

Numbers 33:49

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they pitched by Jordan, from Beth-jesimoth even unto Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab.

Analysis

They pitched by Jordan, from Beth-jesimoth even unto Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab (וָאָזְנוּ עַל-הַיַּרְדֵּן מִבֵּית הַיְּשִׁמּוֹת עַד אֶבֶל הַשְּׁטִיִּם בְּעֶרְבַת מוֹאָב)—This describes Israel's final, extended encampment before crossing Jordan. The Hebrew Yarden (יַרְדֵּן, "descender") separates wilderness wandering from Canaan conquest. Beth-jeshimoth (בֵּית הַיְּשִׁמּוֹת, "house of the deserts/wastes") marks the southern end; Abel-shittim (אֶבֶל הַשְּׁטִיִּם, "meadow of acacias") the northern—a massive camp stretching miles along Jordan's east bank.

Abel-shittim (shortened to Shittim in Numbers 25:1) was the site of Israel's catastrophic sin with Moabite women and Baal-peor (Numbers 25), resulting in 24,000 deaths by plague. Yet from this same camp, Israel will launch the conquest under Joshua. The juxtaposition is striking: greatest failure and greatest victory occupy the same geography. Shittim becomes both warning and hope—the place where a generation stumbled into idolatry and where the next generation stepped into inheritance. Grace doesn't erase sin's consequences but writes new chapters beyond them.

Historical Context

The plains of Moab (עֶרְבַת מוֹאָב, arvot Moav) were the Jordan valley lowlands northeast of the Dead Sea, opposite Jericho. Israel camped here several months (circa early 1406 BC): Moses delivered Deuteronomy here, died on Nebo, Joshua assumed leadership, spies explored Jericho (Joshua 2), and Israel crossed Jordan

(Joshua 3). Shittim means "acacias," desert trees whose wood was used for the Tabernacle.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the dual legacy of Shittim—catastrophic sin yet launching point for conquest—encourage you when past failures haunt present opportunities?
2. What does Israel's extended encampment "by Jordan" teach about waiting at the threshold of God's promises until His timing says "cross"?
3. How might the "meadow of acacias" symbolize that even in spiritually dry places, God provides material (acacia wood for Tabernacle) to build what honors Him?

Interlinear Text

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|-----------------------|---------------|-------------|---------|-------------------|----------|
| וָּנָחֲנוּ וְ | עַל | בְּיַרְדֵּן | מִבֵּית | הַשִּׁמְשׁוֹת | לְעַד |
| And they pitched | H5921 | by Jordan | H0 | from Bethjesimoth | H5704 H0 |
| H2583 | | H3383 | | H1020 | |
| הַשִּׁטִּים | מֵעַרְבָּת | מוֹאָב: | | | |
| even unto Abelshittim | in the plains | of Moab | | | |
| H63 | H6160 | H4124 | | | |
