

Exodus 24:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

Analysis

And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

From below, God's glory looks like 'devouring fire' (אֵשׁ אוֹכֶלֶת, *esh okhelet*)—consuming, terrifying. 'On the top' (בְּרֹאשׁ, *berosh*) the mountain, visible to all below. The people see what Moses enters—fire that would consume them kills him not. This demonstrates his unique calling—mediator survives what would destroy others. The fire imagery recurs: burning bush (Exodus 3), pillar of fire (Exodus 13), God descending in fire (19:18), Shekinah fire in tabernacle/temple. Hebrews 12:29 declares 'our God is consuming fire'—He is dangerously holy. Approaching requires mediation (Moses, then Christ).

Historical Context

Fire is the dominant theophanic element at Sinai—God manifests as fire, smoke, lightning. Ancient Near Eastern gods were often associated with storm and fire, but YHWH is not a fire-god; He manifests via fire to communicate holiness.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does God's manifestation as 'devouring fire' teach about His holiness?
2. How does Moses entering the consuming fire prefigure Christ enduring God's wrath for us?

Interlinear Text

וּמִרְאָה	כָּבֹד	יְהוָה	כִּי שֵׁ	אֵךְ לָת	בְּרֹאשׁ
And the sight	of the glory	of the LORD	fire	was like devouring	on the top
H4758	H3519	H3068	H784	H398	H7218
הָהָר	לְעֵינַי	בְּנֵי יִ	יִשְׂרָאֵל:		
of the mount	in the eyes	of the children	of Israel		
H2022	H5869	H1121	H3478		

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 12:29 (Parallel theme): For our God is a consuming fire.

Hebrews 12:18 (Parallel theme): For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

Exodus 3:2 (References Lord): And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

Deuteronomy 4:36 (Parallel theme): Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire.

Exodus 19:18 (References Lord): And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

Deuteronomy 4:24 (References Lord): For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

Ezekiel 1:27 (Parallel theme): And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

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