

## Exodus Chapter Seventeen

Read **Exodus 17:1-7** – Israel Murmurs for Water

**v.1** “AND ALL THE CONGREGATION OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL JOURNEYED FROM THE WILDERNESS OF SIN, AFTER THEIR JOURNEYS, ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENT OF THE **LORD**, AND PITCHED IN REPHIDIM: AND *there was* NO WATER FOR THE PEOPLE TO DRINK.”

Israel is again on the march. They stopped at two other locations that are recorded in:

**Numbers 33:12-13** “AND THEY TOOK THEIR JOURNEY OUT OF THE WILDERNESS OF SIN, AND ENCAMPED IN DOPHKAH. AND THEY DEPARTED FROM DOPHKAH, AND ENCAMPED IN ALUSH.”

We don't know the exact location for these two intermediate stops but we can be assured that they are somewhere in between Elim and Rephidim. See Map

The simple fact is recorded that there was no water at Rephidim and we immediately see the result as Israel again murmurs and complains.

**v.2** “WHEREFORE THE PEOPLE DID CHIDE WITH MOSES, AND SAID, GIVE US WATER THAT WE MAY DRINK. AND MOSES SAID UNTO THEM, WHY CHIDE YE WITH ME? WHEREFORE DO YE TEMPT THE **LORD**?”

Some folks think that we are too quick to condemn Israel because they murmured against Moses and consequently against God. They say, look you're got 2-3 million people in the hot, dry desert without any water. But what about their faith in God? Don't they have any? Jesus told his disciples:

**Matthew 6:33-34** “BUT SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS; AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU. TAKE THEREFORE NO THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW: FOR THE MORROW SHALL TAKE THOUGHT FOR THE THINGS OF ITSELF. SUFFICIENT UNTO THE DAY *is* THE EVIL THEREOF.”

Where is their faith? God manifested himself in ten plagues that devastated Egypt. God parted the Red Sea, brought Israel across on dry ground and then drowned the entire Egyptian army. He has provided for their every need and some of their wants, quail for meat, manna for bread, sweet water where it was bitter, etc. They have not been taught patience, self-control, nor do they have the kind of faith in God that they should, even though they have seen these miracles preformed.

We are warned, using these occurrences in the Old Testament as a testimony to:

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**Hebrews 3:8-9** “HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS, AS IN THE PROVOCATION, IN THE DAY OF TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS: WHEN YOUR FATHERS TEMPTED ME, PROVED ME, AND SAW MY WORKS FORTY YEARS.”

**v.3** “AND THE PEOPLE THIRSTED THERE FOR WATER; AND THE PEOPLE MURMURED AGAINST MOSES, AND SAID, WHEREFORE IS THIS THAT THOU HAST BROUGHT US UP OUT OF EGYPT, TO KILL US AND OUR CHILDREN AND OUR CATTLE WITH THIRST?”

Just like they did at the shore of the Red Sea, Israel is now again charging Moses and subsequently God himself of just bringing them out into this horrible place to destroy them.

**Exodus 14:12** “*Is* NOT THIS THE WORD THAT WE DID TELL THEE IN EGYPT, SAYING, LET US ALONE, THAT WE MAY SERVE THE EGYPTIANS? FOR *it had been* BETTER FOR US TO SERVE THE EGYPTIANS, THAN THAT WE SHOULD DIE IN THE WILDERNESS.”

**v.4** “AND MOSES CRIED UNTO THE **LORD**, SAYING, WHAT SHALL I DO UNTO THIS PEOPLE? THEY BE ALMOST READY TO STONE ME.”

Were the Israelites really about to stone Moses or is he suffering somewhat from the same sickness of faith that his people are suffering? Perhaps he was, it is contagious. We see that they were ready to stone Caleb and Joshua when they gave their report after spying in Canaan:

**Numbers 33:10** “BUT ALL THE CONGREGATION BADE STONE THEM WITH STONES. AND THE GLORY OF THE **LORD** APPEARED IN THE TABERNACLE OF THE CONGREGATION BEFORE ALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.”

**v.5** “AND THE **LORD** SAID UNTO MOSES, GO ON BEFORE THE PEOPLE, AND TAKE WITH THEE OF THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL; AND THY ROD, WHEREWITH THOU SMOTEST THE RIVER, TAKE IN THINE HAND, AND GO.”

So God gives Moses these instructions. “GO ON BEFORE THE PEOPLE”, go ahead of the people at they continue to move slowly across the land. “TAKE” “THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL” with you. They need to be shown again the power of God and that God will provide for his people. “AND THY ROD, WHEREWITH THOU SMOTEST THE RIVER”. What incident is he referring to here?

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**Exodus 7:20** “AND MOSES AND AARON DID SO, AS THE **LORD** COMMANDED; AND HE LIFTED UP THE ROD, AND SMOTE THE WATERS THAT *were* IN THE RIVER, IN THE SIGHT OF PHARAOH, AND IN THE SIGHT OF HIS SERVANTS; AND ALL THE WATERS THAT *were* IN THE RIVER WERE TURNED TO BLOOD.”

**v.6** “BEHOLD, I WILL STAND BEFORE THEE THERE UPON THE ROCK IN HOREB; AND THOU SHALT SMITE THE ROCK, AND THERE SHALL COME WATER OUT OF IT, THAT THE PEOPLE MAY DRINK. AND MOSES DID SO IN THE SIGHT OF THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL.”

They were to go as far as Mount Horeb, see map. There Moses was to smite the rock and God would provide water from that rock for Israel. Cook in the Baker commentary says that they did not actually go to the mountain but that some other rock was struck that existed close by. He follows the Arab tradition that this rock was located in the Wadi Feiran in the nearby wilderness.

Adam Clarke, on the other hand, contends that this was a rock that Moses knew about from his wanderings in this area as a shepherd working for Jethro. Clarke, also, in his commentary, written about 1830, states that his nephew visited this rock in 1823 and brought a piece of it home. This is supposedly a picture of the actual rock taken and posted on the internet in 2007. Whether it is the actual rock or not, only God knows. However, the occurrence was used repeatedly in scripture to bolster the faith of those who needed to be uplifted.

**Nehemiah 9:15** “AND GAVEST THEM BREAD FROM HEAVEN FOR THEIR HUNGER, AND BROUGHTEST FORTH WATER FOR THEM OUT OF THE ROCK FOR THEIR THIRST, AND PROMISEDST THEM THAT THEY SHOULD GO IN TO POSSESS THE LAND WHICH THOU HADST SWORN TO GIVE THEM.”

**Psalms 78:15** “HE CLAVE THE ROCKS IN THE WILDERNESS, AND GAVE *them* DRINK AS *out of* THE GREAT DEPTHS.”

And by Paul to the Corinthian church:

**I Corinthians 10:4** “AND DID ALL DRINK THE SAME SPIRITUAL DRINK: FOR THEY DRANK OF THAT SPIRITUAL ROCK THAT FOLLOWED THEM: AND THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST.”

This passage also acknowledges that Jesus Christ is the, or is near to the fountain of living waters

**v.7** “AND HE CALLED THE NAME OF THE PLACE MASSAH, AND MERIBAH, BECAUSE OF THE CHIDING OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, AND BECAUSE THEY TEMPTED THE **LORD**, SAYING, IS THE **LORD** AMONG US, OR NOT?”

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The place was given two names. See Map. Massah means temptation or trial, and Israel are definitely tempting God at this time with their murmuring and complaining. The second is Meribah, which means contention or litigation. Because of their conduct this occurrence followed them, in this final sermon Moses reminds them at least twice:

**Deuteronomy 6:16** “YE SHALL NOT TEMPT THE **LORD** YOUR GOD, AS YE TEMPTED *him* IN MASSAH.”

**Deuteronomy 9:22** “AND AT TAB’E-RAH, AND AT MASSAH, AND AT KIB’ROTH-HAT-TA’A-VAH, YE PROVOKED THE **LORD** TO WRATH.”

And as Jesus reminds Satan when He was tempted in the wilderness:

**Matthew 4:7** “JESUS SAID UNTO HIM, IT IS WRITTEN AGAIN, THOU SHALT NOT TEMPT THE LORD THY GOD.”

Read **Exodus 17:8-16** – War with Amalek

**v.8** “THEN CAME AMALEK, AND FOUGHT WITH ISRAEL IN REPHIDIM.”

Who is Amalek and who are the Amalekites? They are the descendants of Esau, brother of Jacob or Israel.

**Genesis 36:15-16** “THESE *were* DUKES OF THE SONS OF ESAU: THE SONS OF ELIPHAZ THE FIRSTBORN *son* OF ESAU; DUKE TEMAN, DUKE OMAR, DUKE ZEPHO, DUKE KENAZ, DUKE KORAH, DUKE GATAM, *and* DUKE AMALEK: THESE ARE THE DUKES THAT CAME OF ELIPHAZ IN THE LAND OF EDOM; THESE *were* THE SONS OF ADAH.”

The word translated duke in the King James is translated chief in the New King James. So we’re looking tribes named for the chieftain that sired them. Amalek was a son of Esau through his wife, Adah.

We are not told why that the Amalekites attacked Israel but the commentators give us a couple of reasons. First of all there are a very large group of people with flocks by the thousand invading the land that they considered to be theirs. Amalek was the dominate people of the western Sinai at this time in history. They might not even know that Israel was just passing through and consequently would not be happy with them being there. Secondly this was the time of the year that the Bedouin people typically move from the valleys where they spend the winters to the higher elevations to find graze for their herds and flocks. Amalek would be on the move, could have encountered Israel as a result and they would be trying to protect the pastures that they typically used for their own flocks.

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**v.9** “AND MOSES SAID TO JOSHUA, “CHOOSE US SOME MEN AND GO OUT, FIGHT WITH AMALEK. TOMORROW I WILL STAND ON THE TOP OF THE HILL WITH THE ROD OF GOD IN MY HAND.”

This is the first time that Joshua is mentioned in scripture. Moses has apparently chosen him to serve as the general of his army.

**v.10** “SO JOSHUA DID AS MOSES SAID TO HIM, AND FOUGHT WITH AMALEK. AND MOSES, AARON, AND HUR WENT UP TO THE TOP OF THE HILL.”

Joshua chose his men and faced Amalek in battle. Moses, Aaron and a Judean named Hur , who apparently is now a companion or perhaps an assistant to Moses go up on top of a hill where they can see the battle.

**v.11** “AND SO IT WAS, WHEN MOSES HELD UP HIS HAND, THAT ISRAEL PREVAILED; AND WHEN HE LET DOWN HIS HAND, AMALEK PREVAILED.”

They discover that when Moses held up his hand, apparently with the Rod of Aaron in that hand, that God and the battle favors Israel. When Moses tires and let his arms down then Amalek prevails.

**v.12** “BUT MOSES HANDS *were* HEAVY; AND THEY TOOK A STONE, AND PUT *it* UNDER HIM, AND HE SAT THEREON; AND AARON AND HUR STAYED UP HIS HANDS, THE ONE ON THE ONE SIDE, AND THE OTHER ON THE OTHER SIDE; AND HIS HANDS WERE STEADY UNTIL THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN.”

They solve the problem by finding Moses something to sit on and Aaron and Hur helped him hold the Rod of God aloft until the end of the day and the end of the battle. The prophet Isaiah uses this occurrence as an example to bolster our faith in a prophecy concerning the kingdom of Christ that was to come.

**Isaiah 35:3-4** “STRENGTHEN YE THE WEAK HANDS, AND CONFIRM THE FEEBLE KNEES. SAY TO THEM *that are* OF A FEARFUL HEART, BE STRONG, FEAR NOT: BEHOLD, YOUR GOD WILL COME *with* VENGEANCE, *even* GOD *with A* RECOMPENCE; HE WILL COME AND SAVE YOU.”

**v.13** “AND JOSHUA DISCOMFITED AMALEK AND HIS PEOPLE WITH THE EDGE OF THE SWORD.”

This statement that “JOSHUA DISCOMFITED AMALEK” is a gross understatement of the type found in scripture. This discomfort usually consisted of a great slaughter “WITH THE EDGE OF THE SWORD” of whoever was being punished.

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**v.14** “AND THE **LORD** SAID UNTO MOSES, WRITE THIS *for* A MEMORIAL IN A BOOK, AND REHEARSE *it* IN THE EARS OF JOSHUA: FOR I WILL UTTERLY PUT OUT THE REMEMBRANCE OF AMALEK FROM UNDER HEAVEN.”

Here we have the first mention in scripture; that I've been able to find, of someone being commanded by God to write a record of what is happening. God wants this battle remembered and a memorial made for that purpose. God is bringing judgment against Amalek and the Amalekites because of their sin but they continue and are a trouble to Israel for hundreds of years.

Saul was ordered to completely remove them from the face of the earth and failed to do so (**I Samuel 15**). This caused God to ultimately remove him from his position as king of Israel. At a later time David had been sent against the Amalekites when Saul fought and was killed fighting against the Philistines (**II Samuel 1:1**). As instruments of God mankind fail frequently and the Amalekite people were not completely removed from existence until the time of King Hezekiah of Judah:

**I Chronicles 4:43** “AND THEY SMOTE THE REST OF THE AMALEKITES THAT WERE ESCAPED, AND DWELT THERE UNTO THIS DAY.”

**v.15** “AND MOSES BUILT AN ALTAR, AND CALLED THE NAME OF IT JEHOVAHNISSI:”

Moses builds an altar and worships God. His name for that place is Jehovah-nissi, Jehovah my banner or ensign. Of course we understand that the banner or ensign that our troops fight under is the flag of our nation. Likewise when Moses held the Rod of God aloft over the battle, he was holding the standard or ensign of God.

**v.16** “FOR HE SAID, BECAUSE THE **LORD** HATH SWORN *that* THE **LORD will have** WAR WITH AMALEK FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION.”

Both Clarke and Cook in the Baker commentary take issue with the translation of this verse. They contend that a more accurate rendering would be (quoting from Clarks).

**v.16** “BECAUSE THE HAND OF AMALEK IS AGAINST THE THRONE OF GOD, THEREFORE WILL I HAVE WAR WITH AMALEK FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION.”

But as we saw above, the descendants of Amalek were not removed from troubling Israel until the time of King Hezekiah.