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After Leaving Succoth they Camped at Etham 13: 20-22

After leaving Succoth they came to Etham DIG: With what resources (human, natural and divine) did God lead the people out of Egypt? Which ones were easier than the others to follow?

REFLECT: How does God lead you through your wilderness wanderings?

The Sh'khinah glory is the visible manifestation of God's presence, which is seen in the form of a light, fire, smoke, cloud, or combination of these. The Sh'khinah **glory** serves a number of different functions in the book of **Exodus**. The first function was to call **Moses** to become the redeemer of **Isra'el (3:2)**, and now the second function was to lead **Isra'el** into the wilderness **by day** and **by night**. From the very beginning of **their** journey, the **glory** of **ADONAI**, was among **them**. Later this **glory** was designated as **the Sh'khinah (16:10; 40:34)**. The presence of this **pillar** must have been a source of comfort and assurance to those who moved in anxiety, not sure of the events of the future.²⁵¹

After leaving Succoth, the people camped at Etham on the edge of the desert (13:20). The exact location of **Succoth** is unknown, but the word is Egyptian and means *fortress wall*. At last they were at the edge of freedom, arriving at the final outpost before escaping into the wilderness. Nothing, it appears, was standing in the way of their deliverance.



Supernaturally guided by a **pillar of cloud** in **the daytime**, which became a **pillar of fire**

at **night**, the **Israelites** apparently traveled some distance every day. By **day** **ADONAI** went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by **night** in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night (13:21). It seems that the **Israelites** traveled some part of each **day** and each **night**, which would coincide with the modern practice. They probably traveled before the heat of the **day** became too severe and tried to utilize the cool of the evening. Besides guiding them, the **cloud** symbolized **God's** presence, assuring them of **His** goodness and faithfulness.²⁵²

Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people (13:22). **God** often spoke to the people from the pillar (Numbers 12:5-6; Deuteronomy 31:15-16; Psalm 99:6-7, 105:39). A similar **cloud** came to represent the **glory** of **God** in the Sanctuary throughout much of **Isra'el's** history (Exodus 40:34-35; First Kings 8:10-11; Isaiah 4:5, 6:3-4). Our **God** never leaves **His** people without the guidance they need.²⁵³

The **fire** in the pillar of cloud was the same **fire** in which **God** revealed **Himself** to **Moses** from the burning bush (3:1-22), and afterwards descended upon **Mount Sinai** in the middle of **thunder and lightning** in a thick cloud (19:16-18). This **cloud** protected **Isra'el** from the heat of the **day**, sunstroke and pestilence (Isaiah 4:5-6, 49:10; Psalm 91:5-6), and by **night** lighted up her path and defended her from all harm (Psalm 27:1; Numbers 16:35). If necessary, **God** would send out a devouring **fire**, which would consume her enemies (Leviticus 10:2; Numbers 16:35). Therefore, the **Sh'khinah** **glory**, or the very presence of **God**, did not depart from them for the forty years they were in the **desert** and was a constant reminder of **His** guidance and **His** presence.

Not even the Church has the visible presence of **God** with it. The Bible tells us: **Praise be to ADONAI, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in the Messiah, has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heaven (Ephesians 1:3). Moses and the nation of Isra'el in the desert**, looked forward to the coming of the **Messiah**, or **Christ**, and today we look back on the First Coming as a historical event. We do not need the visible presence of **God** in order to walk by faith. They needed the **Glory** because the redemption had not yet been worked out in history as it has now.²⁵⁴ **God** had made every preparation for **Moses** and the nation of **Isra'el** to get through their **desert**, and for you and me to get through our **desert**.

Today, **God** offers direction through **His** Word and the promptings of the **Ruach ha-Kodesh**. This is a reality on which we must reflect. **Yeshua** made it clear: **I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20)**. The writer to the **Hebrews** reminds us

of what **ADONAI** said: **Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). Therefore, we can say with confidence, "ADONAI is my helper; I will not be afraid - what can mere mortals do to me" (Hebrews 13:6)? Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).** This is vital to **the Spirit's** daily comfort in our lives.

In this sense, we must - like **the Israelites** - wait and listen for **ADONAI**. You can almost imagine **the Israelites** in **their** camp. **They** were satisfied but never fully settled. **They** set up camp but were always ready at any moment to move ahead. At any moment, **God's** presence, like **the cloud**, would arise and press on. And **Isra'el** would follow. It is always wise to patiently and prayerfully look around and see what **God** is doing and join **Him** in **His** work.