

Exodus 13:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And 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, to give them light; to go by day and night:

Analysis

The LORD's guidance through 'pillar of a cloud' by day and 'pillar of fire' by night provides both direction and protection. Cloud shielded from desert heat; fire gave light and warmth in darkness. The continuity—"to go by day and night"—meant Israel could travel any time under divine guidance. This visible manifestation of God's presence (Shekinah glory) assured them of His nearness. God doesn't send from distance but personally accompanies.

Historical Context

This pillar remained throughout wilderness wanderings (Exodus 40:36-38). It later filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34), connecting God's guiding presence with His dwelling presence.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's pillar adapting to circumstances (cloud/fire) demonstrate His provision for every condition you face?
2. What does God personally accompanying Israel rather than merely directing from heaven teach about His covenant relationship?

Interlinear Text

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|--------------|--------------|------------------|------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| לְנֹחַת מִן | נָתַן | בְּעֵמָה וְדֹבֶר | לְלִכְתָּה | יְהִי הָ | לְפָרִיב מִן | יּוֹם מִן | לְפָרִיב מִן | לְלִכְתָּה | יְהִי הָ |
| And the LORD | went | before | by day | in a pillar | of a cloud | to lead | | | |
| H3068 | H1980 | H6440 | H3119 | H5982 | H6051 | H5148 | | | |
| them the way | and by night | in a pillar | of fire | to give them light | | H0 | לְבָא יְרָא אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵמָה וְדֹבֶר | לְבָא יְרָא אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵמָה וְדֹבֶר | לְבָא יְרָא אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵמָה וְדֹבֶר |
| H1870 | H3915 | H5982 | H784 | H215 | | | | | |
| went | by day | and by night | | | | | וְלִילָה: יּוֹם מִן לְלִכְתָּה | וְלִילָה: יּוֹם מִן לְלִכְתָּה | וְלִילָה: יּוֹם מִן לְלִכְתָּה |
| H1980 | H3119 | H3915 | | | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 9:12 (Light): Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.

Psalms 99:7 (Parallel theme): He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them.

Deuteronomy 1:33 (Parallel theme): Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.

Psalms 105:39 (Light): He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night.

Psalms 78:14 (Light): In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.

Nehemiah 9:19 (Light): Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go.

Numbers 14:14 (References Lord): And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

Numbers 10:34 (References Lord): And the cloud of the LORD was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp.

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