

Numbers 10:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the cloud of the LORD was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp.

Analysis

And the cloud of the LORD was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp—The נֶבֶל יְהוָה ('ānan YHWH, cloud of the LORD) provided both guidance and protection during Israel's journeys. This marks the departure from Sinai, where Israel had camped for nearly a year receiving the Law. The cloud's presence 'by day' (yōmām) paired with the pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21) gave continuous divine oversight.

The cloud represents God's Shekinah glory—His manifest presence dwelling with His people. Israel's movement wasn't based on human strategy but divine initiative; they traveled only when the cloud moved (Numbers 9:15-23). This theocratic guidance system required radical trust and immediate obedience, foreshadowing the Spirit's leading of the Church (Galatians 5:25).

Historical Context

This occurred at the departure from Mount Sinai (also called Horeb) in the second year after the Exodus, the twentieth day of the second month (Numbers 10:11). Israel had spent approximately eleven months at Sinai receiving the Law, constructing the Tabernacle, and organizing the camp. The cloud had rested on the Tabernacle since its completion (Exodus 40:34-38).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do you discern when God's 'cloud' is moving—when it's time to stay versus time to go in your current season?
2. What must you release to follow God's guidance with the immediacy Israel required when the cloud moved?
3. How does visible dependence on God's leading (like the cloud) differ from our culture's emphasis on strategic planning and self-reliance?

Interlinear Text

וְנַסְעָה	בְּ	יְמִינֵי	הָ	עַלְיָה	בְּ	וְנַסְעָה	בְּ
And the cloud	of the LORD			H5921	was upon them by day	when they went out	
H6051	H3068				H3119		H5265
מִן	בְּמַטָּה						
H4480	of the camp						
	H4264						

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 105:39 (Parallel theme): He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night.

Nehemiah 9:12 (Parallel theme): Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.

Nehemiah 9:19 (Parallel theme): Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day,

to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go.

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