

# Rock Water

Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 20:1-13

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The whole community of Israel started out from the Desert of Sin. They traveled from place to place, just as the Lord commanded.

They camped at Rephidim. But there wasn't any water for the people to drink. So they argued with Moses. They said, "Give us water to drink."

Moses replied, "Why are you arguing with me? Why are you putting the Lord to the test?"

But the people were thirsty for water there. So they told Moses they weren't happy with him. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt? Did you want us, our children and our livestock to die of thirst?"

Then Moses cried out to the Lord. He said, "What am I going to do with these people? They are almost ready to kill me by throwing stones at me."

The Lord answered Moses. He said, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take some of the elders of Israel along with you. Take in your hand the wooden staff you used when you struck the Nile River. Go. I will stand there in front of you by the rock at Mount Horeb. Hit the rock. Then water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses hit the rock in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Moses called the place Massah which means testing and Meribah which means quarreling. That's because the people of Israel argued with him there. They also put the Lord to the test. They asked, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

Later on, the whole community of Israel arrived at the Desert of Zin. They stayed at Kadesh.



The people didn't have any water. So they gathered together to oppose Moses and Aaron. They argued with Moses. They said, "We wish we had died when our people fell dead in front of the Lord."

"Why did you bring the Lord's people into this desert? We and our livestock will die here. Why did you bring us up out of Egypt? Why did you bring us to this terrible place? It doesn't have any grain or figs. It doesn't have any grapes or

pomegranates. There isn't even any water for us to drink!"

Moses and Aaron left the people. They went to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. There they fell with their faces to the ground.

Then the glory of the Lord appeared to them.<sup>7</sup> The Lord spoke to Moses. He said, "Get your wooden staff. You and your brother Aaron gather the people together. Then speak to that rock while everyone is watching. It will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community. Then they and their livestock can drink it."

So Moses took the wooden staff from the tent. He did just as the Lord had commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the people together in front of the rock. Moses said to them, "Listen, you who refuse to obey! Do we have to bring water out of this rock for you?"

Then Moses raised his arm. He hit the rock twice with his staff. Water poured out. And the people and their livestock drank it.

But the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron. He said, "You did not trust in me enough to honor me. You did not honor me as the holy God in front of the people of Israel. So you will not bring this community into the land I am giving them."

Those were the waters of Meribah. That's where the people of Israel argued with the Lord. And that's where he showed them he is holy.

