

# Exodus 24: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[ 0 : 00 ] Exodus chapter 24 Then 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 afar.

Moses alone shall come near to the Lord, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him. Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do. And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar.

Then 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 we will do, and we will be obedient. And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.

[ 1 : 13 ] Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet, as it were, a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.

And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel. They beheld God, and ate, and drank. The Lord said to Moses, Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction. So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. And he said to the elders, Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them. Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days.

And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. 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.

[ 2 : 24 ] Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights. Exodus chapter 24 concludes a period of law with a section of narrative.

It's the ratification of the book of the covenant. The leaders of Israel are summoned to worship in verses 1 and 2. The point of the law is worship and relationship with the Lord, which this chapter really underlines.

The bond between the Lord and the children of Israel is more personal than contractual. Many have seen this in terms of a suzerain vassal treaty, the sort of treaties that exist between kings and tributaries within the ancient Near East.

But what we see here is something that goes beyond that. The bond between the Lord and the children of Israel is more personal and more like a sort of marriage covenant. The three priests, the seventy elders and Moses, are summoned up the mountain.

You should note that they stand at different points. Once again we can relate this to the order of the tabernacle. Moses is the prophetic uber-priest, the Levite prophet by whom God establishes the entire system, while Aaron functions within the system.

[ 3 : 34 ] Moses writes down all of the words as a written testament and then later on he reads the book of the covenant, the contents of chapters 21 to 23, to the people and then they are sent to it.

Moses builds an altar at the base of the mountain with 12 pillars representing the tribes of Israel and there's a repetition of the people's ascent to the words of the book of the covenant. There may be two distinct stages here.

Moses explaining the words of the book of the covenant first, relaying them in his own words and then reading the book out to the people. There are two stages of the covenant ratification as well. There are the burnt offerings and the peace offerings that Israel practices with the associated blood rite and then there is the meal of the elders, Aaron and his sons and Moses before the throne of the Lord.

Through these rituals a formal covenant bond is established between God and his people. This is a marriage. There's already a bond between the Lord and the Israelites through Abraham but this is a further development and an intensification of that relationship.

[ 4 : 36 ] This covenant is not an arrangement between two equal parties. There are mutual commitments but God is the one who establishes the covenant and the people are the ones who are called to submit to it.

The covenant is not just the rules but it's also the promises. God has declared his commitment to the people and the conditions that come with it are always shaped by that fundamental commitment of God to his people, his deliverance of them.

And these conditions are not something that undermines the Abrahamic covenant. As Paul makes very clear in the book of Galatians, the Abrahamic covenant is not conditional in the same way. There are conditions here that will shape Israel's relationship with the Lord but the Abrahamic covenant that underlies it and that provides the basis for God's relationship with Israel in the first place is not conditional.

The burnt offerings and the peace offerings atone for and consecrate the people to the Lord and express their communion with him. Half of the blood is thrown against the altar and half is thrown against the people.

[ 5 : 40 ] And it's a formalising ritual. You can maybe remember the ritual of Genesis chapter 15 where the animals are divided in two and the smoking fire part and the flaming torch goes through the midst.

As in the case of Genesis 15, this rite provides part of the foundation for the enduring practice of sacrifice which repeats and recapitulates this rite and event.

It points back to the fundamental relationship between God and his people and every time they sacrificed it was referring back to this reality. You can think also of the way that this is related to Christ in Hebrews chapter 9 verses 15 to 22.

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant so that those who are called may receive the promised inheritance since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

For where a will is involved the death of the one who made it must be established for a will takes effect only at death since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

[ 6 : 42 ] Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood for when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people he took the blood of calves and goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people saying this is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you and in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship indeed under the law almost everything is purified with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

The elders, the priests and Moses have an audience with the Lord himself an intimate audience they see a manifestation of the Lord upon his throne and they see his feet on this sapphire pavement God invites them into his royal presence in safety and there is a communication here of fellowship and closeness Moses is then summoned further up the mountain where he goes with his assistant Joshua God will there give him the tablets of stone and behind he leaves her who represents the elders and Aaron who represents the priesthood they will be the leaders of the people in his absence God's authority in the law is underlined here we're also seeing more of the principle of the relationship between Sinai and the tabernacle the altar at the base the way that the elders can go into the middle realm the people have to go in the surrounding area the courtyard and then Moses can go into the very presence of God himself and we'll see more about these connections as we go further and at this point I think we should also notice some allusions back to

the story of Noah and the covenant with Noah not least in the order of the days there are two sets of seven days and then there's a 40 day period in which there's an ascension up you can think about in Genesis chapter 7 first of all in seven days I will send rain on the earth and then later on and after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth and then further the rain fell upon the earth 40 days and 40 nights and the waters increased and bore up the ark and it rose high above the earth so we're seeing two sets of seven we're having a period of 40 days and during that 40 days raising up the ark to God's presence

Moses ascends to God's presence during the 40 days and 40 nights and so I think there's some sort of correspondence here that we're supposed to notice and as we get into the next chapter we'll see that it continues and there's obviously something deeper going on here the Sabbath principle should also be noticed that Moses is admitted to God's presence on the seventh day there has been a decreation in the events of the Exodus and the plagues and now there is a new covenant and a new humanity being established on this mountain just as there was a new covenant and a new humanity formed through Noah a question to consider how did the events of this chapter help us to understand Jesus' statement about the blood of the covenant at the Last Supper■■■■■■■