**Exodus 19: Arrival in Sinai; The Great Theophany**

***“Then the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying: ‘This is what you will say to the house of Jacob; tell the Israelites: you have seen how I treated the Egyptians and how I bore you up on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now, if you obey me completely and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured possession among all peoples, though all the earth is mine. You will be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. That is what you must tell the Israelites.’”*** *(Exodus 19:3-6)*

* This scripture summarizes the meaning of the covenant that is going to be established.
* The basis of the covenant is Israel’s deliverance from bondage. God made them a people by bringing about their deliverance.
* Israel is to be set apart from all the other nations or the world. Israel is to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
* Israel was to be a magnet. When the other nations of the world saw what Israel had in its relationship with Yahweh the other nations of the world would come to the one true God.
* If the Israelites keep the covenant, they will become a very special kind of people.
* Israel will only develop to its full maturity to the extent that it listens to and obeys the will of God.

***“So Moses went and summoned the elders of the people. When he set before them all that the Lord had ordered him to tell them, all the people answered together, ‘Everything the Lord has said, we will do.’ Then Moses brought back to the Lord the response of the people.”*** *(Exodus 19:7-9)*

* The Abrahamic Covenant was made with a tribe. The primary requirement was for Abraham to have faith. All of the males of Abraham’s tribe were to be circumcised.
* The Mosaic Covenant was with a nation. With the Mosaic Covenant there is a moral demand of the members of the people to show by their lives what they are by God’s election.
* There is a progression and development between the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant
* With the Mosaic covenant there was a greater responsibility. It is not clear that the Israelites understood what they were agreeing to.

Theophany on Sinai; Exodus 19:10-25

***“When Moses, then, had reported the response of the people of the Lord, the Lord said to Moses: ‘Go to the people and have them sanctify themselves today and tomorrow. Have them wash their garments and be ready for the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.’”*** *(Exodus 19:10-11)*

* God was going to appear to Israel in an extraordinary way. To be “consecrated” or “sanctified” is to be set apart for God.
* There was a prescribed ritual that the people had to observe for God to reveal Himself in an extraordinary manner. (Lev 15:16)
* The description of God revealing Himself to the Israelites in an extraordinary manner contains features of a solemn liturgy.
* Ritual purification in the days prior.
* Ablution – the act of washing oneself.
* Ban on sexual intercourse.

***“On the morning of the third day there were peals of thunder and lightning, and a heavy cloud over the mountain, and a very loud blast of the shofar, of that all the people in the camp trembled. But Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stationed themselves at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely enveloped in smoke, because the Lord had come down upon it in fire. The smoke rose from it as though from a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently.”*** *(Exodus 19:16-18)*

* The manifestation of God took place on the third day. The smoke, fire, and earthquake are external signs of God’s presence.
* With the two trumpet (shofar) blasts the people march to the foot of the mountain. There is a liturgical tone to their acknowledgement of the Lord as their sovereign.
* The Israelites were trembling and were in fear with the manifestation of God at Mount Sinai. The smoke, fire, and earthquake reveal the transcendence of God.
* The Israelites were to be in awe of God and the theophany at Mount Sinai was to inspire them to be faithful in their observance of the covenant.

The Navarre Bible; Pentateuch; Exodus 19; Scepter Publishers; New York; 1986

[Enduring Word Bible Commentary Exodus Chapter 19](https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/exodus-19/)

William J. Murphy