

The LORD leads the children of Israel to a place called Riphidim where they will encounter some challenges. They fail miserably in the first challenge when they encounter a lack of water and they question the LORD's care for them. The next challenge involved an enemy army as Moses must hold the "rod of God" over his head during the battle to insure Israel's victory over the Amalekites.

**Exodus 16:** About a month after leaving Egypt the people have already forgotten the ability of the LORD to provide for them and again begin to complain and criticize Moses. They are hungry and they point back to Egypt where they had food to eat, accusing Moses of bringing them out to the wilderness to starve them to death. The LORD responds mercifully by promising to send bread from heaven in the morning and quail in the evening. Although the LORD continued to provide the bread from heaven until the day that Israel entered the land of Canaan, it's unclear if they quail was provided as regularly. Because they had not seen anything like this bread from heaven before, the people called this bread "manna," which means "what is it?" The LORD provided it each morning except for the seventh day of the week when they were required to collect enough for two days on the sixth day. The LORD was teaching them to trust and depend on Him for their needs.

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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?

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**"Wherefore the people did chide [strive; dispute] with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink"** – In v. 1 the children of Israel are led by the LORD to a place called Riphidim but there was no water there. The people become impatient and begin to argue with Moses over the lack of water. They seem to consistently hold Moses personally responsible for all the difficulties they encounter while being in the wilderness.

**"And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt [tempt; test] the LORD?"** – Moses points out that he is not the mastermind behind their departure from Egypt or their travels in the wilderness. The choice to camp at Riphidim was the LORD's and so their quarrel is with the LORD and not Moses. He then asks them why they would want to tempt the LORD by insisting that He do what they want. This carnal attitude is in contrast with the sinless way Jesus handled the temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-4). Jesus responded to Satan's challenge that He turn stones in to bread to satisfy His hunger by expressing His complete dependence on His Father to provide. These Israelites showed no such dependence on the LORD and demanded that the LORD act so that their flesh could be satisfied. Jesus responded to Satan's second temptation by quoting a verse from Deuteronomy that referred to this incident (**Deut. 6:16** "Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah"). Satan's temptation was for Jesus to jump from a pinnacle of the temple and force His Father to act in order to save Him (Matt. 4:5-7).

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

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The confrontation between the people and Moses intensifies as they accuse him of bringing them out of Egypt with the purpose of killing them with thirst. Rather than patiently asking the LORD to supply their need, they focus on the needs of their flesh and make outlandish accusations against Moses because they are not getting what they want. The dissension is so great that Moses becomes afraid that the people are going to stone him and pleads with the LORD to show him what to do with these people.

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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. 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.

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**"And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel"** – So that the people understand that a legitimate miracle is about to happen, the LORD has Moses do things out in the open in front of witnesses. Moses is to do this before the people and take the elders of the people to witness close up what is about to happen.

**"and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go"** – Moses is also to take the rod (staff) that the LORD had him to use to smite the Nile River and turn all the water in Egypt into blood (Ex. 7:19-20). This rod, also known as the "rod of God," represented the authority that the LORD gave to Moses as the liaison between the LORD and the people and was involved in many miracles that the LORD performed through Moses.

**"Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb"** – The LORD gives His assurance that He will be with Moses when he stands at the rock. It's unclear where the "rock in Horeb" was and commentators are undecided on the location since the Israelites were still at Riphidim at this time and had not yet traveled to Horeb, the mountain where the LORD had told Moses to bring the people. Estimates of the location of Riphidim place it as close as 12 miles and as far as 25 miles from Horeb. It's possible that the LORD had Moses and the elders travel to Horeb and there strike the rock and obtain the water. This would have created a stream or small river that flowed back toward Riphidim and provided water for the entire congregation of Israel.

**"and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink"** – This miracle producing physical water from the rock at Horeb foreshadowed Jesus Christ Who would be smitten so that we may drink from Him as the fountain of living waters (**1 Cor. 10:4** [Paul speaking of the children of Israel in the wilderness] "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ").

**"And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel"** – Moses obeys and the LORD mercifully provides water for Israel despite their sinful complaining, quarreling and tempting of Him.

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?

**“And he called the name of the place Massah [temptation; testing], and Meribah [strife or contention]”** – Moses gives the location two names as a reminder of Israel’s failure to trust the LORD.

**“because of the chiding [strife; dispute] of the children of Israel”** – Israel wanted their fleshly desires for water satisfied on their terms rather than waiting on the LORD to provide. When their desires weren’t being satisfied on their timetable then they became angry and began to dispute with Moses. Thus Moses uses the name “Meribah” (strife or contention) for the place.

**“and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?”** – They thought that the LORD should have already provided the water for them and so began questioning whether or not He was among them to provide for them. They were not trusting Him but impatiently thought they LORD should be doing things when and how they thought they should be done. They tempted the LORD by attempting to force Him to act as they wanted and so Moses also uses the name “Massah” (temptation) for the place.

8 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 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.

**“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim”** – The Amalekites were descendants of Amalek, who was the grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:12), and thus were distant relatives of the Israelites. They had settled in the region where the Israelites were traveling through, so they likely considered the Israelites to be trespassers or even invaders.

**“And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek”** – This is the first reference to Joshua, who would later lead Israel after the death of Moses. Moses chooses him as a military leader to assemble an army to defend Israel.

**“to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand”** – Moses promises to be present during the battle because he will be standing on the hill overlooking the battlefield with the “rod of God” in his hand. This rod in the hand of Moses has been the conduit through which the LORD has performed miracles in the behalf of Israel.

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

**“So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek”** – Joshua chose men capable of fighting and assembled an armed force as Moses had commanded and engaged the enemy the next day.

**“and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill”** – Moses takes his place on the hill overlooking the battlefield. He obviously knows that he will need assistance and brings Aaron and Hur with him.

**“And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed”** – Many commentators believe that Moses was holding his hand up in prayer but it would seem that the position of Moses’ hands would not affect his ability to pray. The LORD had used the rod in the hand of Moses to perform many miracles thus far and so it would seem consistent that, just as the LORD performed a miracle when Moses struck the Nile River or the rock with the rod, He would do so now as well by only enabling Israel to win the battle when Moses held up the rod in his hand.

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. 13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

**“But Moses' hands were heavy”** – Moses was human and his arms soon became weary so that he was unable to continue holding the rod up in his hand. We should take note of the lesson concerning the men of God in our day: they are human and grow weary and in need of assistance. We ought to not only pray for our pastors and other church workers but also to provide tangible help when we can.

**“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”** – Aaron and Hur recognized that Moses was growing weary and so they took steps to support him, giving him a seat and holding up his hands until the battle was won. We should be ready to support our pastors in the work of the gospel, providing whatever assistance they need so that they are not laboring alone.

**“and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun”** – What Moses was unable to do by himself, he was able to accomplish with the help of Aaron and Hur. Israel needed the divine help that came through the rod of God held in Moses’ upraised hands and these two men insured that Moses’ hands remained steady until the battle was won.

**“And Joshua discomfited [to overthrow; to weaken] Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword”** – The LORD, through Moses with the help of Aaron and Hur, gave Israel the victory over Amalek through Joshua’s leadership. Everyone had their part to play in the victory and the same thing is true in the church today. The apostle Paul used the illustration of a human body to show that every member of the church is valuable and serves an important purpose (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

**Exodus 18:** The father-in-law of Moses, Jethro, brought Moses’ wife and children to be reunited with him now that the confrontation with the Egyptians was over. Jethro observes Moses performing the office of judge over the entire nation of Israel, resolving any conflicts the people may have between themselves. When Jethro sees that this exhausting task occupies Moses from daylight to dark, he advises Moses to delegate this responsibility to a hierarchy of trustworthy judges that report to him. Moses sees the wisdom in the advice and does as his father-in-law recommended.