

## Pentateuch 13

### Brought to the Mountain of God Part 1: Exodus 15:22-24:18



#### I. Sinai dominates the Pentateuch

- A. Arrival at base of mountain (Exodus 19)
- B. Departure (Numbers 10)
- C. The center of the wilderness journey
  - 1. Egypt-Sinai=
    - a) The unit 13:20 to 18:27 is in the form of an itinerant journey that provides structure to the narrative: from Succoth to Etham on the edge of the desert (13:20–21); to Pi Hahiroth between Migdol and the Red Sea (13:22–15:21); into the wilderness of Shur to Marah and on to Elim (15:22–27); to the Desert of Sin (16:1–36); to Rephidim (17:1–16); and finally to the Desert of Sinai (Exod. 18:1–Num. 10:11)
    - b) The wilderness itinerary stretches from Rameses and Succoth in Egypt (Exod. 12:37) to the Plains of Moab (Num. 22:1). In truth, like the *tôledôt* of Genesis, the itinerary (see Num. 33:1–49) provides structure and a geographical/chronological progression to the narrative, while selective happenings provide the narrative with its theological freight (Waltke).

## II. The dominant attribute of Mount Sinai is its holiness

- A. That holiness is also brought out by the many warnings against approaching or even touching the mount (19:12–13, 21, 23–24; 24:2);
- B. by the tripartite division of the mount into bands of holiness (top, 19:20; 24:12, 16–18; midsection, 19:24; 24:1–2, 9–15; base, 19:12, 17);
- C. and the need to maintain these boundaries;
- D. by the need for consecration (19:10–11, 14–15, 22);
- E. and, in addition to all these precautions, by the need for a mediator (19:3; etc.).
  - 1. Once more, then, the question of the gate liturgy naturally arises, ‘Who shall ascend the mountain of YHWH?’ And that question is answered in no uncertain terms: Moses—and Moses alone—may ascend the mountain of God.
    - a) As mediator Moses is consistently described as the one—again, the only one—who is able to ascend. The arrival at Sinai in Exodus 19 immediately contrasts Israel, who ‘camped before the mountain’ (v. 2), with Moses, who ‘ascended to God’ (v. 3).
    - b) Further on we read, ‘YHWH descended upon Mount Sinai, on the summit of the mountain [’el-rōš hāhār]. Then YHWH called Moses to the summit of the mountain [’el-rōš hāhār], and Moses ascended [wayya‘al]’ (Exod. 19:20).
- F. Three zones of holiness
  - 1. Exodus 24
    - a) (v. 1)—‘you-ascend’ being masculine singular. In the next verse a threefold prohibition follows, according to the mountain’s three zones of holiness:
    - b) (v.2) **[TOP]** And Moses alone may draw near to YHWH, **[MIDDLE]** but they [the elders, Aaron and his sons] must not draw near, **[BOTTOM]** and the people are not to ascend with him.
    - c) Then from the midpoint of the mountain, after the elders, Aaron and his sons see, as it were, the feet of God through the sapphire-like clear pavement above (presumably, looking up through or into the cloud of glory on the summit), YHWH calls to Moses, ‘Ascend to me on the mountain and be there’ (v. 12), and we read, ‘Moses ascended into the mountain of God’ (v. 13b). Ever higher, the narrative follows him: ‘Moses ascended into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain’ (v. 15).
- G. (v.16)
  - 1. Here we find the familiar 6 + 1 pattern of creation. Moses, as an Adam upon the mountain of God, enters the fire of YHWH’s glory on the seventh day. Justly, Exodus 24 has been described as a going ‘back to Eden’

\*Up through the Waters to the Mountain to worship God. (Cosmogonic Pattern)