

Exodus 19:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

Analysis

And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

God 'came down' (תָּמַר, vayered) to the summit, then 'called up' (תִּקְרָא, vayiqra) Moses—God condescends to meet, then summons the mediator higher. The verbs map the covenant dance: God initiates by descending, humans respond by ascending. Moses alone crosses the boundary—his unique access prefigures Christ's entrance into God's presence on our behalf. The mountaintop becomes the covenant-making venue, heaven and earth overlapping. Ancient kings descended to subject territories to establish rule; here God descends not to conquer but to covenant, bringing law as gift rather than imposition.

Historical Context

Mountaintops in the ancient world were considered closer to the gods, but at Sinai God condescends to the mountain rather than residing there naturally. Moses' ascent begins the first of several meetings that will structure the next chapters.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does God's 'coming down' before calling Moses 'up' teach about divine initiative in salvation?
2. How does Moses' solitary ascent to meet God prefigure Christ's unique access to the Father?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּבֹא	יְהוָה	עַל	רֶכֶב	סִינַי	אֶל	רֶאשֶׁת
came down	And the LORD	H5921	of the mount	Sinai	up to	on the top
H3381	H3068		H2022	H5514	H413	H7218
רֶכֶב רֶכֶב	אֶל יְהוָה	מֹשֶׁה:	אֶל רֶאשֶׁת	רֶכֶב רֶכֶב		
of the mount	called	And the LORD	Moses	up to	on the top	of the mount
H2022	H7121	H3068	H4872	H413	H7218	H2022
מֹשֶׁה: עַל						
went up	Moses					
H5927	H4872					

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 9:13 (Sin): Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments:

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