

Numbers 33:48

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they departed from the mountains of Abarim, and pitched in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho.

Analysis

And they departed from the mountains of Abarim, and pitched in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho.

This seemingly simple geographical notation carries profound significance as Israel's final encampment before entering the Promised Land. The mountains of Abarim (meaning "regions beyond" or "passages") include Mount Nebo, where Moses would soon view Canaan before his death (Deuteronomy 34:1). The movement from mountains to plains (araboth, desert steppes) represents descending to the threshold of promise.

The plains of Moab became Israel's staging ground for conquest and renewal—here they received final instructions, renewed covenant, mourned Moses, and prepared under Joshua's leadership. The phrase "by Jordan near Jericho" pinpoints their location at the border between wilderness wandering and inheritance. The Jordan River, soon to be miraculously crossed (Joshua 3), represented the final barrier between slavery's legacy and freedom's fulfillment. Every geographical marker in this verse speaks of **transition, preparation, and the faithfulness of God** who led His people through forty years to this exact spot at this exact time.

Historical Context

Numbers 33 provides a comprehensive itinerary of Israel's wilderness wanderings, listing forty-two encampments from Egypt to Moab. This final stop at Moab's plains

(around 1406 BC) concluded a journey that began with the Exodus approximately forty years earlier. The plains of Moab stretched along the Jordan's eastern bank opposite Jericho, providing strategic access to Canaan's central highlands. Archaeological surveys confirm this region could support large encampments with access to water. This location witnessed crucial events: Balaam's attempted curse turned blessing (Numbers 22-24), Israel's sin with Moabite women (Numbers 25), the second census (Numbers 26), and Moses' farewell addresses (Deuteronomy). Ancient readers would have recognized these plains as sacred ground where the wilderness generation died and the conquest generation received their commission.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What significance does God's precise record-keeping of Israel's journey have for understanding His faithfulness?
2. How do 'threshold moments'—being on the edge of promised breakthrough—test and reveal our character?
3. Why did God have Israel camp at the border rather than immediately entering Canaan, and what was accomplished in that waiting?
4. How does this geographical transition from mountains to plains mirror spiritual transitions from vision to action?
5. What 'Jordans' in your life represent the final barrier between where you are and where God is calling you?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּסְעוּ	מִהָרִי	הָעֵבְרִים	וַחֲנּוּ	בְּעֵרְבֵי ת
And they departed	from the mountains	of Abarim	and pitched	in the plains
H5265	H2022	H5682	H2583	H6160
עַל	יַרְדֵּן	יֶרִיחוֹ:		
of Moab	by Jordan	near Jericho		
H4124	H3383	H3405		

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 22:1 (Parallel theme): And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho.
