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Strike the Rock and Water Will Come Out of It 17: 1-7

Strike the rock and water will come out of it DIG: Why is this the same song, second verse? How does this passage compare with 16:1-4? What is wrong with this picture? Why didn't the water come out until after the rock was struck? Was this for the benefit of Moses, the people, or the elders? Was thirst the only problem? What was the deeper object lesson and how well did they learn it (Numbers 20:1-3)?

REFLECT: Have you been to the rock that was struck for a drink of living water? Jesus Christ says if you drink of that water, you will never thirst again (John 7:37-39)! Are you spiritually thirsty? **To see link click [Eg](#) - The Peace Offering**, and discover how you can receive living water.

And the whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin. Note that in the Hebrew, **Chapter 17** begins with the word **And**, which connects it with **Chapter 16**. So, too, **Chapter 16** opens with the same word, which links it to the bitter water of Marah in **Chapter 15**. It is such a little word, but it makes such a big difference because there is a common thread of **complaining** in all three of these chapters. **And** here, once again, **Isra'el** was face to face with another trial of faith. **Their** dependency upon **God** was tested. This time it was not a lack of food, but the absence of **water**. How this illustrates the fact that *the path of faith is a path of trial*. **God's plan is to wean us from everything down here (**First Peter 2:11**), to bring us to the place where we have no reliance upon material or human resources, but to cast *ourselves* completely upon **Himself**. O how slow, how painfully slow we are to learn this lesson. How miserably and how repeatedly we fail! How longsuffering **God** is with us. This is what the introductory word **and** is designed to point out. Here in **Chapter 17** it is but a tragic repetition of the beginning of **Chapter 16**.³⁰⁹**

They traveled from place to place as ADONAI commanded. If the pillar of cloud moved, **they** moved; if the pillar of fire stood still, **they** stood still. **Encampment locations at Dophkah and Alush (Numbers 33:12-14) are**

omitted here to focus on the incidents of testing and complaining.³¹⁰ **They camped at Rephidim**, which was **their** last stop on their way to Mount Sinai. It was probably either Wadi Refayid or Wadi Feiran, both of which are not far from Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Mount Sinai in the southeastern region of the peninsula.³¹¹ **But there was no water for the people to drink (17:1).** At Marah there was water, although bitter, but **God** made it sweet. **At Rephidim**, however, there was no **water** at all. **It** would have to be created out of nothing (**Genesis 1:1**).

Again, the lack of **water** became a stumbling block. But this time **their** rebellion became much more of a problem than the last incident at Marah (**15:24**) or in the Desert of Sin (**16:1-3**) because a mob mentality began to develop. Parched from **their** journey and finding **no water**, **they complained to Moses** and were **almost ready to stone him (17:4)**. The leadership and capability of **Moshe** should have been established by then, but to a people easily influenced by the mixed multitude (**12:43-51**), and the difficulty of the circumstances made **Moses'** track record easy to forget. Such **complaining**, **Moses** said, **put God to the test (17:2)**, that is, they were challenging **God** or trying **His** patience rather than trusting in **Him**.³¹² In fact, the whole history of the desert wanderings of **the Israelites** is a good example of the longsuffering of **ADONAI** with a **people** who constantly tested and provoked **Him (Psalm 78:56; 106:7, 14, 25, 29)**.

While there is no doubt that the shortage of **water** reached a dangerous level, **the people** should not have tested **Moshe**, but should have turned to **God** who had already proven **His** ability to provide for **them** in the past.³¹³ **But the people were thirsty for water there, and they complained to Moses. They** said: **Why did you bring us and our children and livestock to die of thirst (17:3)? Their** language is angry and hostile. However, **God**, as always, graciously supplied the people's need. **ADONAI** answered **Moshe** and commanded: **Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Isra'el and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile (7:20), and go from Rephidim to the region of Mount Horeb (17:5). Horeb** was the place where **God** had revealed Himself to **Moshe** at the burning bush (**3:1-5**). It refers to a range of mountains. So **Horeb** is a mountain range that contains Mount Sinai. The slopes of **Horeb** reached **Rephidim**, so the walk that **Moses** and **the elders** took was not a long one.



God announced that **He Himself** would: **Stand there before you by the rock at Mount Horeb**. Some argue this is merely anthropomorphic language, using human imagery to describe the presence of **God**. Others see a theophany in which **the pillar of cloud** descended upon **the rock**. Either way, **God** was at **Horeb** in a special, unique way in order to provide for **His people**. **He** said: **Strike the hard, dry rock with your staff, and water will come out of it for the people to drink**. It was not until **the rock** was struck **with the staff of Moshe** that the **water** gushed **out**. This was another **Exodus**-like event.³¹⁴ Because **water** is a picture of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh (John 7:38-39)**, this foreshadows the coming of **the Spirit of God** at **Shavu'ot (Acts 2:1-4)** after the death of **Christ** on the cross (**Isaiah 53:4-12; John 19:16b-37**). We learn more about this incident in **the Psalms**. **He opened the rock, and water gushed out; like a river it flowed in the desert. For He remembered His holy promise given to His servant Abraham (Psalm 105:41-42)**. It was because of **His** covenant with **Abraham (Genesis 15)** that **God** gave the **water** to **Isra'el**.³¹⁵ **So Moses did this in the sight of all the elders of Isra'el** so that **they** could be witnesses to the miracle and relay what **they** had seen to **the unbelieving people (17:6)**. The word **rock** is used here in a literal sense. There was a real **rock at Horeb** and when **Moshe struck it**, real **water** came **out of it**, providing **water** for **the children of Isra'el**.

However, whenever the word **rock** is used symbolically, it is *always* used of the second person of the Trinity, or **Jesus Christ**. Paul made this very clear when he wrote to the church he had founded in the city of Corinth. He said to them: **For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they passed through the Red Sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ (First Corinthians 10:1-4; also see Hebrews 11:24-26)**.

So, although the Bible uses many symbols, it uses them consistently. Whenever the word **rock** is used, it is a picture of **Christ**, although sometimes it will have a slightly different emphasis. **There are seven examples of this. First**, sometimes when **the rock** is used of **Christ**, or **the Messiah**, the emphasis is on **His** deity, as the **God-man (Genesis 49:24; Deuteronomy 32:15; Second Samuel 23:2-3; Psalm 18:31; Matthew 15:16-18).**

Secondly, the emphasis on **His** pre-existence is found in **Dani'el 2:34** where **Christ** is referred to as **a rock that was cut out, but not by human hands.**

Thirdly, another usage is that **Christ** was the **stone** has been tried, **tested** and proven to be true. Like **the Lamb of God, He was without spot or blemish (Isaiah 28:16; First Peter 2:4 and 6).**

Fourthly, still another usage of the word **rock** is used in reference to **the Messiah** as the foundation (**Matthew 16:18, 21:44).**

Fifthly, to **the Jews** and other nonbelievers **He is a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall (Isaiah 8:14; Romans 9:32; First Corinthians 1:23; First Peter 2:8).**

Sixthly, another common motif of the **stone** in reference to **Christ** is to call it the **rejected stone**, because the TaNaKh made it clear that when **the Messiah** came the first time, **He** would be rejected by **His people (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11).** Therefore, out of this historical incident a picture of **the Messiah** begins to develop. **He** would be a proven and tested **stone**, but is rejected by the nation of **Isra'el** to become a **stone** of stumbling.

Ultimately, however, He would become the **cornerstone** of the Church (**Isaiah 28:16; Ephesians 2:20; First Peter 2:6).**

In **Numbers 20:8-12** we are told of a second time that **the children of Isra'el** complained that they had **no water**. The first time **Isra'el** complained about being thirsty, **God** told **Moses** to **strike the rock and water would come out of it for the people to drink**. In **Numbers**, however, **God** gave **Moshe** different directions. **He** told **Moses** to **speak to the rock and water would pour out of it**. **Moses** was supposed to **speak to the rock** because **the Messiah** was to be **stricken** only once. After that we only need to ask for salvation. **Christ** was

crucified twenty centuries ago, and from the cross **He** said: **It is finished (John 19:30)**, and it was **finished** indeed. **He** does not have to be crucified again. When **He** comes back a second time it will not be to die; it will be to rule and reign over the entire world as **the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5)**. **God the Father** is satisfied with what **God the Son** did for you. The question is, “Are you satisfied with the work **Christ** did for you on the cross?” **He** died to save you. All **God the Father** is asking, is that you believe in, trust in, have faith in, **His Son**.³¹⁶

And Moshe called the place Massah, or testing, **because the Israelites tested** Him there, **and** he also **called the place Meribah**, or **complaining**, **because the Israelites complained** to **God** saying: **Is ADONAI among us or not (17:7)?** Like Pharaoh before **them**, how many times did they need to see **God** work before they understood? Did **they** not see that **God** had **their** best interests at heart? Did **they** not see that **He** had moved mightily from the time of the patriarchs to come to that very moment and **He** wasn't going to let a little thing like the **water** supply stand in the way of fulfilling **His** plan?³¹⁷ Still **the people complained**, and the fruits of **their complaining** would sow thorns of conflict in the future. And conflict would breed contention. Soon the Amalekites would attack **the Israelites**, and then it would be **Isra'el** who would be **tested**.