

Deuteronomy 33:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.

Analysis

The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.

This magnificent theophany describes Yahweh's covenant procession from Sinai using three geographical markers: Sinai (law-giving), Seir (Edom), and Paran (wilderness). The Hebrew *zarach* ("rose up/shined forth") uses dawn imagery—God's appearing is luminous, overwhelming, undeniable. *Ribbot qodesh* ("ten thousands of saints") refers to angelic hosts accompanying Yahweh (cf. Psalm 68:17), emphasizing divine majesty and heavenly armies.

The phrase *esh dat lamo* ("fiery law for them") is textually difficult—literally "fire of law" or "from his right hand of fire, law unto them." This connects Sinai's fire (Exodus 19:18) with Torah's giving, emphasizing law's divine origin and holy character. God's right hand signifies power and authority; the law proceeds from His covenant strength, not human legislation. The fire imagery recurs in biblical theophanies (burning bush, Sinai, Pentecost), signifying divine holiness that both attracts and warns.

The geographical progression (Sinai→Seir→Paran) traces Israel's wilderness journey but also suggests Yahweh's cosmic lordship—He isn't localized to Sinai but

sovereign over surrounding territories (Edom/Seir). This counters ancient Near Eastern deities confined to national territories. Yahweh's mobility and transcendence establish Him as universal King who condescends to covenant relationship with Israel.

Historical Context

Mount Sinai (also called Horeb) in the southern Sinai Peninsula was where God gave the law (Exodus 19-20). Seir designates Edom's mountainous region southeast of the Dead Sea, home of Esau's descendants. Mount Paran refers to the wilderness region in north-central Sinai where Israel camped (Numbers 10:12). The geographical references trace Yahweh's theophanic movement from Sinai toward Canaan.

The 'ten thousands of saints' language parallels ancient Near Eastern descriptions of divine warrior-kings accompanied by celestial armies. Habakkuk 3:3-4 echoes this theophany with similar language. The fiery law imagery recalls the two tablets Moses received amid fire, smoke, and thunder (Exodus 19:16-20:21). Paul alludes to angelic mediation of the law in Galatians 3:19 and Acts 7:53, connecting this verse to New Testament understanding of Sinai's significance.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the theophanic imagery (light, fire, angelic hosts) shape your understanding of God's holiness and transcendence?

2. What does Yahweh's movement from Sinai through Edom's territory teach about His universal sovereignty versus territorial deities?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	יְהוָה	מִסְעֵנִי	בָּא	יָצַב	מִשְׁעֵיר	לְמוֹ
And he said	The LORD	from Sinai	came	and rose up	from Seir	H0
H559	H3068	H5514	H935	H2224	H8165	
unto them he shined forth	from mount	Paran	and he came	with ten thousands		
H3313	H2022	H6290	H857	H7233		
לְמוֹן	אֵשֶׁת	מִימִין	וְקִדְשָׁ			
of saints	from his right hand	went a fiery	H0			
H6944	H3225	H799				

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 5:11 (Parallel theme): And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

Habakkuk 3:3 (Holy): God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

Hebrews 2:2 (Word): For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;

Acts 7:53 (Word): Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

Psalms 68:17 (Holy): The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.

Jude 1:14 (Holy): And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.

Galatians 3:19 (Word): Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

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