

Exodus
June 17, 2007
Chapter 17

I. Rebellion #4 Weakens Moses

Ex 17:1-7

17:1 The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. **2** So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink."

Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?"

3 But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

4 Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."

5 The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. **6** I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. **7** And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

NIV

Verse 1 The time frame is not identified, but it was not a long period from earlier events. 19:1 talks about being in the third month since they left Egypt, and Chapter 16:1 speaks of the 15th day of the second month. So about a month (or two months maximum) has passed.

Verse 1 The verse makes it clear that they camped at Rephidim because the LORD decided it. He knows that there was no water at this location. So, why did He pick it?

Verse 1 Despite the fact that the place has not water and the people are attacked there, Rephidim means refreshments or rests.

Verse 2 Once again the people quarrel with Moses even though their true quarrel is with God. In what ways are they testing the LORD?

Verse 3 This statement concerning dying because they came out of Egypt is already growing irritating to us. How do you think that Moses felt about it?

- Verse 4 Some commentators criticize Moses for not consoling the people, but he might have done just that; it might not have been recorded. Chances are that the people were not going to let him off the hook until they were drinking H₂O.
- Verse 4 Clearly, though, the constant complaints of the people were getting to Moses. Here, we see him not praying for the people but for himself. While it would have been better for him to be selfless, it is hard for me to criticize him. **This is the most important verse for 17:1-7.** Why is Moses so bothered by the Israelites complaining this time?
- Verse 5 Since the people are blaming Moses, the LORD appears to decide to use him as a visible sign in the miracle.
- Verse 6 Horeb is another name for Mt. Sinai or the mountainous district that contains Mt. Sinai.
- Verse 6 Even though Moses is the individual obvious to the Israelites, the LORD is standing before Him to help him and assure that he does not fail.
- Verse 7 “Massah” means testing/trial/temptation, and “Meribah” means protest/contention/quarrel/strife.

This episode is apparently repeated in Numbers 20, but in this case, Moses acts in a way not totally consistent with God’s direction. Moses is punished for this act of disobedience by not being allowed to enter the Promise Land.

II. We All Need a Helping Hand

Ex 17:8-13

8 The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. 9 Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands." 10 So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. 11 As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. 12 When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up — one on one side, one on the other — so that his hands remained steady till sunset. 13 So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

NIV

- Verse 8 The nature of the attack is not given in detail although Deuteronomy indicates that there was an attack on those lagging behind.

Deut 25:17-19

17 Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. 18 When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and

cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God. 19 When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget! NIV

Verse 8 The Amalekites are related to Israel through Esau:

Gen 36:12 Esau's son Eliphaz also had a concubine named Timna, who bore him Amalek. NIV

Verse 9 This is the first mention of Joshua in the Bible. He is called Moses' young assistant in Ex. 33:11, and was about 45 years old at this point.

Verse 9 For the first time, we see Moses using the staff of God without being told specifically to do so. Presumably, God did tell him to use, and it is not recorded here. Certainly God appears to be honoring his actions.

Verse 10 Josephus identifies Hur as the husband of Meriam, although it is often hard to believe him.

Verse 11 It was important for Israelites to know that the LORD was fighting for them. It was not through their power or Moses' power. The LORD would do so only if they did exactly what he told them.

Verse 12 Apparently the battle goes on for some time, and eventually Moses gets tired. The first countermeasure is to have him sit on a stone. **Then, Aaron and Hur helped Moses keep his hands high.** Moses wanted to keep his hands up but this is a fatiguing thing to do. Even a young man would have great problems, and from all the information in the Pentateuch, Moses had great strength, which was undiminished by age. The problem is that any human needs help; God can provide this help, but God might use people; the recipients should be willing to accept the help.

III. Memorial

Ex 17:14-16

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

15 Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner. 16 He said, "For hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD. The LORD will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation."

NIV

Verse 14 There are no Amalekites today. Indeed, there have not been any for 2500 years. In the days of Hezekiah, 500 men of the

tribe of Simeon defeated the Amalekites. Consequently, the Simeonites took their land, and the Amalekites became a dispossessed people (1 Chron 4:39-43).

Verse 15 Literally, he called it “Yahweh is my signal pole,” probably because of the military victory.

Verse 16 Deu 25:19, quoted above, indicates how personally the LORD took the attack... “Do not forget!”

Note: The Amalekites will attack the Israelites again within a year. In Numbers 13, all but two of the Israelites are afraid to go into the Promise Land. The LORD punishes them by telling them that none of them will enter into it, which extended the journeys in the Wilderness for 40 years until that generation had died off. However, rebelling again against the LORD, the same people who had been afraid to enter the Promise Land tried to do so after the LORD told them their punishment. The LORD used the Amalekites to defeat them in combat (in Numbers 14) so that they could not enter the Promise Land.

IV. The Lord’s Service is Tiring

In Chapter 17, we see Moses tiring, both spiritually and physically. Some helpful answers will be given to him in the next chapter from his father-in-law and from God. However, there are helpful lessons to us from this chapter that we need to apply as we perform our own service to the Lord.

In verses 1-7, we see Moses overwhelmed by the continual attacks on him. He has led the Israelites from victory to victory without fault, and yet the Israelites are ready to kill him. Knowing that he does not have the answers, what does Moses do? We will all be in such situation. What should we do?

In verses 8-13, we see Moses overwhelmed in a different way. Others come to his aid. Aaron and Hur hold up his hands, and Joshua leads the attack. The LORD could have strengthened Moses directly, but instead allows other workers to help Moses carry on. Chapter 18 builds on this point.

Why does the Lord use others to help us?

When should we let others help us?

When should we offer to help others?