

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

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The third day arrives with cosmic fireworks—thunders (תִּלְקָה, qolot), lightnings (בְּרָקִים, beraqim), thick cloud (עָנָן כָּבֵד, anan kaved), and deafening trumpet (קוֹל שׁוֹפָר, qol shofar). The accumulation of phenomena overwhelms the senses—sight, sound, touch all bombarded. 'The people trembled' (וַיִּתְרַדּוּ, 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' (חֲזָאק מְעֹד, 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.

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.