

WORSHIP AT MOUNT SINAI

1. Covenant-making divine theophany (Exod 19:1–23:33)

- (1) Purification (Exod 19:10–15)
- (2) Descent of God to appear and speak at Sinai before the people (Exod 19:16–20)
 - Cloud, thunder and lightning
 - Fire and smoke
 - Earthquake
 - Trumpet sound
 - God spoke with a great thunder/voice (Hebrew: *qol*)
- (3) Ascension of Moses (Exod 19:20–23:33)
 - Meet with God in glory
 - Hear and receive the word of God's instruction

2. Covenant-making liturgy (Exod 24:1–11)

While ascension offerings and peace offerings are offered at the altar at the base of the mountain (24:5), Moses leads the people in responding to God's revelation.

(1) Purification: Splashed blood on the altar (24:6).

By explicitly mentioning Moses' splashing the blood against the altar, the covenant liturgy at Sinai highlights the display of blood that signifies purification and forgiveness in all animal sacrifices.

(2) The Word of God revealed to the ascended Moses is read to the people (24:7).

The primary purpose of Moses' ascension to the summit of Mt. Sinai is to receive the word of God. The reading of the Law (the Book of the Covenant) in the covenant-making liturgy that follows Moses' ascension reveals to the people some of Moses' own experience with God on the mountain. Through the mediatorial role of Moses, the people receive the same word that Moses receives in God's special presence at the summit of Mt. Sinai.¹

(3) Response to God's word: The people respond with an oath sealed in blood (24:7–8). The people respond to God's word with an oath of loyalty and fidelity to God and the obligations of the covenant spelled out in his Law.

(4) Communion meal: Moses, Aaron and his sons, and elders of Israel ascended half-way up the mountain where they "beheld God" and ate and drank in his special presence (24:9–11).

Conclusion: Worship = covenant renewal. The actions of corporate worship are the tangible means and sequential steps by which God draws his people near to enter and renew his covenant relationship with them.

¹ When Moses returned from the presence of God to instruct the people, they even glimpsed a bit of the visible manifestation of God's glory reflected in the glow of Moses' face (Exod 34:29–35).