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## **Spatial Images In Biblical Texts: Exodus**

### *Prostorske podobe v bibličnih besedilih: eksodus*

*Abstract:* The paper discusses the spatial images of Moses' ritual practices in a block of biblical texts describing his work between God's invitation and the Sinai Covenant. Three aspects guided the analysis of the texts: Moses' relationship with Transcendence, the ritual and dramaturgical characteristics of this relationship, and the physiognomy of the spatial consequences of their interaction. Comparison of the findings with the archetypal architectural matrix of the sacral shows the continuity of the tradition of the Old Testament patriarchs in the spatial arrangements of human communication with God. The latter receives the first complex reinterpretation in the Sinai Covenant in terms of spatial as well as ritual characteristics. Due to its archetypal richness and roundness, it has all the characteristics of a prototype of an Old Testament Jewish sanctuary.

*Key words:* architecture, sacral complex, Jewish sanctuary, archetype, Moses, Exodus

*Povzetek:* Prispevek obravnava prostorske podobe obrednih Mojzesovih praks v bloku svetopisemskih besedilih, ki opisujejo njegovo delovanje med božjim povabilom in sinajsko zavezo. Obravnavo besedil so usmerjali trije vidiki: Mojzesov odnos s transcendenco, obredne in dramaturške karakteristike tega odnosa in fiziognomija prostorskih konsekvenc njune interakcije. Soočenje ugotovitev z arhitekturno arhetipsko matrico sakralnega pokaže kontinuiteto tradicije očakov v prostorskih ureditvah človekove komunikacije z Bogom. Ta komunikacija dobi v sinajski zavezi prvo, tako po prostorskih kakor tudi po obrednih karakteristikah, kompleksno reinterpretacijo. Zaradi njenega arhetipskega bogastva in zaokroženosti ima vse značilnosti prototipa starozaveznega judovskega svetiščnega kompleksa.

*Ključne besede:* arhitektura, sakralni kompleks, judovsko svetišče, arhetip, Mojzes, eksodus

## 1. Introduction

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There are few places in biblical texts with such a richness and density of spatial images as are revealed in the story of Moses. From the point of view of dealing with the architectural characteristics of spaces of human communication with Transcendence, two asymmetrical motifs occur in it in terms of scope and complexity. The first appears as a dramaturgical loop, the beginning and end of which are determined by a locality hitherto unknown in biblical texts - Mount Sinai (Exod 3:1–18:27). It enters biblical texts as the site of Yahweh's revelation and 'recruitment' of Moses for the demanding project of freeing the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and, after their successful escape, Mount Sinai is the spatial framework of the most solemn event in Israel's history-making the Covenant with Yahweh. The backbone of the second motif is the journey of the Israelites to the Promised Land (25:1-5;34:12). A time of shaping their relationship with Yahweh that was anything but predictable and non-conflictual, during which the final framework of an otherwise rich set of ritual practices, whose unique spatial core becomes a portable sanctuary, a tabernacle, becomes more apparent. The thematic framework of the article is the first dramaturgical unit, with the aim of highlighting the characteristics of the spatial images of ritual practices and finding possible architectural archetypal elements of the sacral in them. Study of the elements that determine the characteristics of the spatial images of human coexistence with transcendent reality shows at least three interacting layers, each of which deserves separate treatment. The first layer determines Moses' relationship with Transcendence, the second the ritual and dramaturgical characteristics of this relationship, and the third the physiognomy of the spatial consequences of their interaction. The three-dimensionality, presented as a methodological framework for the treatment of selected texts, shows with the help of the descriptive method and literary analysis, particularly architectural analysis, the first spatial features of the future sanctuary complex. Due to the richness of archetypal architectural elements of the sacral, this can be defined as a prototype of the Jewish sanctuary.

## 2. Moses' Relationship with Transcendence

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Already in the first book of the Pentateuch, we are confronted with a dynamically changing relationship between man and Transcendence. Paradisal coexistence is followed, with expulsion, by man's isolation (Debevec 2019, 195–212). In it, he begins to fumble for the restoration of communication, which, in the simple offerings, by Cain of his crops and Abel the firstlings of his flock (Gen 4:4), the first tangible expression appears, as well as selective value, because God is pleased only with Abel's offering. In the tiny but undoubtedly significant glimpses of his presence, the Old Testament Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob recognised God as a mighty authority. He is revealed to them through promises, demanding instructions and expectations, as well as through otherwise rare theophanies that preserve and strengthen the premonition of the special mission and choice of

the people of Israel (Debevec 2020, 233–253). The relationship between man and Transcendence in biblical texts reaches a new level of quality with Moses. The relationship with Yahweh becomes appreciably more real. Those features in the described relationship that are reminiscent of the former coexistence of man in Eden with his Creator are interesting for our discussion. The first encounter of Yahweh with Moses is already a notable step towards this. Its specificity is determined by at least three characteristics. The first concerns Yahweh's idea of liberating Moses' compatriots. Instead of abstract predictions of possession of the Promised Land, Yahweh informs Moses that he has been chosen as the deliverer of the people of Israel, who will lead them out of slavery »unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey« (Exod 3:8). The second shows Moses' surprising (almost presumptuous) restraint towards God's idea, which establishes an unexpected balance in the dialogue between the two. In it, one cannot overlook the patience with which Yahweh urges Moses to participate in the project of deliverance. Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, man has not enjoyed a better, a more excellent status in relation to God, judging by Yahweh's words encouraging Moses not to be afraid to take on the role of ‚deliverer': »and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet« (7:1). The intimacy of Yahweh's affection for Moses is finally shown by the revelation of his name (3:14). Despite Moses' hesitation, which even makes Yahweh angry (4:14), Yahweh does not relent until he obtains Moses' consent. Finally, the meeting in question is characterised by the effectiveness of Yahweh's utterances. With the authority of the lord of history, he presents to Moses the whole scenario of liberation (3:16-20), which also takes into account the problematic arrogance of Pharaoh.

The confidentiality of the relationship between Yahweh and Moses soon becomes apparent to both the Egyptians and the oppressed people of Israel since, in the role of Yahweh's messenger, Moses invocation of afflictions on the Egyptians (7:14-10,29;12:29-34) and, on his way to Mount Sinai, with the miracle of the crossing of the sea (14:15-31), the supply of food (16:1-17) and water (17:1-17), and the obvious help in the conflict with the Amalekites (17:1-17), all point to God's omnipotence. The ‚public' proclamation of the excellence of this relationship is an introduction to the events of Sinai, when Yahweh said to Moses, »Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever« (19:9).

### **3. Dramaturgical Characteristics of Moses' Ritual Acts**

In parallel with the presented process of man's coming closer to God again, Moses' ‚story' shows an even more important process for the present discussion: the transition from the individualised ritual practices of former leaders of the Israeli community, initially followed by Moses, to a unified rite at a single shrine.

Ritual acts before Moses are marked by man's own initiative and the associated predictable variety of ritualisations of communication with God. Cain and

Abel brought offerings on their own initiative (Gen 4:3-4). We know nothing about the nature of their ritual. Noah acted similarly, pointing to his selection of ,clean' animals for sacrifice, to the first beginnings of structuring the rite (8:20). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob most often »called on the name of the Lord« in places where they recognised God's proximity. Jacob expanded the previous set of ritual acts by anointing a pillar erected at the site of the experience of God's proximity (28:18) and the ritual cleansing of the people (35:2) for whom he was responsible. In terms of self-initiative, exceptions are God's command to Abraham to give him his firstborn Isaac (22:1-19) and the command to Jacob to set up an altar to him in Bethel (35:1). Moses' encounters with God bring noticeable changes to the ritual. At the first meeting, Yahweh warned Moses, »Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground« (Exod 3:4-5). The significance of the warning from the point of view of this discussion is that Yahweh, in contrast to the hitherto predominant human self-initiative, himself determines the ,standard' of the ritual conduct of a person who enters into dialogue with him. Yahweh's initiative in shaping ritual acts is a clear step toward creating a ritual that will become an important core of the identity of the future nation of Israel. Moses is no longer merely a God-fearing individual trapped in his own ideas in seeking God's proximity but, although not yet fully committed, is Yahweh's partner in the project of liberating the people of Israel. The privilege of the worldly mediator, by which God's omnipotence will be revealed, is manifested in Moses in the supernatural abilities bestowed by Yahweh (4:2-17). The outward expression of this becomes Moses' staff. With an outstretched hand and staff - a simple ritual gesture - by God's command Moses summoned a disaster of apocalyptic proportions over the land of Egypt (7:19). He divided the sea in the flight from the Egyptians with the same ritual gesture (14:16) and later drowned the Egyptian army with it (14:26). On the way to Mount Sinai, he drew water from a rock with the blow of a stick, thus quenching the thirst of the parched Israelites (17:5-6). Finally, the power of the ritual act in question was revealed in the battle of the Israelites with the Amalekites, which accompanied Moses from the mountain. He held the ,rod of God' in his raised hand and thus ensured the supremacy of the Israelites (17:11).

The rite, as a moment of identification of the entire people of Israel, comes fully to life for the first time in preparation for the flight from Egypt. Yahweh gives Moses detailed instructions for a special rite to be performed by each family of Israel on the night before departure (12:3-14). It consists of three ritual acts: slaughtering a lamb, anointing the door frames of the entrance door with lamb's blood, and eating a roasted lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. As can be concluded from the quoted text, the meaning of the ritual is at least twofold. On the one hand, it provides protection for the Israelites from God's last punishment against the Egyptians - the death of firstborns and, on the other, these actions already show the outlines of the people of Israel as a recognisable entity (Huston 2001, 75). As a new element of the emerging collective consciousness, the Lord Himself proclaims them again with the words: »And this day shall be unto

you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever!» (Exod 12:14) The further structuring of the ritual acts in which the people of Israel as a whole were involved is reflected in the events under Mount Sinai. In the preparations of the people for the Covenant with Yahweh, the latter determines three ritual acts: a two-day ‚consecration‘ of the people (19:10), purification (19:10-11) and sexual abstinence (19:15).

The conclusion of the Covenant between Yahweh and the liberated people of Israel is an event at which the complexity of the rite is revealed in biblical texts for the first time (Exod 24:5-8). Unlike the preparations for the conclusion of the Covenant, the structure of the rite of its conclusion is not determined by Yahweh. The procession of the people of Israel from the camp to the foot of Mount Sinai under the command of Moses is introduced into the ritual (19:17). An offering follows. It is performed by ‚young men‘. In the presence of the whole people, burnt offerings are first offered, followed by peace offerings (24:5). Moses is then included in the rite, and he distributes the blood of the sacrificed animals. He keeps half in containers and burns the rest on the altar. After that, Moses solemnly reads the Book of the Covenant. The dramaturgical peak of the rite is the solemn commitment of the whole people to be obedient to the commands of Yahweh (24:7). Then Moses sprinkles the people with the blood of the sacrificed animals and thus symbolically connects the people of Israel with Yahweh (Sveto pismo 2014, 175). The final ritual act is Moses‘ ascent of the mountain, together with the representatives of the now ‚holy nation‘ (Exod 19:6), where they perform a ritual meal according to the instructions of Yahweh’s theophany (24:9-11).

#### **4. Spatial Characteristics of the Flight from Egyptian Slavery**

According to students of Jewish history, the biblical account of the liberation of the people of Israel from Egypt, which took place in the thirteenth century BC (Sveto pismo 1996, 1931), contains four spatial motifs worthy of more detailed observation. The first such motif is the land of Egypt, the place of exile of the people of Israel. If it can be concluded from the frequent nervousness of the Israelites on their way through the desert, after leaving Egypt, the people of Israel seem to experience the land of Egypt, the land of slavery, as a place of the ‚bearable‘. The arrival of Moses and Aaron interrupts this resignation, submission to destiny and revives the almost forgotten longing for a free life in their own homeland. In the biblical description of the deliverance of the Israelites, Yahweh deliberately intensifies Pharaoh’s intransigence to reveal his power to the people of Israel. He behaves as the master of creation and, through his messengers, Moses and Aaron; he invokes the curse of affliction over the land of Egypt.

Notwithstanding disagreements among interpreters of biblical texts as to whether or not the afflictions have a historical core or not, in their consequences:

the destruction of precious drinking water and the destruction of life on the Nile (Exod 7:20-21), the stench of the land with dead frogs (8:2,9-10), the death of Egyptian cattle from the plague (9:6), destruction of crops and trees by hail (9:25) and locusts (10:15), paralysis of life by temporary cessation of light (10:22-23) and the death of all firstborns (12:29), they transformed the land of Egypt into a place of curse. The disasters fatally affected the space of slavery at its constitutive levels; on the level of religion, as Yahweh showed his superiority over the Egyptian gods, on a political level with the death of Pharaoh's successor and, with a cataclysm (plague, hail...), also on an economic level. The epilogue of the curse is determined by another spatial motif - the crossing of the sea.

The sea is the *topos* of the destruction of the Egyptian army as the last constitutive pillar of the land of slavery (Exod 14:28) and, at the same time, a space for the final liberation of the people of Israel. The purifying power of the water, with which the Israelites finally get rid of their conquerors, connects the spatial motif of crossing the sea with the motif of the universal flood (Gen 7:7-8,19). Noah, together with the firstborn of all life on earth, was protected from destruction by a vessel built according to the Creator's instructions, and here Moses, with Yahweh's help, established a 'space' in the sea - a dry 'corridor' (14:21-22), which is salvation for the Israelites and a disastrous trap for the pursuers.

The spatial framework and the third spatial motif of the first steps of the liberated Israeli people is the contrasting opposites of the crossed sea - desert. The position of the Israelites in the wilderness at the beginning of their journey to the Promised Land is undoubtedly significant. The desert as a space establishes solitude, isolation and exposure to raw natural forces. This helplessness shows all the benefits of Yahweh's closeness and the persuasiveness of his omnipotence, in which he gives the people food (quail and manna), water for survival, and defends them from invaders. The desert thus seems to be a thoughtfully chosen place in which the people of Israel, in the face of the challenges of survival, gradually acquired the characteristics of a homogeneous national entity.

From the point of view of the topic under discussion, in terms of far-reaching meaning and spatial complexity, the last spatial motif, the hitherto unknown mountain Horeb or Sinai, indisputably dominates in the discussed texts (Svetopismo 2014, 136). Early Christian tradition had placed it in the south of the Sinai Peninsula since the early fourth century. Despite the various locations substantiated by exegetes, this remains the most likely (Davies 1972, 152-163). Mount Zion enters the biblical texts as the site of Moses »first encounter with Yahweh«. Significantly, it is not Moses who recognises the mountain as a place of God's proximity. Attention to its significance is drawn by the mysterious theophany of a burning bush that does not burn (Exod 3:2). The Lord Himself calls it holy when He asks Moses to take off his sandals because of its sanctity (3:4-5). The significance of Mount Sinai as a holy place is not yet exhausted, since Yahweh determines it or announces it as a spatial framework - a meeting place with the already liberated people of Israel: »... this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon

this mountain.« (3:12) The motif of the mountain as a place of God's proximity is already encountered in the story of the Patriarch Abraham. God commanded him »to sacrifice his firstborn Isaac to him as an offering on one of the mountains in the province of Moriah, which he would show him« (22:2). The mountain (hill) also appears in the story of the march of the liberated people of Israel to Mount Sinai, during which there was a conflict with the Amalekites. Moses' decision to climb to the top of the hill is not an act of fleeing from the enemy but a deliberate strategy that counts on God's intervention. The day before, Moses commanded Joshua, »Choose us men, and go to fight against the Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with God's rod in my hand« (17:9). After the battle, Moses marks the top of the hill - the place of God's obvious help - ,architecturally' with the erection of an altar (17:15).

The idea that the gods dwell on a high mountain was very widespread in the cultures of the time. Ancient cultures of Greece, India, China, Japan, Africa, and even America, recognised a mountain as a point of manifestation of Transcendence (Eliade 1996, 41–44). Even the deities of the Canaanite culture from which the people of Israel arose, El and Baal, dwell and appear on a mountain (Clifford 1972, 34–97). The image of the mountain as an attribute of deity is made meaningful by the simple fact that the tops of the mountains are closest to the sky - the sphere of transcendent reality. A mountain always fascinates people with its exposure and, at the same time, with the generally difficult accessibility of its top. Sinai was not Yahweh's ,abode', as mountain tops were the home of the gods in ancient religions, but the place of his encounters with Moses, the place where Moses receives the mighty theophany at the conclusion of the Covenant with the people of Israel, the place where Moses receives a stone tablets with the Commandments and, finally, the place where Yahweh conveys to Moses a plan for a tabernacle — an architectural space for their future encounters and an expression of God's closeness to the chosen people. By its very exposure, a mountain itself establishes a hierarchical quality between its foothills and peak. Thus, on the way from Egypt, the people of Israel encamped in the wilderness »opposite the mountain« (Exod 19:2). The special nature of Mount Sinai is established by Moses at the command of Yahweh: »And thou shalt set bounds unto the people roundabout, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it.« (19:12) We learn from Moses' answer that the border was intended to establish the holiness of the mountain. At Yahweh's warning that the people should not go up on the mountain: »for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it.« (19:23-24). The exception is Moses. Yahweh calls him to the top of the mountain (19:20) and thus shows to the whole people his closeness and affection for their leader. The erection of a border around Mount Sinai is not the only architectural intervention that transforms the hitherto usually profane natural space of the Sinai Desert into a sacral complex. The uniqueness of the rite of making the Covenant described above is also established at the spatial (architectural) level. As can be read in the biblical description of this solemn event, on the day of the Covenant, Moses »set up an altar and twelve

stones under the mountain for the twelve tribes of Israel« (24:4-5). The camp of the people of Israel, set opposite Mount Sinai, the altar bordered by twelve stones, the boundary at the foot of Mount Sinai and the mountain itself, come to life in the rite of the Covenant as a homogeneous spatial whole - a sacral complex. As can be deduced from the description of the rite of making the Covenant. Its architectural core was the altar. The altar under Mount Sinai is the second in a row erected by Moses. The function of the first, on the hill at Rephidim, is not entirely clear. The biblical description shows that it was erected as a sign of Yahweh's (miraculous) intervention in the battle with the Amalekites, i.e., as a symbol of God's presence, as Moses said »the Lord is my standard« (17:15). However, we know nothing about whether the altar also served any ritual.

The significance or primacy of the altar is strengthened by Yahweh's intervention on its ‚architectural‘ image. As can be seen from the biblical record, it is directly related to Yahweh's revelation of the Ten Commandments to Moses, which gives it a special normative weight. At the same time, the very first intervention of Transcendence connected with the spatial arrangement of the place of its interaction with man appears in biblical texts. The prohibition on making images of other gods is followed by God's instruction: »Make me an altar out of the earth, and on it offer your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and cattle. In every place where I will remind you of my name, I will come to you and bless you. But if you make me an altar of stone, do not build it of hewn stone! For if you set a chisel on them, you will defile them.« (Exod 20:24-25). In relation to the topic under consideration, at least two important architectural consequences can be identified in this condensed text. The first relates to the spatial placement of altars. The latter is not left to man, much less to chance, but is determined by God's free will to ‚remind man of his name‘ (Moses) or the people of Israel as a whole in a certain place. The setting of the Covenant thus still allows for a plurality of places of worship. Worship is permitted wherever the Lord has confirmed His presence, where He has revealed Himself and has accepted that place into His possession (Sveto pismo 2014, 169). The second consequence concerns the design or constructional aspect of an altar. Yahweh determines two original ‚substances‘ for the design of altars. Earth, which symbolically highlights the importance of fertility and, at the same time, design flexibility, and a stone, in which the symbolism of permanence, timelessness, cannot be ignored. Yahweh's requirement that a stone altar be built (stacked) of unhewn stones is significant. Human creativity and craftsmanship before the Sinai Covenant clearly do not yet have the status of the potential for ‚sanctity‘ (Debevec 2011, 96).

#### **4.1 ‚Spatial‘ Characteristics of the Theophany**

In biblical texts describing Moses' forebears, the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, theophanies are relatively rare, brief in ‚temporal‘ terms, like some sort of flashbacks, and predominantly intimate, intended for a chosen individual. Obviously, the significance of the events connected with the liberation of the people of Israel in which Moses is involved also changes the duration and characteristics

of theophanies. Looking at the texts in question, it seems as if Yahweh, with the frequency, duration and power of his revelation, sought finally to convince the people of Israel of safety under his auspices and his care for the people Moses led. Theophanies in the texts under consideration show the common background of a natural phenomenon - storms. This very powerful and important phenomenon was well known to the people of Israel as a Canaanite agricultural community. Strong winds, lightning and thunder, mighty manifestations of the power of nature, were a fairly regular occurrence in the life of an Israelite. Their awesomeness mitigated the benefits of rainfall, which ensured growth and thus survival (Hiebert 1992, 505–511).

A cloud stands out among the motifs of Yahweh's theophanies with distinct spatial characteristics. This does not, of course, mean that Yahweh adopts the visible image of the cloud but as can be seen from the texts under consideration, a cloud is shown as a covering that obscures the majesty of God. This duality appears in several places in the texts under consideration. When the Egyptians follow the Israelites, »the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them« (Exod 14:19-20). Yahweh reappears in a cloud in front of the entire community of Israel as it murmurs over the famine in the wilderness (16:10). On Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai, its top is covered by a cloud so that »the Majesty of the Lord may descend« (24:15-17). Even on the day of the conclusion of the Sinai Covenant, all Mount Sinai was »altogether in 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.« (Exod 19:16-18) In all the cases cited, the cloud obscures the mystery of God's majesty. It is very effective as a spatial phenomenon in this role, since at the level of visual perception it acts as a compact mass, almost impenetrable to the eyes but, at the same time, it is intangible despite its materiality. The ever-changing appearance of a cloud in the experienter creates a convincing impression of the turbulent dynamism within him, his own transcendence. No wonder the most common companion of the cloud as God's theophany is the image of fire or flame. In the latter, the dynamism and, simultaneously, intangibility and uncontrollability are escalated to the full. Fire as an element of purification and distinction of transcendent reality from otherworldly profanity is already known from the ,times' of Eden. After man's expulsion from paradise, cherubims guard the path to the tree of life »and a flaming sword, which turned every way« (Gen 3:24). Moses' first encounter with Yahweh is also accompanied by fire, since it appears to him as »an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush« (Exod 3:2). When the people of Israel left Egypt, the Lord »went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire« (13:21).

A completely new spatial characteristic of Yahweh's theophanies is given by the record of the ascent of Moses with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and the seventy elders of the people of Israel at the conclusion of the solemn Covenant (Exod 24:9-10). The God of Israel, who was then seen, was separated from the otherworldly reality by a surface, »and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a

sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness« (24:9-10). More significant than its precious materiality, which researchers attribute to authorial literary ‚processing‘ of the semi-precious stone *Lapis lazuli*, then often used in decorating shrines (Huston 2001, 84), is its presence as a demarcation surface between this world and the otherworldly. We will return to the meaning of the latter in the archetypal analysis of the considered texts. Finally, the importance of demarcation for our discussion is all the greater because it is established by an architectural element and not by any other element from nature.

## 5. Architectural Archetypal Elements of the Sacral in the Spatial Images under Discussion

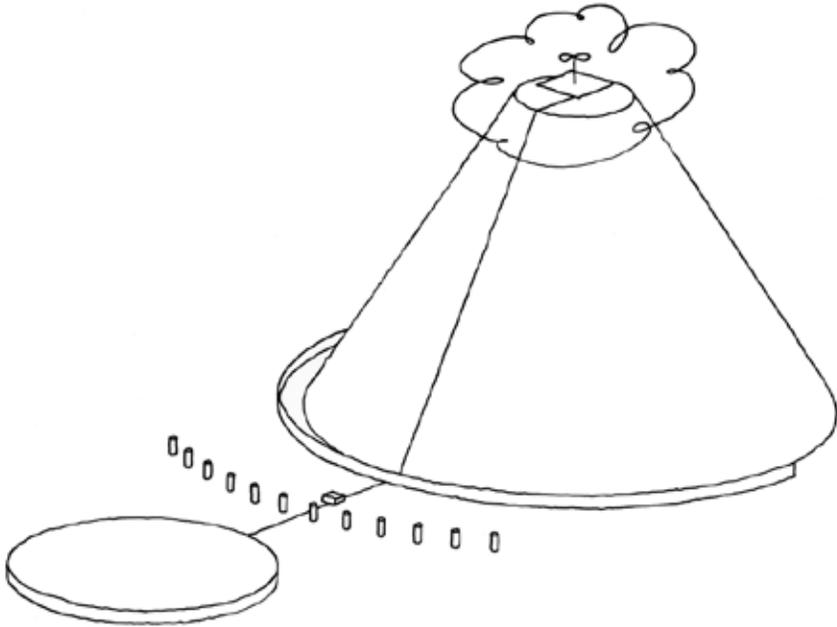
From the point of view of the presence of archetypal architectural elements of the sacral in the considered spatial images, the spatial arrangement of the solemn conclusion of the Sinai Covenant undoubtedly stands out in terms of richness and complexity. When the characteristics of its arrangement are compared with the model of architectural archetypes of the sacral (Debevec 2011, 202–273), surprisingly, almost the entire register of architectural archetypes is revealed. From the set of spatial envelopes, we are first confronted with ‚location‘. The location of the Sinai Covenant is determined by Yahweh. Its uniqueness is grounded on Mount Sinai since it was here that Yahweh revealed himself to Moses and it was already then called holy (Exod 3:2). The next archetype that can be understood from the arrangement in question is *fanum*. It corresponds to the space directly below Mount Sinai where Moses erected the altar, at which the people of Israel are present at the conclusion of the Covenant. It is, therefore, a place with a ritual character. As has already been shown, Mount Sinai is the materialisation of the ‚holy‘ archetype. Its sanctity in the consciousness of the Israelites is strengthened by Yahweh’s prohibition of climbing the mountain, from which Moses is exempted and, after the conclusion of the Covenant, the elders of the people (Exod 19:23). Thus »the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was« (20:21). The top of the mountain, in appearance and meaning, corresponds to the archetypal ‚holy of holies‘. Such a status is established by Yahweh himself when he descends upon it at the conclusion of the Covenant (19:20).

Most of the archetypes from the set of demarcations can also be extracted from the spatial arrangement of the Sinai complex. The first one is the enclosure. It separates the *fanum* from the rest of the profane space. Its ‚architectural‘ interpretation can be recognised in the placement of the »twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel« (Exod 24:4), establishing a ritual area centred on the sacrificial altar. The demarcation of the areas of the sacred and the *fanum* is determined in the sacral complexes by the archetype of ‚architectural shell‘. It is present in the complex in question, in an extremely simple ‚architectural‘ interpretation, as the border by which Moses, by God’s command, enclosed Mount Sinai (19:2). Although nothing about its architectural image can be learned from

the texts, it is extremely important, as Yahweh points out: »Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death.« (19:12) The archetype of the ‚screen‘ intended to distinguish between the sacred and the most sacred in sacral complexes also has a convincing appearance in the spatial arrangement of the Sinai Covenant. It can be seen in the cloud in which Yahweh is present during the solemn ceremony. The cloud as an imaginative interpretation of the archetypal demarcation of transcendent and immanent reality, as has already been shown, is present even before the Sinai Covenant; on the way out of Egypt. Such a role is also played by the bush in which God first appears to Moses (19:16-18). Moses' ceremonial ascent of the mountain together with the seventy elders of the people of Israel, as the final act of sealing the Covenant, reveals the archetype of the ‚pedestal‘ at God's revelation. The latter is shown as the floor of sapphire plates under God's feet (24:10). as an architectural plan of demarcation between transcendent and immanent reality. The importance of the pedestal as an archetypal element of the sacral complex is also indicated by Yahweh's instruction about the altar, otherwise an obvious expression of later editorial interventions in the texts in question. In it, the Lord warns: »Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.« (20:26) The quotation points to a later architectural tradition, which emphasised the sanctity of the altar with a foot-shaped pedestal. Although Moses and his companions see the God of Israel, his face remains a mystery. For archetypal analysis, therefore, the record of the burning flame in the middle of the bush, where Yahweh first revealed himself to Moses, is important. The burning flame with which Transcendence enters the human sensory horizon corresponds exactly to the ‚figure‘ as the final archetype from the group of demarcations.

Finally, we can also recognise in the spatial arrangement of the Sinai Covenant the archetypes that determine the specificity of relations between the spatial envelopes or demarcations discussed so far. The first is ‚selectivity of access‘. In the arrangement under discussion, it is established by two restrictions. The first is formed as a border ‚around‘ Mount Sinai, which prevented the Israelites from stepping on its slopes. As already mentioned, only Moses was allowed to cross it, and after the conclusion of the Covenant, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy elders of the people of Israel. The cloud determines the second border. From Exod 20:20, we learn that Moses ascended the mountain during the Covenant ceremony, but only approached the cloud that covered the majesty of God. At the conclusion of the Covenant, however, Moses and his companions on the mountain ‚saw‘ the God of Israel. From this can be concluded that they were allowed to cross the line between the holy and the Holy of Holies. Undoubtedly, however, Moses crosses this line at God's invitation to the mountain to give him »tablets of stone, and a law, and commandments« (24:12). We read in the text that Moses ascended the mountain and »went into the midst of the cloud« (24:18).

The next archetype from the group of relations that can be understood in the described arrangement is ‚hierarchy‘. It is determined by different height levels.



**Figure 1:** *Sinai Covenant Spatial Planning Scheme.*

In the biblical description, at least three can be distinguished: the area below Mount Sinai, its slope, and its peak. The hierarchy follows the substantive and ritual logic of making a covenant. To Yahweh belongs the top of the spatial composition, to the people of Israel the space under the mountain, and to Moses, as the mediator between the divine and the human, is attributed the slope of the mountain, which physically connects the two realities.

Finally, we can understand the archetype of the 'liturgical axis' in the spatial arrangement of the Sinai Covenant. Its extreme end is the top of the mountain. It is ordained by Yahweh when he descends to the top of the mountain at the conclusion of the Covenant, and later by Moses, who performs a ritual meal here with his entourage. Its starting point is the camp of the people of Israel, set opposite the mountain. From here, as already shown in the analysis of the rite, Moses led the people to the foot of the mountain (24:5-8). We can certainly add to the elements that define the liturgical axis of the altar and the twelve stone stelae beside it.

The analysis of the architectural archetypes of the sacral in the spatial arrangement of the Sinai Covenant shows the presence of almost the entire set of archetypes that co-create the archetypal matrix of sacral complexes as unique entities of building typology.

Although elementally modest in architectural interpretations, they already show the richness of semantics and roundedness, because of which it can be concluded without exaggeration that the spatial design of the Sinai complex has all the characteristics of a prototype of the Old Testament Jewish sanctuary complex. (Figure 1)

## 6. Discussion

Examination of the spatial images in the considered dramaturgical unit of Moses' story shows two emphases. On the one hand, we witness a continuation of the tradition of the Patriarchs in articulating the relationship with Transcendence. In the post-Eden reality, sacrifice remains the core of this relationship. On the other hand, in the communication between God and man, it is impossible to overlook the important qualitative changes that determine the direction, roughly speaking, from self-talk and awe-inspiring fulfilment of God's will to a balanced dialogue. The latter, between Yahweh and Moses, first takes place through an impenetrable 'shroud' (burning flame, cloud ...), which, for the first time, dissipates for a moment on Moses' ascent of the mountain together with his entourage, at the conclusion of the Sinai Covenant and indicates a whole new quality. Moses experienced it at the top of Mount Sinai as he stepped into the middle of the cloud to receive the stone tablets of the law from Yahweh. Changes in the quality of the relationship also acquire convincing spatial characteristics. These, in the otherwise very simple architectural language of the spatial arrangement of the Sinai Covenant, appear for the first time as a rounded whole, which has all the characteristics of the prototype of the Jewish sanctuary. The semantic, and especially symbolic, value of the considered spatial images is far from exhausted by the present discussion. Their inter-relational structure will be revealed by similar analyses of other Old Testament texts. A specific, and at the same time, the independent problem is identifying the topographic reality of the considered spatial images or research into their natural chronological sequence.

Similarly, determining the degree of autochthony of the considered architectural interpretations in relation to the contemporary traditions of other nations with which the Israeli people came into contact is clearly a completely independent research challenge. All these and many other areas, which are already the subject of in-depth research, do not diminish the value and topicality of spatial images, as they can be found in biblical texts and how they are arranged in them. They indicate an awareness of the timeless effectiveness of spatial arrangements, through which man can perceive even the finest nuances of the mystery of his conditionality with the Surplus.<sup>1</sup>

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