

Numbers 10:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they departed from the mount of the LORD three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them.

Analysis

The ark 'went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them.' The Hebrew 'tur' (search out/spy) shows the ark leading Israel to safe encampments. Though God's presence filled the tabernacle, the ark went ahead, demonstrating God's protective leadership. This foreshadows Christ who goes before His sheep, making paths straight (John 10:4, Heb 6:20 'forerunner'). The 'three days journey' emphasizes extended travel requiring divine guidance. Just as the ark sought rest for Israel, Christ promises 'I will give you rest' (Matt 11:28). We follow God's leading, not our own plans, trusting Him to prepare our way.

Historical Context

This describes Israel's departure from Sinai after nearly a year's encampment receiving the Law and building the tabernacle (Ex 19-Num 10). The cloud lifted, signaling movement toward Canaan (Num 10:11-12). The ark's forward position during marches (rather than in the middle where it normally traveled, Num 2:17) emphasized divine guidance at journey's beginning. Moses' prayer at the ark's lifting ('Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered,' v.35) and resting ('Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel,' v.36) became liturgical formulas still used in synagogue Torah processions.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Do you wait for God's leading before proceeding, or forge ahead trusting your own planning?
2. How does Christ's promise to go before you as your forerunner give you confidence in facing unknown paths?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּצְאוּ	מֵהָר	יְהוָה	דֶּרֶךְ	שְׁלֹשֶׁת	יָמִים
And they departed	from the mount	of the LORD	journey	them in the three	days
H5265	H2022	H3068	H1870	H7969	H3117
וְאֵת	בְּרִית	יְהוָה	וַיֵּצְאוּ	לִפְנֵיהֶם	דֶּרֶךְ
and the ark	of the covenant	of the LORD	And they departed	before	journey
H727	H1285	H3068	H5265	H6440	H1870
שְׁלֹשֶׁת	יָמִים	לְתוֹר	לָהֶם	מְנוּחָה:	
them in the three	days	to search out	H0	a resting place	
H7969	H3117	H8446		H4496	

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 1:33 (Parallel theme): Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.

Exodus 3:1 (Parallel theme): Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

