

CHAPTER 24

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS 24

In this chapter we have an account that Moses was ordered to come up to the Lord alone, (⁽¹²⁴¹⁾Exodus 24:1,2), but that before he did go up, he related to the people all the above laws delivered to him, which they promised obedience to, and so a covenant was made between God and the people by sacrifice, and by the sprinkling of blood, (⁽¹²⁴³⁾Exodus 24:3-8), upon which he and Aaron, and his two sons and seventy elders of Israel, went up part of the mountain, and had a vision of God, (⁽¹²⁴⁹⁾Exodus 24:9-11), when Moses with Joshua was called, and went up higher, until at length he entered into the cloud where the Lord was, and continued forty days and forty nights, (⁽¹²⁴²⁾Exodus 24:12-18).

Ver. 1. *And he said unto Moses*, etc.] Who said? no doubt a divine Person, and yet what this Person said is,

come up unto the Lord; meaning either to himself, or one divine Person called to Moses to come up to another: according to the Targum of Jonathan, it was Michael, the prince of wisdom; not a created angel, but the eternal Word, Wisdom, and Son of God; who said this on the seventh day of the month, which was the day after the giving of the law, or ten commands; though Jarchi says this paragraph was before the ten commands, and was said on the fourth of Sivan; but the Targumist seems most correct:

come up unto the Lord, thou and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; Nadab and Abihu were the two eldest sons of Aaron, (⁽¹¹⁶³⁾Exodus 6:23) and the seventy elders were not all the elders of Israel, but were so many of them selected out of them, the chief and principal; who were heads of tribes and families, and were no doubt many, if not all of them, of those who by the advice of Jethro were chosen to be rulers of thousands, hundreds, and fifties; these were called to come up to the Lord on the mountain, but not to the top of it, only Moses went thither:

and worship ye afar off: from the people, and even at a distance from Moses; for he only was admitted near to God, as the following verse shows.

Ver. 2. *And Moses alone shall come near the Lord*, etc.] Into the cloud where he was, and talk with him face to face, as a man talketh with his friend; which was great nearness indeed, and a peculiar favour and high honour was this:

but they shall not come nigh; Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel:

neither shall the people go up with him; not any of them, much less the whole body. It seems, by this account, that Moses had been down from the mount after he had received the laws recorded in the two preceding chapters; though as yet he had not related them to the people, but did before he went up again by the above order, as appears from what follows.

Ver. 3. *And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments*, etc.] Which according to Jarchi were the seven commands given to the sons of Noah, the laws concerning the sabbath, and honouring parents, the red heifer, and the judgments at Marah; but all these they were acquainted with before, excepting that of the red heifer, and the law, for that was not yet delivered to Moses, nor were these the ten commands, for they had heard them from the Lord themselves; but they doubtless were the judgments, or judicial laws, which he was ordered to set before the people, contained in the two preceding chapters, which were chiefly of the judicial kind, and related to the civil polity of the people of Israel:

and all the people answered with one voice; one speaking for, and in the name of the rest, or they all lift up their voice together, and being unanimous in their sentiments, expressed them in the same words:

and said, all the words which the Lord hath said will we do; that is, they would be careful to observe all the laws, statutes, judgments, and commands which the Lord had enjoined them; and less than this they could not say, for they had promised Moses, that if he would draw nigh to God, and hear what he should say, and deliver it to them, they would hearken to it, and obey it, as if they had heard God himself speak it; only they entreated the Lord would speak no more to them, as he did the ten commands, it being so terrible to them.

Ver. 4. *And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord*, etc.] Jarchi says, all from the creation, to the giving of the law, and the commands at Marah; but though these were written by him, yet not at this time; but as Aben Ezra more truly observes, what are mentioned in this “parashah”, or section, or what is contained in the two preceding chapters, he not only related to them from his memory, but he wrote them in a book, which is after mentioned, that they might be seen and read hereafter; for these were not the ten commands, they were written as well as spoken by the Lord himself, but the judicial laws before mentioned:

and rose up early in the morning: not on the fifth of Sivan, as Jarchi, the day before the giving of the law, but on the eighth of that month, two days after it:

and built an altar under the hill: under Mount Sinai, about the place where the bounds were set, beyond which the people were not to go:

and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel: to answer to them, and which were to represent them, as seems by the following account; these probably were made of marble stone, of which Mount Sinai consisted, and of which there was plenty thereabout.

Ver. 5. *And he sent young men of the children Israel*, etc.] To the altar under the hill he had these young men, according to Jarchi, were the firstborn of the children of Israel; and so the Targums Onkelos and Jonathan; and the latter adds,

“for unto this hour the worship was among the firstborn, as yet the tabernacle of the covenant was not made, and as yet the priesthood was not given to Aaron.”

But though this is a notion that has obtained among learned men, both Jews and Christians, it has been called in question by some, who have such reasons against it, as are not easily refuted. And very probably, as the seventy elders were such as were selected from the senior and graver part of the people, so these were choice young men, that were separated from others for this service, without any regard to birthright:

which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord; by way of thankfulness; and such were used at making covenants, when the parties ate and drank together. The Vulgate Latin version has it, “twelve calves”, without any authority for it.

Ver. 6. *And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins,* etc.] Half of the blood of the above sacrifices, this he put into basins, and set by, in order to sprinkle on the people:

and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar; the Targum of Onkelos adds, to atone for the people. But the altar here seems to represent the Lord, who was one of the parties covenanting, and therefore is sprinkled with blood as a ratification of the covenant on his part, and the promises of it.

Ver. 7. *And he took the book of the covenant,* etc.] Which contained the words of the Lord he is said to write, (^{<0240>}Exodus 24:4), and consisted both of laws and judgments required of the people, and to which they had given their assent, and promised obedience to; and of promises made by the Lord of sending his angel before them to guide them in the way, and bring them to Canaan, and to drive the Canaanites from thence, and put the Israelites into the possession of it; so that here were promises on both sides, a restipulation of parties, which made a formal covenant:

and read in the audience of the people; he had rehearsed what was contained in it from his memory, by word of mouth, to which they had assented, (^{<0243>}Exodus 24:3) and having written the same in a book, he read it to them distinctly, that they might the better take notice of the contents of it:

and they said, all that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient; which is a repetition and confirmation of what they had before said, and is expressed in stronger terms; so that this was not done suddenly and inconsiderately, and yet they seem not to be so well apprised of their own inability to keep the laws of God, and of the treachery of their own hearts as to their regard to them; (see ^{<0253>}Deuteronomy 5:28,29).

Ver. 8. *And Moses took the blood,* etc.] The other half of the blood which was in the basins:

and sprinkled it on the people; not on the whole body of the people, who could not be brought nigh enough, and were too numerous to be all sprinkled with it; though the apostle so expresses it, a part being put for the whole, (^{<0209>}Hebrews 9:19) either this was sprinkled on the young men that offered the sacrifices in the name of all the people; or on the seventy elders, as the heads of them, so Aben Ezra; or upon the twelve pillars, which

answered to the twelve tribes, and represented them as the altar did the Lord:

and said, behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words; being a ratification of the covenant on both sides, having been sprinkled both upon the altar, and upon the people. In allusion to which, the blood of Christ is sometimes called the blood of sprinkling, and which, sprinkled upon the mercy seat, calls for pardon for men; and sprinkled on their consciences, speaks peace and pardon to them, and cleanses from all sin; and sometimes the blood of the everlasting covenant, the covenant of grace made with him, by which it is ratified and confirmed; and our Lord may have regard to this rite and mode of expression in (^{<4138>}Matthew 26:28).

Ver. 9. *Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu*, etc.] After the above things were done, the words of the Lord were told the people, and the book of the covenant read unto them, to which they agreed, sacrifices were offered, and the blood of them sprinkled on the altar, and on the people. The Samaritan version adds to these, Eleazar and Ithamar, the two younger sons of Aaron:

and seventy of the elders of Israel, who were called up to the mountain to the Lord, (^{<1240>}Exodus 24:1).

Ver. 10. *And they saw the God of Israel*, etc.] The Targum of Jonathan restrains this to Nadab and Abihu whereas it is doubtless true of Moses and Aaron, and the seventy elders, who all saw him, and who were witnesses to the people that it was a divine Person that spoke to Moses, and delivered the laws unto him, to be observed by them; which seems to be the reason of their being called up, and favoured with this sight which must not be understood as of anything criminal in them, as if they curiously looked and pried to see something they should not, for which they deserved some sort of punishment, as the Targum intimates; but of a privilege, and a very high one they were favoured with: and this sight they had was not by a vision of prophecy, or with the eyes of their understanding, but corporeally; they saw the Son of God, the God of Israel, in an human form, as a pledge and presage of his future incarnation, who is the Angel that spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, as Stephen says, and the Lord that was among the angels there, who afterwards became incarnate, and having done his work on earth, ascended on high, (^{<4178>}Acts 7:38 ^{<1987>}Psalm 68:17,18)

and [there was] under his feet; which shows that there was a visible form, and that human; nor is this contrary to what is said, “ye saw no similitude”; (^(-RHH2)Deuteronomy 4:12,15), since what is here related does not respect the same time, nor the same persons; this was after the giving of the ten commands, that at the time of it; this is said of the seventy elders, with Moses, Aaron, and his two sons, that of all the people:

as it were paved work of a sapphire stone: like a pavement pitched with sapphire. The Septuagint version is,

“and they saw the place where the God of Israel stood, and what were under his feet, as the work of a sapphire brick.”

The sapphire stones, of which the pavement was, were as broad as bricks, and being like a brick, was a memorial, as the Targum of Jonathan says, of the servitude the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with in clay and bricks; but being a sapphire, bright and glorious, may denote the liberty they now enjoyed in exchange for their bondage. And the Targum of Jonathan understands it of the colour, and not of the form of the sapphire, and renders it, the white sapphire; and so do some Jewish writers ^{f745}; though the colour of the sapphire is azure, or sky coloured, with which agrees what follows:

and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness; and Ruæus ^{f746} says, the sapphire is sky coloured, and some of them shine and sparkle with golden points or spots, and are reckoned the best sapphires; so that this represents the heaven as quite clear and serene, bespangled with stars; and as the heavens, covered with clouds, may denote the displeasure of God, so a serene heaven his favour and good will, and in such an amiable light was he now beheld.

Ver. 11. *And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand*, etc.] Which some interpret of his hand of prophecy, and of the measure of the Spirit, such an one as Moses had, and by virtue of which he lived forty days and nights without eating and drinking; but these not having such a measure of the Spirit, were obliged to eat and drink to support nature, as in the next clause: but it is rather to be understood of the hand of God; he did not inflict any disease or death upon them on their sight of him, it being a notion that no man could see God and live; but these men did live, not only Moses, and Aaron and his two sons, but the seventy elders, who were the principal choicest persons among the children

of Israel; wherefore the Targum of Jonathan wrongly restrains this to Nadab and Abihu:

also they saw God, and did eat and drink: though they saw God, they continued alive and well, and in good health, of which their eating and drinking were a sign and evidence; or they ate, as Abendana, the sacrifices of the peace offerings, which were usually eaten by the priests and the people; and as a feast was common at covenant making, here was a feast kept by the elders, the representatives of the people, when they covenanted with God. Onkelos favours this sense,

“and they rejoiced in their sacrifices, which were accepted with good will, as if they had ate and drank.”

Ver. 12. *And the Lord said unto Moses, come up to me into the mount,* etc.] For as yet Moses was not got up to the top of the mount, only up some part of it with the elders, though at some distance from the people: but now he is bid to come up higher:

and be there; continue there, as he did six days after this:

and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that is, the law of the ten commandments, which were written on tables of stone by the Lord himself; he had already spoken them in the hearing of the people, but now he had wrote them, and that in tables of stone; partly for the duration of them, and partly to represent the hardness of the hearts of the Israelites, the stubbornness of their wills to comply with his law, their contumacy and obstinate persistence in disobedience to it:

that thou mayest teach them; these being in hand and sight, would have an opportunity of explaining them to them and inculcating them on their minds, and pressing them to yield an obedience to them.

Ver. 13. *And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua,* etc.] In order to go up higher on the mount. Joshua, and he only, was to go up higher with him, though not to the top of the mount, at least not into the cloud upon it, as Moses did. Joshua was his minister or servant, and waited upon him wherever he went, and was to be his successor; and therefore for his encouragement, and to qualify him the better for it, he was indulged with a sight and knowledge of things others were not; for by his not knowing anything of the idolatry of the golden calf, (⁽¹³²¹⁷⁾Exodus 32:17,18) it appears that he was on some part of the mount all the forty days and forty nights;

and if it should be asked whether he fasted all that time, or, if he did not, how he was provided with food and drink? it may be replied, that there is no necessity to suppose that he fasted all that time; and it is easy to imagine how he was supplied, for the manna fell round about the mountain, of which he might gather and eat day by day, as Aben Ezra observes; and there was a brook which descended out of the mount, from whence he might have water, (⁽¹⁸¹²⁾Deuteronomy 9:21)

and Moses went up into the mount of God; Mount Sinai, where he had formerly appeared to him in a bush, and now had descended on it to give the law, and was still upon it, where his glory was seen; and therefore might, with great propriety, be called the mount of God; to the top of which Moses was preparing to go, but before he went gave the following instructions.

Ver. 14. *And he said unto the elders*, etc.] The seventy elders which were selected out of the several tribes of Israel, and now about to return to the camp:

tarry ye here for us; meaning himself and Joshua, who was going with him:

until we come again unto you; perhaps Moses might not know how long his stay would be at the top of the mount, but supposed it would be some time by the provision he makes for hearing and adjusting cases in his absence:

and behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; Hur is not mentioned before, as being with Moses and the rest; but doubtless he was, at least it is highly probable he was one of the seventy elders of him, ((see Gill on "⁽¹²⁷⁰⁾Exodus 17:10"))).

if any man have any matters to do: any cases to be considered, any cause to be tried in difference between him and another man, and which cannot be determined by the inferior judges, is too difficult for them to take in hand:

let him come unto them; bring his case before them, and have their advice and opinion, and be determined by them.

Ver. 15. *And Moses went up into the mount*, etc.] To the top of it, and as it seems alone, leaving Joshua behind in a lower part of the mountain:

and a cloud covered the mount; in which cloud Jehovah was.

Ver. 16. *And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai*, etc.] The divine Shechinah or Majesty, some visible token of it, an exceeding great brightness and splendour:

and the cloud covered it six days; either the glory of the Lord, so that it could not be seen it had been; or the mount, as Jarchi; but that is observed before, unless repeated for the sake of the time it covered it, six days; or him, Moses, as some in Jarchi, who for six days together was covered with a thick cloud, so that he was not seen by any while on the mountain; and thus he remained, until he was admitted into the immediate presence of God, for which he was now preparing: what he did, or was made known to him during this time, is not said; it is probable his thoughts were employed about the glory and greatness of the divine Being; and as he was abstracted from earthly men and things, he was more at leisure to contemplate on divine and heavenly things, and so was more fitted for an intercourse with God, and had more courage and presence of mind to enter into it:

and on the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud; in which the glory of God was, and which seems to favour the first sense of the preceding clause, that it was the glory of God the cloud covered.

Ver. 17. *And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount*, etc.] For when God spoke out of the cloud, the glory of the Lord flashed out like devouring fire; it was not devouring fire, but it was like it; it was like a great blaze of fire, which consumes all that is in its ways; it was such a large body of light, and so clear and bright, that it looked like devouring flames of fire; and being upon the top of the mount was very visible, and seen at a great distance in the eyes of the children of Israel throughout, their camp.

Ver. 18. *And Moses went into the midst of the cloud*, etc.] Where the glory of God was, and he must at this time be endowed with more than ordinary courage to enter into it, when the glory of the Lord flashed out of it like flames of fire; yet being called of God he was not intimidated, but with great serenity and composure of mind, as may be thought, he went into the presence chamber of the most High, to hear what he had to say unto him:

and gat him up into the mount; that is, he went into the cloud, after he had ascended the summit of the mount; for it cannot be supposed that he first went into the cloud, and then got himself up to the mount, which yet our version, if not carefully guarded against, may lead unto:

and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights; without eating or drinking; and just such a term of time Christ fasted in the wilderness; it is probable that the six days before mentioned are to be reckoned part of those forty days, since it is not said that he was in the cloud forty days and forty nights, but in the mount. The Targum of Jonathan adds,

“learning the words of the law from the mouth of the Holy One, whose name is to be praised.”

Living without food so long must be ascribed to a miracle; for Hippocrates¹⁷⁴⁷ that great physician, says, that

“those who remain without food seven days, thenceforward, if they would, cannot receive any support from food, because then the belly will not admit of any;”

and gives this reason for it, because the fasting intestine coheres, or is wrinkled.