

Exodus 19:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

Analysis

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

The third day arrives with cosmic fireworks—thunders (תָּנָךְ, qolot), lightnings (בָּרָקִים, beraqim), thick cloud (עֲנָן בָּבֶד, anan kaved), and deafening trumpet (שָׁפָר, qol shofar). The accumulation of phenomena overwhelms the senses—sight, sound, touch all bombarded. 'The people trembled' (וַיַּחֲרַד, vayecherad)—reverent fear is the appropriate response to holy God. This isn't the chummy deity of modern sentimentalism but the terrifying LORD whose presence shakes mountains. The trumpet grows 'exceedingly loud' (צָהָזֶה בָּזָק, chazaq me'od), escalating tension. Hebrews 12:21 records even Moses saying 'I fear and tremble—if the mediator fears, how much more the people?

Historical Context

This theophany is the most dramatic in the Old Testament, surpassing even Elijah's encounter (1 Kings 19) or Ezekiel's visions. The sensory overload communicated God's transcendent otherness to ancient Israel and future readers.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Why does God manifest Himself with such overwhelming terrifying phenomena?
2. How does the fear that gripped Israel at Sinai inform proper worship today (Hebrews 12:28-29)?

Interlinear Text

יְהִי	פֶּבֶן	בָּהּוּ	תִּירְאֵי			
H1961	day	And it came to pass on the third	H1961	in the morning	H1961	
H3117		H7992			H1242	
אָקֵל	עַל	בָּרָא	עַל			
and the voice	and lightnings	cloud	and a thick	H5921	upon the mount	
H6963	H1300	H6051	H3515	H2022		
אָקֵל	שָׁפֵר	מְאֹד	תִּחְכַּד	כָּל		
and the voice	of the trumpet	loud	exceeding	trembled	H3605	
H6963	H7782	H2389	H3966	H2729		
בְּמִקְרָבָה:	אֲשֶׁר	בְּמִקְרָבָה:				
so that all the people	H834	that was in the camp				
H5971		H4264				

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 4:1 (Parallel theme): After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet

talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

Hebrews 12:21 (Parallel theme): And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

Revelation 4:5 (Light): And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Revelation 11:19 (Light): And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Revelation 8:5 (Light): And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

Psalms 77:18 (Light): The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.

Job 38:25 (Light): Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder;

Exodus 20:18 (Light): And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

Exodus 19:9 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto 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. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.

Exodus 9:23 (Parallel theme): And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.