

Numbers 10:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony.

Analysis

After remaining at Sinai for approximately eleven months, the cloud finally lifted, signaling it was time to march toward Canaan. The specific dating—"the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year"—anchors this momentous departure in historical precision. This departure from Sinai represented a major transition: Israel had received the Law, constructed the tabernacle, organized their tribal structure, consecrated the priests and Levites, and now prepared to journey toward the Promised Land. The phrase 'the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony' indicates divine initiative—God determined the timing, not human planning. The wilderness of Paran, their destination, lay in the central Sinai region north of the traditional Mount Sinai site, positioning them for eventual approach to Canaan from the south. This departure should have led directly to Conquest, but Israel's unbelief at Kadesh-barnea would turn an eleven-day journey into a forty-year wandering (Deuteronomy 1:2). The tragedy of squandered opportunity looms over this text—so much preparation wasted through covenant unfaithfulness. God's timing is perfect; human disobedience delays but cannot ultimately thwart His purposes.

Historical Context

The chronology indicates Israel spent approximately eleven months at Mount Sinai. They arrived in the third month after leaving Egypt (Exodus 19:1) and departed Sinai on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year

(Numbers 10:11). During this extended encampment, the events of Exodus 19-40, all of Leviticus, and Numbers 1:1-10:10 occurred—reception of the Law, golden calf apostasy, tabernacle construction, priestly ordination, and various legal and ceremonial instructions. The wilderness of Paran extended from the Sinai Peninsula northward toward the Negev desert and Kadesh-barnea. Archaeological surveys show this region was sparsely inhabited during the Late Bronze Age, with occasional nomadic settlements and oases. From Paran, Israel would send spies to reconnoiter Canaan (Numbers 13), leading to the catastrophic unbelief that sentenced that generation to die in the wilderness. The journey from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea should have taken approximately eleven days (Deuteronomy 1:2), but Israel's rebellion extended it to thirty-eight years of wandering.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What does Israel's extended time at Sinai (eleven months of preparation) teach about the importance of thorough spiritual foundation before major undertakings?
2. How does the tragedy of Israel's later unbelief at Kadesh-barnea warn us against squandering prepared opportunities through lack of faith?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהִי י'	בְּשָׁנָה ה'	הַשָּׁנָה י'	בַּחֹדֶשׁ	הַשָּׁנָה י'	
H1961	year	day of the second	month	day of the second	
	H8141	H8145	H2320	H8145	
	בְּעָשְׂרִים יָמִים	בַּחֹדֶשׁ	נִעְלָה	הָעָנָן	מֵעַל ל'
And it came to pass on the twentieth		month	was taken up	that the cloud	H5921
H6242		H2320	H5927	H6051	
מִשֹּׁכֶה		הָעֵדוּת:			
from off the tabernacle		of the testimony			
H4908		H5715			

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