

Numbers 33:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they removed from Elim, and encamped by the Red sea.

Analysis

They removed from Elim, and encamped by the Red sea—After Marah's bitter water (33:8-9), Israel found Elim with its 12 springs and 70 palm trees (Exodus 15:27), an oasis providing refreshment. Yet they didn't stay long; God led them back toward **the Red sea** (יָם-סָוף, Yam Suph). This return to the sea that witnessed their deliverance seems geographically puzzling, but demonstrates God's non-linear path. Wilderness wandering wasn't efficient travel; it was transformative testing.

The movement from Elim's abundance back to the barren sea coast teaches that spiritual formation alternates between refreshment and renewed testing. God doesn't lead His people from oasis to oasis but through cycles of provision and dependence. This encampment by the Red Sea likely evoked fresh memories of God's power, strengthening faith for challenges ahead—particularly the manna provision that would soon begin (Exodus 16).

Historical Context

This stage occurred approximately 3-4 weeks after the Exodus (circa 1446 BC). The route from Elim back toward the Red Sea suggests a southeastern trajectory along the western Sinai coast. Exodus 15-16 indicates this period bridged Elim's oasis and the Wilderness of Sin, where Israel first complained about food.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Why does God sometimes lead us from places of abundance back to places of barrenness and testing?
2. How might encamping by the Red Sea have served as a faith-reminder before new trials arose?
3. What does the non-linear wilderness route teach about spiritual formation versus efficient destination-reaching?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר־יְדִיאָה אָמַר לְמִצְרָיָם
And they removed from Elim and encamped by the Red sea
H5265 H362 H2583 H5921 H3220 H5488

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