

Numbers 33:42

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they departed from Zalmonah, and pitched in Punon.

Analysis

Departed from Zalmonah, and pitched in Punon—**פָּנוֹן** (Pūnōn, possibly 'darkness' or related to copper mining). This site is likely Feinan in Jordan, a region rich in copper deposits exploited from ancient times. Archaeological evidence confirms extensive Bronze Age mining operations there.

The journey from 'shade' (Zalmonah) to 'darkness' or metalworking (Punon) reflects the varied terrain of faithfulness—from comfort to labor, from rest to refining work. If Punon's name relates to copper smelting, it's theologically apt: God's people were being refined through wilderness trials like metal in fire (Deuteronomy 4:20 calls Egypt an 'iron furnace'). The smithy's heat purifies; wilderness disciplines sanctify.

Historical Context

Punon (modern Feinan, Jordan) was a major copper mining center in biblical times. The area's slag heaps and mining shafts date to the Bronze Age, making it one of the ancient Near East's significant metallurgical sites. Israel's route passed through economically valuable regions.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the possible meaning of Punon ('copper refining') connect to the theological purpose of wilderness wandering?
2. What does the progression from 'shade' to 'darkness/refining' teach about the alternating rhythms of comfort and trial in Christian life?

Interlinear Text

בְּפָנָן: תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת מִצְלָמָתְךָ הָיָה
And they departed from Salmonah and pitched in Punon
H5265 H6758 H2583 H6325

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