Me on the mountain and it will be there that I will give to you the tablets of stone and the law and the commandment which I wrote for their instruction."

13 And Moses arose and Joshua his assistant and Moses went up to the mountain of God. **14** And to the elders, he said, "Stay here for us until when we return to you all and behold Aaron and Hur [are] with you. Who is a master of words, let him approach to them."

15 And Moses went up to the mountain and the cloud covered the mountain. **16** And the glory of Jehovah settled on the mountain of Sinai and the cloud covered [it] for six days and He called to Moses in the seventh day from the midst of the cloud. **17** And the appearance of the glory of Jehovah [was] as fire consuming at the pinnacle of the mountain before the eyes of the sons of Israel. **18** And Moses came into the midst of the cloud he went up to the mountain and it was [that] Moses [was] on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

HEBREW WORDS:

"Stones" (ver. 10) or "pavement" was used earlier at 5:7-8, 16, 18-19. "Sapphire" is actually a transliteration of the Hebrew word. It is used 11 times in the OT; it will be used in Exodus again at 28:18; 39:11. "Essence" was used earlier at 12:17, 41, 51. "Purity" or "clarity" is used only here in Exodus; it will be used again at Lev. 12:4, 6; Psalms 89:45. "Noblemen" (ver. 11) is used only here; Isaiah 41:9; Ezekiel 13:18. "To see" was used earlier at 18:21. "Tablets" (ver. 12) is used 43 times in the OT; 17 in Exodus. The phrase "tablets of stone" is used 9 times throughout the OT. The word for "law" is that Hebrew word *torah* which is related to the verb "to instruct" and the word "instruction" used later in this verse. "Law" was used earlier at 12:49. "Commandments" was used earlier at 15:26. "Instruction" is a verb in the Hebrew text; it was used earlier at 4:12, 15. "Joshua" (ver. 13) was introduced in chapter 17 (17:9-10, 13-14). "Assistant" is used twice in Exodus (24:13; 33:11); it is used 98 times in the OT.

"Master" (ver. 14) is the word *baal*; it was first used at 21:3. "To cover" (ver. 15) was used earlier at 8:2. "Cloud" is used three times in this text; it was used earlier at 13:21-22. "Glory" (ver. 16) was used earlier at 16:7, 10. The expression "glory of Jehovah" is used 38 times in the Bible. "Appearance" (ver. 17) was used earlier at 3:3.

COMMENTARY:

Verse 9 recounts, now, the sixth ascension of Moses up Mount Sinai (if we have counted correctly). For a certain distance, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel accompanied him, as God commanded in verse 1. Verse 10 denotes clearly that these men "saw the God of Israel." However, the only aspect of His appearance which is described is the pavement of sapphire under His feet. This likely denotes the beauty of God's surroundings and the inability of mankind to approach any further to God. The Bible is consistent that no one can see God and live (33:20; John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12). However, God allowed these men to see *enough* of His glory that, if He had not protected them, they would have been destroyed. That is the significance of God "not stretching out His hand" against these men. Consequently, the men enjoyed a meal in the presence of God. While eating a meal is not an

act of worship, it is an act of fellowship by which men and women strengthen their ties to one another.

At verse 12, God called Moses to separate himself from the rest of the men and ascend even higher to be in God's presence. At that point, God will give Moses the "law" and the "commandment" which He had written for their "instruction." The word "instruction" is related to the word "law," showing that "law" is broader than just laws themselves, but also includes instructions. We presume that these laws and commandments are the Ten Commandments, which God had written with His own finger (Exo. 31:18; 32:15-16; 34:1; Deut. 4:13; 5:22; 10:2-4). It is possible that the whole law (from chapters 20-23) were included on the tablets since they were written on both sides (32:15).

Moses obeyed God and took Joshua, his assistant, with him further up the mountain. As he would be away from Israel for several days (24:18), Moses left Aaron and Hur with the responsibility to maintain peace and justice while Moses was gone (ver. 14). When Moses ascended the mountain, the cloud of God's glorious presence enveloped him, impressing on him the importance and sublimity of what he was about to experience (ver. 15). Moses had to wait for six days (ver. 16), before Jehovah God called him again to enter into the cloud of His presence.

As the children of Israel were watching down below, they were able to see the "glory of the Lord" as it appeared at the top of Mount Sinai like a fire which would consume its source (ver. 17). This was also to impress on Israel's mind the sublimity of the occasion and how important it was for them to obey Jehovah God in all His commands and His servant, Moses. At the end of the chapter, Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he ascended the mountain and then he stayed at the top of the mountain for forty days and forty nights. There is no reason to take this time period as figurative or symbolic. Moses will not descend the mountain again until 32:15.

APPLICATION:

Moses' contemporaries - Based on Deuteronomy 9:9, it appears that Moses fasted while he was on the mountain. Joshua is identified as Moses' servant again in 33:11 and Numbers 11:28. Once Israel obeys God's requirements for the building of the tent of worship, in Exodus 40:34-38, the glory of God's presence will descend on the tent of worship, acknowledging the relationship God now has with Israel. Moses also wrote some of the law himself: Exo. 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Deut. 27:3, 8; 31:9. Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, will be burned by God with fire from heaven in Leviticus 10:1-2 for disobeying the Law of Moses.

Later Jewish writers - Joshua takes over the leadership of Israel from Moses, according to Joshua 1:1. For a similar description of the "appearance" of Jehovah God, see Ezekiel 1:26-28.

NT writers - The early church enjoyed meals together (1 Cor. 11:17-34) which was called, by some Christians, a "love feast" (Jude 12). In a reflection of Moses' experience here, Jesus was tempted by the devil for forty days and forty nights (Matt. 4:1-11). John also gives a description of Jehovah God on His throne, in Revelation 4.