

• *Israel led by the law – Christians by the Spirit*

From the moment the people were redeemed by the blood of the lamb they were 'led' by God. The people of Israel were being led to the obedience of the law; they were being led to Mount Sinai. The Christian is led by the Spirit. He is being brought to the 'law of Christ', the habit of walking in the Spirit.

• *Two ways – internal and external*

There are two ways in which God leads us: the internal and the external. Often when we think of God's 'leading' we are thinking of the inner prompting of God's Holy Spirit. But there is external leading as well. In Exodus 13:21 Yahweh was going before the people in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

• *External representations*

The cloud is a manifestation of God Himself. From time to time God makes Himself visible. It is not that the very 'stuff' of God is able to be seen. This is not possible. But angels represent God so powerfully that it is as if God is being seen. Often the appearance comes as a cloud or with a cloud. 'The glory of Yahweh appeared in the cloud', says Exodus 16:10, referring to a divine appearance. 'I come to you in a thick cloud', said God on Mount Sinai<sup>☐1</sup> (see 19:16; 25:15, 16; 34:5; 40:34–38). God appeared also as a fire. To Abraham He revealed Himself as a 'lamp of fire'<sup>☐2</sup>. When God appeared to Moses it was 'in a flame of fire'<sup>☐3</sup>. Now God appears in a pillar of fire. Soon He will appear in an entire mountain of fire<sup>☐4</sup>. Then the fire and the smoke will continue in the tabernacle, when it is built.

- *A cloud*

- *Angels*

- *Here a pillar of fire*

☐1 19:9  
☐2 Gen 15:17  
☐3 3:2  
☐4 19:18

## God's Leading

The people of God are being visibly and externally led by God Himself. The people had been redeemed. The nation of Israel had been brought into being. The blood had been shed which protected them from the anger of God against sin and enabled God to enter into a relationship with the entire nation. Now we are looking at what follows. God is in relationship with them. He begins to lead them. The cloud and fire showed them the way they should go.

1. *Does not always go by the quickest route*

1. **The leading of God does not always go by the quickest route.** God did not lead Israel by the route that led along the Mediterranean Sea in the north<sup>☐1</sup>. There was a coastal road to Canaan. It would have been most direct to go that way, but God led them into the desert to the east of Rameses<sup>☐2</sup>. They took the bones of Joseph, who had long before expressed faith that God's future was in Canaan<sup>☐3</sup>. They went southwards first<sup>☐4</sup>; God was leading them<sup>☐5</sup> but not in the way they would have thought.

☐1 13:17  
☐2 13:18  
☐3 13:19  
☐4 13:20  
☐5 13:21

2. *Is not always straightforward*

2. **The leading of God is not always straightforward.** Suddenly God instructs the people to turn around and travel towards places in the north. It is an unexpected move. God's leading does not always go in a straight line. He sometimes takes us through unexpected twists and turns. Why is the leading of God so surprising?

3. *Prevents us from being tried beyond our strength*

3. **God's leading prevents us from being tried beyond our strength.** If God had taken them along the Mediterranean coast, they would have met Philistines and they were not yet ready for that<sup>☐1</sup>.

☐1 13:17-18

4. *Gives us a demonstration of His power*

4. **God's leading gives us a demonstration of His power.** The people were told to turn around<sup>☐1</sup>. It led to Pharaoh's misunderstanding<sup>☐2</sup> and his heart was hardened yet further<sup>☐3</sup>. Yet it

☐1 14:1-2  
☐2 14:3  
☐3 14:4

would lead to God's demonstrating His power. 'I will get glory... the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh', says God<sup>14:4</sup>.

14:4

So it happened<sup>14:1</sup>. Pharaoh changed his mind<sup>14:2</sup> and got ready to chase the Israelites<sup>14:3</sup>. He had no sensitivity to the will of God; his heart was hardened<sup>14:4</sup>. The Egyptians chased the Israelites and came within sight of them by one of the great lakes in the area<sup>14:5</sup>. But it would all lead to a great demonstration of God's power. God leads us in ways that demonstrate the greatness of His sovereignty.

14:5  
14:5  
14:6-7  
14:8  
14:9

5. Enables us to know his ways

5. **God's leading enables us to know His ways.** The people are alarmed when they see Pharaoh's armies in the distance. They are fearful<sup>14:10</sup> and complain against Moses<sup>14:11</sup> and have regrets about their leaving Egypt<sup>14:12</sup>. Yet it was God who had led them. They could not doubt that it was His leading.

14:10  
14:11  
14:12

• As God acts the people move forward

Moses continues to believe. They are to do nothing but watch to see what God will do<sup>14:13</sup>. God will fight for them<sup>14:14</sup>. It seems that even Moses is secretly crying out to God. 'Why are you crying out to me?', says God; the 'you' is singular and refers to Moses. It is a time not for praying but for believing and moving forward<sup>14:15</sup>. As the people move forward a miracle takes place. Moses is told to raise his staff<sup>14:16</sup>. Pharaoh is about to be defeated utterly<sup>14:17-18</sup>. The angel of Yahweh appearing in a cloud comes in between them and Pharaoh<sup>14:19</sup>. Pharaoh cannot see them and for a while is slowed down and can make no move. God is making time for something to happen<sup>14:20</sup>. A powerful wind blows all night<sup>14:21</sup> and the sea is dried up. The Israelites cross over<sup>14:22</sup>. Soon Pharaoh tries to do the same thing<sup>14:23-31</sup>. But God is acting to save Israel; His miracle does not continue for the Egyptians. The Egyptians go in to the middle of the sea area<sup>14:24-25</sup>. God throws the army into confusion<sup>14:26-27</sup>. The waters come back<sup>14:28</sup>. Pharaoh's army is annihilated<sup>14:29</sup>. Not one remained<sup>14:30</sup>. Israel had walked through on dry ground<sup>14:31</sup>.

14:13  
14:14  
14:15  
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14:17-18  
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14:30

• God leads us so that we may get to know his ways

From now on the people of Israel ought to know what God is like. He is the God who rescues us when we His people are in extreme distress. Yahweh saved them and the people saw it<sup>14:30</sup>. They saw the great power of Yahweh and they had seen that His power had come to their aid when they needed Him<sup>14:31</sup>. God leads us so that we may get to know His ways. God's leading is surprising but He knows what He is doing.

14:30  
14:31

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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