

Exodus 17:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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?

Analysis

Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink—The verb 'chide' (רִיב, riv) means 'to contend, quarrel legally'—Israel puts Moses on trial for their thirst. Their demand 'Give us water' treats Moses as responsible rather than crying to God. Moses' response 'Why chide ye with me?' recognizes their real accusation: 'wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?' The verb 'tempt' (נָסָה, nasah) means 'to test, put to trial'—Israel presumes to test God rather than trust Him. This reverses proper relationship: creatures don't test Creator. Their thirst is legitimate, but their response is faithless, echoing Psalm 78:18—'they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.'

Historical Context

This is the third major complaint (food in Ex 15:24, manna in Ex 16:2, now water), establishing a pattern of murmuring that characterizes Israel's wilderness journey.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does legitimate need become sinful 'tempting God' through manner of asking?
2. What does putting human leaders 'on trial' for circumstances reveal about refusing God's sovereignty?

Interlinear Text

תָּרִיבוֹן	הָעָם	עִם	מֹשֶׁה	וַיֹּאמֶר	תְּנוּ	לִנוּ
did chide	Wherefore the people	H5973	And Moses	and said	Give	H0
H7378	H5971		H4872	H559	H5414	
מִי	וְנִשְׁתֶּה	וַיֹּאמֶר	לָהֶם	מֹשֶׁה	מָה	תָּרִיבוֹן
us water	that we may drink	and said	H0	And Moses	H4100	did chide
H4325	H8354	H559		H4872		H7378
עִמָּדִי	מָה	תִּנָּס וְ	אֶת	יְהוָה:		
H5978	H4100	ye with me wherefore do ye tempt	H853	the LORD		
		H5254		H3068		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 78:41 (Parallel theme): Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.

Deuteronomy 6:16 (References Lord): Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.

Isaiah 7:12 (References Lord): But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.

Psalms 78:18 (Parallel theme): And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.

1 Corinthians 10:9 (Parallel theme): Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Hebrews 3:9 (Parallel theme): When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

Psalms 95:9 (Parallel theme): When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.

Matthew 4:7 (References Lord): Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Numbers 21:5 (References Moses): And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

Acts 15:10 (Parallel theme): Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?