

Numbers 21:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

Analysis

Israel journeyed 'by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom' because Edom refused passage (20:14-21). This detour tested patience, prompting the complaint that follows. The phrase 'the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way' reveals how circumstantial difficulty can erode faith, especially when God's path seems indirect or unnecessarily hard.

Historical Context

The southern route around Edom added significant time and distance to reach Canaan. This detour through difficult terrain came near the 40 years' end, when entry to the Promised Land seemed tantalizingly close yet frustratingly delayed.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do unexpected detours in your spiritual journey test your trust in God's wisdom?
2. What practices help you maintain faith when God's path seems unnecessarily difficult?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּסַּע ו	מֵהָר	הָהָר	בְּדֶרֶךְ:	יָם	סוּף
And they journeyed	Hor	from mount	because of the way	sea	of the Red
H5265	H2023	H2022	H1870	H3220	H5488
לָסֹבֵב	אֶת	אֶרֶץ	וְתִקְצַר	נַפְשׁ	
to compass	H853	the land	was much discouraged	and the soul	
H5437		H776	H123	H7114	H5315
הָעָם	בְּדֶרֶךְ:				
of the people	because of the way				
H5971	H1870				

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 6:9 (Parallel theme): And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

Judges 11:18 (Parallel theme): Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon was the border of Moab.

Numbers 32:7 (Parallel theme): And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them?

Acts 14:22 (Parallel theme): Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Numbers 32:9 (Parallel theme): For when they went up unto the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the LORD had given them.

Numbers 33:41 (Parallel theme): And they departed from mount Hor, and pitched in Zalmonah.

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