

Numbers 33:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they removed from Etham, and turned again unto Pi-hahiroth, which is before Baal-zephon: and they pitched before Migdol.

Analysis

Turned again unto Pi-hahiroth (וָשׁוּבוּ עַל-פִּי הַחִירֹת, vayashuvu al-Pi ha-Chiroth)—The verb shuv (turned back) indicates a reversal. After leaving Etham, God commanded Moses to "turn back" (Exodus 14:2), appearing to trap Israel between the Red Sea and approaching Egyptian army. Pi-hahiroth means "mouth of the gorges," a narrow pass. **Which is before Baal-zephon** positions them before a Canaanite shrine, as if fleeing in confusion.

This divine strategy (appearing to retreat) set the trap for Pharaoh. Exodus 14:3 reveals God's purpose: "Pharaoh will say, They are entangled in the land." Israel's apparent military blunder baited Egypt's pride into pursuing—straight into history's most decisive miracle. The mention of camping **before Migdol** (מִגְדֹּל, "tower/fortress") emphasizes the seeming impossibility: trapped between military installation, sea, and pursuing army.

Historical Context

This occurred approximately 7-10 days after the Exodus. Pi-hahiroth's exact location is debated, but it was near the Red Sea's northern extension (likely the Bitter Lakes region). Baal-zephon was an Egyptian shrine to the Canaanite storm god. The geographical trap was intentional, setting the stage for Exodus 14's sea crossing.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. When has God led you into an apparent "trap" that actually positioned you for miraculous deliverance?
2. How does this strategic retreat demonstrate that faith sometimes looks like foolishness by worldly military standards?
3. What does camping "before Baal-zephon" (a false god's shrine) suggest about God's supremacy over pagan deities?

Interlinear Text

וַסְעוּ	מֵאֶתְּם	וַיֵּשְׁבּוּ	עַל	פִּי	הַחִירוֹת
And they removed	from Etham	and turned again	H5921	H0	unto Pihahiroth
H5265	H864	H7725			H6367
אֶשֶׁר	עַל	לִפְנֵי	י	בְּ	עַל
H834	H5921	before	H0		
	H6440			which is before Baalzephon	and they pitched
				H1189	H2583
לִפְנֵי	מִגְדֹּל:				
before	Migdol				
H6440	H4024				

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 14:2 (Parallel theme): Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.

Exodus 14:9 (Parallel theme): But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.

Numbers 33:8 (Parallel theme): And they departed from before Pi-hahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, and went three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham, and pitched in Marah.

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