

# Exodus 20:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

## Analysis

**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.**

Israel 'saw' (רָאִים, ro'im) thunderings—synesthesia, senses overwhelmed. The phenomena (thunder, lightning, trumpet, smoke) terrify rather than attract. 'Removed and stood afar' (וַיָּמָדַע וַיָּתַעַזֵּב, vayyanu'u vaya'amdu)—they trembled and retreated. The natural response to holy God is fear, not familiarity. They've glimpsed what Adam knew in Eden—God is dangerous (in the holy sense). Uzzah dies touching the ark; Nadab and Abihu die offering strange fire; this people would die approaching the mountain. Modern Christianity's chummy God 'who's there for me' is foreign to Scripture. God is consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29); approach requires reverence.

## Historical Context

The theophanic phenomena exceed anything Israel experienced in Egypt. The visible, audible manifestation of God's presence confirms the law's divine origin—these aren't Moses' ideas but God's commands.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## Study Questions

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1. What does Israel's fear at Sinai teach about proper reverence in worship?
2. How do you balance confidence in approaching God (Hebrews 4:16) with fear of His holiness (Hebrews 12:28-29)?

## Interlinear Text

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וְכֹל	וְכֹל	בְּעֵם	בְּעֵם	אָת	וַיַּרְא	אָת	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל
H3605	<b>And all the people</b>	saw	H853	and the noise	H853	and the noise	H853	and the lightnings	H3940			
H5971		H7200		H6963								
וְכֹל	וְכֹל	בְּשִׁפְךָ	רָם	וְכֹל	בְּשִׁפְךָ	רָם	וְכֹל	רָם	וְכֹל	עִישׂ	וְכֹל	רָם
H853	<b>and the noise</b>	<b>of the trumpet</b>	H853		H853	<b>and the mountain</b>	H2022	<b>smoking</b>	H6226	<b>saw</b>	H7200	
H6963		H7782										
בְּעֵם	בְּעֵם	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל
<b>And all the people</b>	<b>it they removed</b>	<b>and stood</b>	<b>afar off</b>									
H5971	H5128	H5975	H7350									

## Additional Cross-References

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**Jeremiah 23:23** (Parallel theme): Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?