

Numbers 33:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they departed from Rephidim, and pitched in the wilderness of Sinai.

Analysis

And they departed from Rephidim, and pitched in the wilderness of Sinai.

Rephidim (רִפְדִּים, Rephidim—"rests" or "supports") was the crucial encampment where Israel received water from the rock (Exodus 17:1-7) and defeated Amalek through Moses's intercession (Exodus 17:8-16). Their return to Sinai's wilderness marks a theological homecoming to the place of covenant-making, where God revealed His law and glory on the sacred mountain.

The **wilderness of Sinai** (מִדְבַּר סִינַי, midbar Sinai) represents the geographical and spiritual center of Israel's wilderness experience. This was not merely a stage in the journey but the destination where God met His people, established His covenant, and dwelt among them in the tabernacle. The return to Sinai symbolizes the centrality of divine revelation and covenant relationship in Israel's identity—they were constituted as a nation not merely by leaving Egypt but by receiving God's law and presence at Sinai.

This itinerary verse demonstrates that wilderness wandering was not aimless but purposefully directed toward covenant encounter with God. Every journey stage moved Israel from bondage toward relationship with YHWH. For believers, spiritual journey is similarly purposeful—leading us from sin's slavery to covenant communion with Christ.

Historical Context

This verse records Israel's journey from Rephidim back to the Sinai wilderness, occurring during the second year after the Exodus (Numbers 10:11-12). The encampment at Sinai lasted nearly one year (Exodus 19:1; Numbers 10:11), during which the tabernacle was constructed and Israel received extensive legislation. The Sinai peninsula, a harsh desert region between Egypt and Canaan, provided minimal natural resources, forcing Israel's absolute dependence on divine provision. Archaeological expeditions have proposed various locations for Mount Sinai (Jebel Musa being traditional), though precise identification remains debated. The wilderness served as God's classroom, teaching Israel to trust Him before entering the Promised Land.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Israel's return to Sinai illustrate that spiritual growth requires returning to foundational covenant commitments with God?
2. What does the centrality of Sinai in Israel's journey teach about the role of divine revelation in shaping God's people?
3. In what ways does your spiritual journey reflect purposeful movement toward deeper covenant relationship with Christ, rather than aimless wandering?

Interlinear Text

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|-------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------|----------|
| וַיֵּסְעוּ | מִרֶפְדִּים | וַיִּחַן | בַּמִּדְבָּר | סִינַי |
| And they departed | from Rephidim | and pitched | in the wilderness | of Sinai |
| H5265 | H7508 | H2583 | H4057 | H5514 |

