

Numbers 33:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of the LORD: and these are their journeys according to their goings out.

Analysis

Moses wrote down Israel's journeys 'according to the commandment of the LORD,' establishing the historical reliability and divine authority of the wilderness itinerary. The phrase 'Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys' emphasizes written documentation of the actual route traveled. This wasn't later legendary embellishment but contemporary recording by eyewitness Moses under divine direction. The command to record the journey established permanent memorial of God's faithfulness throughout forty years of wandering. Each station name would remind later generations of specific locations where God provided, judged, or revealed Himself. The detailed preservation of this itinerary (42 stations listed in Numbers 33:3-49) demonstrates historical precision—these weren't mythological settings but real geographical locations. The record's purpose was theological memory: 'that ye may remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them' (Numbers 15:40). Recording the journey helped Israel remember both God's faithfulness despite their failures and the consequences of disobedience. For Christians, Scripture's historical reliability grounds faith in real events, not myths—God acts in history, and faithful recording preserves His mighty acts for future generations to remember and trust.

Historical Context

Moses' recording of Israel's journey created the list preserved in Numbers 33:3-49, documenting 42 encampments from Rameses in Egypt to the plains of Moab

opposite Jericho. Scholars debate many locations' precise identification, though some are well-known (Rameses, Sinai, Kadesh). The journey covered approximately forty years (circa 1446-1406 BCE, early chronology, or 1270-1230 BCE, late chronology), traversing the Sinai Peninsula and regions east of the Jordan River. The itinerary's detailed preservation suggests Moses maintained written records throughout the journey, compiling them near its end. Ancient Near Eastern cultures commonly documented royal campaigns and journeys; Moses' record served similar memorial purposes while emphasizing theological rather than merely military or political significance. The list omits details about events at each location (recorded elsewhere in Exodus-Numbers) but preserves the geographical framework, allowing readers to trace Israel's physical journey. This written record fulfilled God's command that Israel remember His faithfulness (Deuteronomy 8:2), providing concrete evidence that He sustained them for forty years.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Moses' written documentation 'according to the commandment of the LORD' establish Scripture's historical reliability?
2. What does the careful preservation of Israel's itinerary teach about the importance of remembering God's faithfulness through actual historical events?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּכְתֹּב בַּמֶּשֶׁה אֶת־לְמוֹצְאֵיהֶם׃ מַסְעֵיהֶם ׀
wrote And Moses H853 according to their goings out according to their journeys
H3789 H4872 H4161 H4550

עַל־פִּי־יְהוָה וְאֵלֶּה מַסְעֵיהֶם ׀
H5921 by the commandment of the LORD H428 according to their journeys
H6310 H3068 H4550

לְמוֹצְאֵיהֶם׃
according to their goings out
H4161