

**Ex. 17:1** 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.

**Ex. 17:2** 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?

**Ex. 17:3** 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?

Well, we know that the Israelites had been out of Egypt for less than three months since chapter 19 starts with the third month. In spite of so many signs from the LORD and miracles on their behalf, the people are still grumbling at the first sign of any hardship. Even though living on the road out of tents must have been hard, it wasn't unusual for people of that day, and it certainly had to be better than being slaves in Egypt. They are traveling in the desert from place to place "according to the commandment of the LORD." That should assure them that He will provide—as the old saying goes, "Where God guides, God provides." Because we don't see the whole plan, we are quick to be impatient and untrusting. Instead of asking Moses to intercede with the Lord on their behalf, they quarrel and complain and demand that he give them water to drink. Moses immediately lets them know that it is the LORD's patience they are testing—the LORD is their provider, not Moses. But they don't let up; they accuse Moses of leading them out of Egypt just to have them die of thirst.

**Ex. 17:4** And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

**Ex. 17:5** 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.

**Ex. 17:6** 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.

Moses cries out to the Lord. This sounds like a call of a man in fear of his life since he tells God they are "almost ready to stone me." The LORD doesn't lose patience or rebuke. He simply answers the prayer of His servant. He always gets the people in position to have to recognize that it is the LORD who is providing their needs through the obedience of His chosen leader. He tells Moses to walk ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with him. He is also to take the staff that was used to turn the waters of the Nile into blood. Then the LORD tells Moses that He will stand before him by the rock at Horeb. Then he is to strike the rock and water will come out of it to provide for the people.

I think it is interesting that the LORD chose to go before Moses. My natural tendency is to think of God being with me or by me in times of need, and I don't think that is wrong. But what's more important is that He is always going before me. That assures me that what is happening is part of His approved plan for my life. It had to get past Him before it could reach me. It is also an assurance that He will provide what is needed in any given situation.

As always, Moses obeyed and did as He was commanded in the sight of the elders of Israel. I'm trying to think through why it was important for the elders of the people to witness this miracle. They were witnesses that it was a miracle (there was no TV to allow them all to see at once) although it seems that would be obvious when you saw water flowing from a rock. Moses didn't question the LORD as to why, so why should I. He just obeyed!

**Ex. 17:7** 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?

Then he named the place in accordance with the attitudes and actions of the people—Massah (which means testing) and Meribah (which means quarreling).

**Ex. 17:8** Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

**Ex. 17:9** And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

**Ex. 17:10** So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

**Ex. 17:11** And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

**Ex. 17:12** 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.

**Ex. 17:13** And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Now we are told that the Amalekites attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses gives Joshua instructions to choose some of the men and go out to fight them, and tomorrow he would stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in his hands.

The first thing that hits me is that Moses doesn't hesitate in his response and is confident that he is instructing Joshua correctly. The longer and more consistently we walk with the LORD, the surer we will become in acting in accordance to His will. The next thing that hits me is that he instructs Joshua to choose men and go fight now and that he will show up with the staff of God tomorrow. Joshua doesn't hesitate; he obeys. He recognizes Moses as God's representative.

Joshua obeyed and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. (3/10 – According to Josephus, the Jewish historian, Hur was Miriam's husband, Moses' brother-in law.) As long as Moses held up his hands with the staff of God, the Israelites were winning; but when he lowered his hands, the Amalekites would be winning. So when Moses grew tired, they put a stone under him to sit on and Aaron and Hur held his hands up until sunset. Then we are told that Joshua and his men won the battle.

It is an interesting side note that when I picture Moses holding the staff up with both hands, I picture Jesus on the cross. I'm not sure why the LORD honored this particular method. It could be that it was a result of Moses again being obedient to God's commands, although that is not what we are told. More importantly, I think it was the

response to the faith of His servant Moses and to those who obeyed Moses in faith as God's appointed leader.

**Ex. 17:14** 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.

**Ex. 17:15** And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi:

**Ex. 17:16** For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn *that* the LORD *will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.*

Then the LORD instructs Moses to write what happened on a scroll as something important to be remembered in generations to come. He is to especially make sure that Joshua hears and understands this instruction and the reason why. (I think this is because he will be the leader to succeed Moses and only one of two to enter the Promised Land out of this generation of adults.) The LORD wants His people to know their history of deliverance. Then the LORD says that He will blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. So, this written record will be the only means left for affirming this incident ever happened. Moses immediately built an altar to honor the LORD for the victory and named it *Jhovahnissi*, "The LORD is my Banner." The banner represents the rallying point and the standard or symbol of whom/what we serve. Then we are told that the LORD will be against the Amalekites in war from generation to generation. I think that He is using the Amalekites as representative of any nation who comes against His people Israel—enemies of the Jews.