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EXODUS 24:1 He said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship from a distance."

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Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders, are commanded to go to the mount to meet the Lord, Exo 24:1. Moses alone to come near to the Divine presence, Exo 24:2. He informs the people, and they promise obedience, Exo 24:3. He writes the words of the Lord, erects an altar at the foot of the hill, and sets up twelve pillars for the twelve tribes, Exo 24:4. The young priests offer burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, Exo 24:5. Moses reads the book of the covenant, sprinkles the people with the blood, and they promise obedience, Exo 24:6-8. Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel, go up to the mount, and get a striking display of the majesty of God, Exo 24:9-11. Moses alone is called up into the mount, in order to receive the tables of stone, written by the hand of God, Exo 24:12. Moses and his servant Joshua go up, and Aaron and Hur are left regents of the people during his absence, Exo 24:13, Exo 24:14. The glory of the Lord rests on the mount, and the cloud covers it for six days, and on the seventh God speaks to Moses out of the cloud, Exo 24:15, Exo 24:16. The terrible appearance of God's glory on the mount, Exo 24:17. Moses continues with God on the mount forty days, Exo 24:18.

#### Verse 1

Come up unto the Lord - Moses and Aaron were already on the mount, or at least some way up, (Exo 19:24), where they had heard the voice of the Lord distinctly speaking to them: and the people also saw and heard, but in a less distinct manner, probably like the hoarse grumbling sound of distant thunder; see Exo 20:18. Calmet, who complains of the apparent want of order in the facts laid down here, thinks the whole should be understood thus: - "After God had laid before Moses and Aaron all the laws mentioned from the beginning of the 20th chapter to the end of the 23d, before they went down from the mount to lay them before the people, he told them that, when they had proposed the conditions of the covenant to the Israelites, and they had ratified them, they were to come up again unto the mountain accompanied with Nadab and Abihu the sons of Aaron, and seventy of the principal elders of Israel. Moses accordingly went down, spoke to the people, ratified the covenant, and then, according to the command of God mentioned here, he and the others reascended the mountain. Tout cela est raconté ici avec assez peu d'ordre."

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EXODUS 24:2 Moses alone shall come near to the LORD, but they shall not come near, neither shall the people go up with him."

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#### Verse 2

Moses alone shall come near - The people stood at the foot of the mountain. Aaron and his two sons and the seventy elders went up, probably about half way, and Moses alone went to the summit.

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EXODUS 24:3 Moses came and told the people all the LORD's words, and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken will we do."

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Verse 3

Moses - told the people all the words of the Lord - That is, the ten commandments, and the various laws and ordinances mentioned from the beginning of the 20th to the end of the 23d chapter.

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EXODUS 24:4 Moses wrote all the LORD's words, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the mountain, and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel.

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Verse 4

Moses wrote all the words of the Lord - After the people had promised obedience, (Exo 24:3), and so entered into the bonds of the covenant, "it was necessary," says Calmet, "to draw up an act by which the memory of these transactions might be preserved, and confirm the covenant by authentic and solemn ceremonies." And this Moses does.

1. As legislator, he reduces to writing all the articles and conditions of the agreement, with the people's act of consent.
  2. As their mediator and the deputy of the Lord, he accepts on his part the resolution of the people; and Jehovah on his part engages himself to Israel, to be their God, their King, and Protector, and to fulfill to them all the promises he had made to their fathers.
  3. To make this the more solemn and affecting, and to ratify the covenant, which could not be done without sacrifice, shedding and sprinkling of blood, Moses builds an altar, probably of turf, as was commanded, Exo 20:24, and erects twelve pillars, no doubt of unhewn stone, and probably set round about the altar. The altar itself represented the throne of God; the twelve stones, the twelve tribes of Israel. These were the two parties, who were to contract, or enter into covenant, on this occasion.
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EXODUS 24:5 He sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of cattle to the LORD.

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Verse 5

He sent young men - Stout, able, reputable young men, chosen out of the different tribes, for the purpose of killing, flaying, and offering the oxen mentioned here.

Burnt-offerings - They generally consisted of sheep and goats, Lev 1:10. These were wholly consumed by fire.

Peace-offerings - Bulls or goats; see Heb 9:19. The blood of these was poured out before the Lord, and then the priests and people might feast on the flesh.

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EXODUS 24:6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

EXODUS 24:7 He took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people, and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken will we do, and be obedient."

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#### Verse 7

The book of the covenant - The writing containing the laws mentioned in the three preceding chapters. As this writing contained the agreement made between God and them, it was called the book of the covenant; but as no covenant was considered to be ratified and binding till a sacrifice had been offered on the occasion, hence the necessity of the sacrifices mentioned here.

Half of the blood being sprinkled on the Altar, and half of it sprinkled on the People, showed that both God and They were mutually bound by this covenant. God was bound to the People to support, defend, and save them; the People were bound to God to fear, love, and serve him. On the ancient method of making covenants, see Clarke on Gen 6:18 (note); and see Clarke on Gen 15:18 (note). Thus the blood of the new covenant was necessary to propitiate the throne of justice on the one hand, and to reconcile men to God on the other. On the nature and various kinds of the Jewish offerings, see Clarke's note on Lev 7:1, etc.

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EXODUS 24:8 Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Look, this is the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you concerning all these words."

EXODUS 24:9 Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up.

EXODUS 24:10 They saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was like a paved work of sapphire stone, like the skies for clearness.

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#### Verse 10

They saw the God of Israel - The seventy elders, who were representatives of the whole congregation, were chosen to witness the manifestation of God, that they might be satisfied of the truth of the revelation which he had made of himself and of his will; and on this occasion it was necessary that the people also should be favored with a sight of the glory of God; see Exo 20:18. Thus the certainty of the revelation was established by many witnesses, and by those especially of the most competent kind.

A paved work of a sapphire stone - Or sapphire brick-work. I suppose that something of the Musive or Mosaic pavement is here intended; floors most curiously inlaid with variously coloured stones or small square tiles, disposed in a great variety of ornamental forms. Many of these remain in different countries to the present day. The Romans were particularly fond of them, and left monuments of their taste and ingenuity in pavements of this kind, in most countries where they established their dominion. Some very fine specimens are found in different parts of Britain.

Sapphire is a precious stone of a fine blue color, next in hardness to the diamond. The ruby is considered by most mineralogists of the same genus; so is also the topaz: hence we cannot say that the sapphire is only of a blue color; it is blue, red, or yellow, as it may be called sapphire, ruby, or topaz; and some of them are blue or green, according to the light in which they are held; and some white. A very large specimen of such a one is now before me. The ancient oriental sapphire is supposed to have been the same with the lapis lazuli. Supposing that these different kinds of sapphires are here intended, how glorious must a pavement be, constituted of polished stones of this sort, perfectly transparent, with an effulgence of heavenly splendor poured out upon them! The red, the blue, the green, and the yellow, arranged by the wisdom of God, into the most beautiful emblematic representations, and the whole body of heaven in its clearness shining upon them, must have made a most glorious appearance. As the Divine glory appeared above the mount, it is reasonable to suppose that the Israelites saw the sapphire pavement over their heads, as it might have occupied a space in the atmosphere equal in extent to the base of the mountain; and being transparent, the intense brightness shining upon it must have greatly heightened the effect.

It is necessary farther to observe that all this must have been only an appearance, unconnected with any personal similitude; for this Moses expressly asserts, Deu 4:15. And though the feet are here mentioned, this can only be understood of the sapphirine basis or pavement, on which this celestial and indescribable glory of the Lord appeared. There is a similar description of the glory of the Lord in the Book of Revelation, Rev 4:3 : "And he who sat [upon the throne] was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." In neither of these appearances was there any similitude or likeness of any thing in heaven, earth, or sea. Thus God took care to preserve them from all incentives to idolatry, while he gave them the fullest proofs of his being. In Scheuchzer's *Physica Sacra*, among his numerous fine engravings, there is one of this glorious manifestation, which cannot be too severely reprehended. The Supreme Being is represented as an old man, sitting on a throne, encompassed with glory, having a crown on his head, and a scepter in his hand, the people prostrate in adoration at the foot of the piece. A print of this kind should be considered as utterly improper, if not blasphemous.

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EXODUS 24:11 He didn't lay his hand on the nobles of the children of Israel. They saw God, and ate and drank.

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#### Verse 11

Upon the nobles of - Israel he laid not his hand - This laying on of the hand has been variously explained.

1. He did not conceal himself from the nobles of Israel by covering them with his hand, as he did Moses, Exo 33:22.
2. He did not endue any of the nobles, i.e., the seventy elders, with the gift of prophecy; for so laying on of the hand has been understood.
3. He did not slay any of them; none of them received any injury; which is certainly one meaning of the phrase: see Neh 13:21; Psa 55:20. Also they saw God, i.e., although they had this discovery of his majesty, yet they did eat and drink, i.e., were preserved alive and unhurt.

Perhaps the eating and drinking here may refer to the peace-offerings on which they feasted, and the libations that were then offered on the ratification of the covenant. But they rejoiced the more because they had been so highly favored, and were still permitted to live; for it was generally apprehended that God never showed his glory in this signal manner but for the purpose of manifesting his justice; and therefore it appeared a strange thing that these should have seen God as it were face to face, and yet live. See Gen 16:13; Gen 33:10; and Jdg 13:22, Jdg 13:23.

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EXODUS 24:12 The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and stay here, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commands that I have written, that you may teach them."

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#### Verse 12

Come up to me into the mount, and be there - We may suppose Moses to have been, with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders, about midway up the mount; for it plainly appears that there were several stations on it.

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EXODUS 24:13 Moses rose up with Joshua, his servant, and Moses went up onto God's Mountain.

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#### Verse 13

Moses rose up - In Exo 24:16 it is said that the glory of the Lord abode on the mount, and the cloud covered it. The glory was probably above the cloud, and it was to the cloud that Moses and his servant Joshua ascended at this time, leaving Aaron and the elders below. After they had been in this region, viz., where the cloud encompassed the mountain, for six days, God appears to have called Moses up higher: compare verses Exo 24:16 and Exo 24:18. Moses then ascended to the glory, leaving Joshua in the cloud, with whom he had, no doubt, frequent conferences during the forty days he continued with God on the mount.

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EXODUS 24:14 He said to the elders, "Wait here for us, until we come again to you. Behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever is involved in a dispute can go to them."

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#### Verse 14

Tarry ye here for us - Probably Moses did not know that he was to continue so long on the mount, nor is it likely that the elders tarried the whole forty days where they were: they doubtless, after waiting some considerable time, returned to the camp; and their return is supposed to have been the grand cause why the Israelites made the golden calf, as they probably reported that Moses was lost.

Aaron and Hur are with you - Not knowing how long he might be detained on the mount, and knowing that many cases might occur which would require the interference of the chief magistrate, Moses constituted them regents of the people during the time he should be absent.

EXODUS 24:15 Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain.

EXODUS 24:16 the LORD's glory settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. The seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

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Verse 16

And the seventh day he called - It is very likely that Moses went up into the mount on the first day of the week; and having with Joshua remained in the region of the cloud during six days, on the seventh, which was the Sabbath, God spake to him, and delivered successively to him, during forty days and forty nights, the different statutes and ordinances which are afterwards mentioned.

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EXODUS 24:17 The appearance of the LORD's glory was like devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel.

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Verse 17

The glory of the Lord was like devouring fire - This appearance was well calculated to inspire the people with the deepest reverence and godly fear; and this is the use the apostle makes of it, Heb 12:28, Heb 12:29, where he evidently refers to this place, saying, Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a Consuming Fire. Seeing the glory of the Lord upon the mount like a devouring fire, Moses having tarried long, the Israelites probably supposed that he had been devoured or consumed by it, and therefore the more easily fell into idolatry. But how could they do this, with this tremendous sight of God's glory before their eyes?

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EXODUS 24:18 Moses entered into the midst of the cloud, and went up on the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

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Verse 18

Forty days and forty nights - During the whole of this time he neither ate bread nor drank water; see Exo 34:28; Deu 9:9. Both his body and soul were so sustained by the invigorating presence of God, that he needed no earthly support, and this may be the simple reason why he took none. Elijah fasted forty days and forty nights, sustained by the same influence, 1Kgs 19:8; as did likewise our blessed Lord, when he was about to commence the public ministry of his own Gospel, Mat 4:2.

1. Moses, who was the mediator of the Old Covenant, is alone permitted to draw nigh to God; none of the people are suffered to come up to the Divine glory, not even Aaron, nor his sons, nor the nobles of Israel. Moses was a type of Christ, who is the mediator of the New Covenant; and he alone has access to God in behalf of the human race, as Moses had in behalf of Israel.

2. The law can inspire nothing but terror, when viewed unconnected with its sacrifices, and those sacrifices are nothing but as they refer to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who alone by the sacrifice of himself, bears away the sin of the world.

3. The blood of the victims was sprinkled both on the altar and on the people, to show that the death of Christ gave to Divine justice what it demanded, and to men what they needed. The people were sanctified by it unto God, and God was propitiated by it unto the people. By this sacrifice the law was magnified and made honorable, so Divine justice received its due; and those who believe are justified from all guilt, and sanctified from all sin, so they receive all that they need. Thus God is well pleased, and believers eternally saved. This is a glorious economy, highly worthy of God its author.