

Numbers 10:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they first took their journey according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

Analysis

They first took their journey according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses (פִּי־יְהוָה pi-YHWH, mouth of the LORD)—The literal Hebrew is "by the mouth of the LORD," emphasizing verbal command. **By the hand of Moses** (בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה beyad-Moshe)—Moses functioned as the mediating agent transmitting divine directives. Every stage of the journey was regulated by explicit command, not human strategy or convenience.

This verse stresses obedience at the outset of the journey to Canaan—tragically, the book of Numbers chronicles how this initial compliance gave way to repeated rebellion (ch. 11-14, 16-17, 20-21, 25). The phrase "they first took their journey" marks faithful beginning before faithless wavering. Deuteronomy reflects on this pattern: "You were rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you" (9:24).

Historical Context

Moses, now 81 years old, had led Israel for approximately one year since the Exodus. The journey organization detailed in Numbers 1-10 demonstrates meticulous divine planning—census, camp arrangement, tribal order, Levitical duties, purity laws, and trumpet signals all preceded movement. This was no disorganized refugee migration but a disciplined covenant people advancing under divine command.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Why does God emphasize that this first journey was "according to the commandment of the LORD" before recording subsequent failures?
2. How does Moses as mediator "by whose hand" God commands prefigure Christ as the mediator of a better covenant?
3. What safeguards against the pattern of initial obedience eroding into eventual rebellion?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּעֲשֶׂה	בְּרִאשֵׁן	הַ	עַל	יְהִי	הָ
took their journey	And they first		according to the commandment		of the LORD
H5265	H7223	H5921		H6310	H3068
בְּ יָד	מִשְׁהָ:				
by the hand	of Moses				
H3027	H4872				

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