

Exodus 24:12-18

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-24/exodus-2412-18/>

The covenant between the LORD and His people Israel has now been ratified. The LORD summoned Moses to the top of the mountain to receive stone tablets and commandments from Him. Moses and Joshua went up the mountain, leaving the rest of the entourage behind. While Moses was with the LORD, Aaron, Hur, and the elders were to attend to the matters of the people, including legal issues that might arise. Moses alone entered the cloud, a visible sign of the LORD's presence and glory that covered the mountain. The Israelites saw His glory in the form of something like fire.

With the covenant ratification ceremony now over, *the Lord said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there."* Moses was to go to the top of the mountain and wait for the LORD. It was there that God was going to give Moses *the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction.* The *law* (Heb. "torah") was probably the Ten Commandments given in [Exodus 20:2 – 17](#) and [Exodus 34:28](#). The *commandment* was probably the laws given in chapters 21 – 23 (the "Book of the Covenant"). It had probably been given only to Moses who then revealed it in general terms to the people for ratification. Here, the contents of chapters 20 – 23 (and possibly more laws) would be fully written down and given to the people *for their instruction.*

In obedience to His word, *Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.* Not all of the leadership were allowed to go up Mount Sinai, however. Moses told the elders to *wait here for us until we return to you.* Here was presumably the camp, since Moses instructed the elders concerning how to handle judicial matters, telling them: *behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them.* The *elders* were to tend to the matters of governing the people. *Aaron and Hur* were to handle any *legal matter* that might arise among the people. *Aaron and Hur* are likely the same pair that accompanied Moses up the mountain to oversee the people fighting Amalek in [Exodus 17:10](#). *Aaron and Hur* each held up one of Moses' arms so the armies of Israel could prevail. ([Exodus 17:12](#)). They thus made Moses' hands "steady." The word translated "steady" in [Exodus 17:12](#) is most often translated "faithful." *Aaron and Hur* were teammates and supporters of Moses.

Once this was organized, *Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain.*

Verses 16 – 18 describe the scene in which the previous verses occurred. First, *the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it for six days.* The word for *rested* (Heb. “shakan”) can also be translated “dwell” ([Exodus 25:8](#)). The Hebrew word for tabernacle (“mishkan”) is related to this word as well. This is the sense in [John 1:14](#) where it states that Jesus (the “Word”) came down and “dwelt” (or, “tabernacled”) among us. It is also the root of the word used for the LORD’s glorious presence dwelling among men—“shekinah.”

The *cloud*, along with the *fire*, in v. 17, was a manifestation of the abiding glory of the LORD. The *cloud* was referred to often during the exodus ([Exodus 40:35](#); [Numbers 11:25](#), [Deuteronomy 31:15](#), to list just a few).

The *cloud* remained on the mountain *six days*, and after that, *on the seventh day, God called to Moses from the midst of the cloud.* It appears that Moses “sat in the waiting room” for six days before God spoke. It was time at last for Moses to go into the presence of his LORD. But the people had a different experience. Instead of seeing a cloud, *to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the mountain top.*

The root word translated *consuming* is usually translated “eat.” It is the same root used in the Garden of Eden, when God told Adam and Eve to not eat of the tree. It is also used to describe the miraculous burning bush that was not “consumed.” The idea of a *consuming fire* is a fire that is large enough and hot enough to burn up everything within its path. Deuteronomy also describes God as a *consuming fire* ([Deuteronomy 4:24](#)). The book of Hebrews quotes this verse, while referencing God’s appearance and essence, both in Sinai as well as in “Mount Zion,” where the people of God will meet God in the future ([Hebrews 12:18-29](#)).

Finally, in verse 18, obediently *Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.* Moses was not seen again by the people until chapter 32.

After seeing the *fire* of God’s glory, the people of *Israel* should have felt the seriousness of the situation, how holy their God is, and how crucial it was to follow Him and obey Him. Unfortunately, although they committed to follow God, fully ratifying His covenant, we will soon see that “out of sight, out of

mind” will kick in quite quickly. We will see this in chapter 32 with the Israelites’ colossal failure with the golden calf.

Biblical Text:

¹² Now the Lord said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction.” ¹³ So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. ¹⁴ But to the elders he said, “Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them.” ¹⁵ Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ The glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷ And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. ¹⁸ Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.