

~PIHAHIROTH (155)
(Pi-ha-hi'roth)

- The last camping site of the Israelites before crossing the Red Sea.
- Next they pulled away from Etham and turned back toward **Pihahiroth**, which is in view of Baal-zephon, and they went camping before Migdol. (**Numbers 33:7**)
- After that they pulled away from **Pihahiroth** and went passing through the midst of the sea to the wilderness and kept marching a three-day journey in the wilderness of Etham and took up camping at Marah. (**Numbers 33:8**)
- After having encamped at Etham at the edge of the wilderness
- And they proceeded to depart from Succoth and to encamp at Etham at the edge of the wilderness. (**Exodus 13:20**)
- Moses received instructions from Yehowah God to turn back and encamp before **Pihahiroth** between Migdol and the sea in view of Baal-zephon.
- Yehowah now spoke to Moses, saying; (**Exodus 14:1**)
- Speak to the sons of Israel, that they should turn back and encamp before **Pihahiroth** between Migdol and the sea in view of Baal-zephon. In front of it you are to encamp by the sea. (**Exodus 14:2**)
- If the sites of Migdol and Baal-zephon were known today, the identification of **Pihahiroth** would not be difficult. This is not the case, however, and attempts at linking their names, as well as that of **Pihahiroth**, with certain localities along Egypt's eastern frontier have been varied and quite inconclusive.
- For this reason certain other geographic requirements contained in the account itself seem to present the soundest basis for obtaining some idea of the location of **Pihahiroth**.

- **Pihahiroth** was near the Red Sea at some point where the only route of escape from the advancing Egyptian forces was through the sea itself.
- The sea at that point must have been of sufficient depth to allow for the waters to be split apart to form a passage through the midst of the sea, with the waters forming a wall on both sides.
- As for you, lift up your rod and stretch your hand out over the sea and split it apart, that the sons of Israel may go through the midst of the sea on dry land. (**Exodus 14:16**)
- Moses now stretched his hand out over the sea, and Yehowah began making the sea go back by a strong east wind all night long and converting the sea basin into dry ground, and the waters were being split apart. (**Exodus 14:21**)
- At length the sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on dry land, while the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. (**Exodus 14:22**)
- No site North of the Gulf of Suez could adequately provide these requirements. It is true that many modern scholars favor the theory of a crossing in the shallow Bitter Lakes region, which begins about 25 kilometers (16 miles) North of Suez.
- This view, however, is accompanied either by a denial of the miraculous nature of the crossing, claiming that the crossing was only through a marsh or swamp, or by the idea that the northern end of the Red Sea anciently ran up into the Bitter Lakes region and that the waters there were of much greater depth at that time, whereas archaeological evidence is that there has been very little change in the water level from ancient times.
- For this reason the suggestion advanced by earlier scholars of the past century still seems to be that which meets best the requirements of the Bible history.
- **Pihahiroth** is evidently a site on the narrow plain running along the southeastern foot of **Jebel `Ataqah** about 20 kilometers (12 miles) Southwest of Suez. It is suggested that the crossing started from the promontory called **Ras `Ataqah** and led across the seabed to the vicinity of the oasis **`Ayun Musa** on the opposite shore.

- The seabed in this section descends quite gradually from either shore because of shoals that run out 3 kilometers (2 miles) from either side. The maximum depth of water near the middle of this trajectory is about 15 meters (50 feet).
- The distance from shore to shore is about 10 kilometers (6 miles) allowing ample space for the possibly three million Israelites to be traversing the seabed while, at the same time, the military forces of Pharaoh were also making their way through the miraculously provided passage in an effort to overtake the Israelite host.

See Also EXODUS (Route of the Exodus)

- This view coincides generally with the tradition handed down by Josephus, Jewish historian of the **First Century C.E.**, that the Israelites prior to the crossing were confined between inaccessible cliffs and the sea. [*Jewish Antiquities*, II, 324, xv, 3]
- A turning back of the Israelite nation from Etham to the place described above would also harmonize well with Yehowah's forecast that Pharaoh would say of them, They are wandering in confusion in the land. The wilderness has closed in upon them.
- Then Pharaoh will certainly say respecting the sons of Israel, They are wandering in confusion in the land. The wilderness has closed in upon them. (**Exodus 14:3**)
- This would hardly be true of locations North of Suez. The location of **Pihahiroth** in the vicinity of **Jebel `Ataqah** would likewise allow for Pharaoh's forces to advance rapidly on the fleeing Israelites by a regularly traveled route from Memphis, the likely capital of Egypt at that time, to the Sinai Peninsula.
- So I shall indeed let Pharaoh's heart become obstinate, and he will certainly chase after them and I shall get glory for myself by means of Pharaoh and all his military forces, and the Egyptians will certainly know that I am Yehowah. Accordingly they did just that. (**Exodus 14:4**)
- Later it was reported to the king of Egypt that the people had run away. Immediately the heart of Pharaoh as well as his servants was changed regarding the people, so that they said; What is this that we have done, in that we have sent Israel away from slaving for us? (**Exodus 14:5**)

- So he proceeded to make his war chariots ready, and he took his people with him. (**Exodus 14:6**)
- And he proceeded to take six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt and warriors upon every one of them. (**Exodus 14:7**)
- Thus Yehowah let the heart of Pharaoh the king of Egypt become obstinate, and he went chasing after the sons of Israel, while the sons of Israel were going out with uplifted hand. (**Exodus 14:8**)
- And the Egyptians went chasing after them, and all the chariot horses of Pharaoh and his cavalrymen and his military forces were overtaking them while camping by the sea, by **Pihahiroth** in view of Baal-zephon. (**Exodus 14:9**)
- While satisfying the geographic requirements, such location of **Pihahiroth** must be viewed as only tentative, dependent on possible future confirmation.