

Numbers 20:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.

Analysis

This water was called 'Meribah' (strife/quarreling) because 'the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.' The Hebrew 'rib' (strove/contended) indicates legal disputation - Israel litigiously challenged God. Yet God was 'sanctified' (qadash - shown holy) through judgment on Moses and Aaron's sin (v.12). Even when His people sin, God maintains His holiness through just responses. This teaches that God's character is vindicated through both mercy (providing water despite complaint) and justice (punishing unauthorized representation). Every divine action sanctifies His name - displays His nature accurately. Believers should likewise live so God is sanctified (shown holy) in us (1 Pet 1:15-16).

Historical Context

This was the second 'Meribah' incident - the first occurred at Rephidim early in wilderness journey (Ex 17:1-7). Both involved water complaints and were called Meribah. The repetition forty years apart shows persistent human rebellion and persistent divine provision. Moses' failure here - striking the rock twice in anger rather than speaking as commanded - cost him Canaan's entrance. The severe consequence demonstrated leadership's greater accountability and that even faithful servants can disqualify themselves through disobedience. The location became memorial to both Israel's rebellion and Moses' failure - cautionary tale for all generations.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How is God sanctified (shown holy) through your life - through obedience or through discipline of your disobedience?
2. Does your leadership represent God accurately, maintaining composure even when dealing with difficult people?

Interlinear Text

זֶה הַמָּה	מֵי י	מְרִיבָה ה	אֲשֶׁר ו	כָּב ו	בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל ל
This is	the water	of Meribah	H834	strove	because the children	of Israel
H1992	H4325	H4809		H7378	H1121	H3478
אֶת	יְהוָה ה	וַיִּקְדֹּשׁ ש	בָּם:			
H854	with the LORD	and he was sanctified	H0			
	H3068	H6942				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 95:8 (Parallel theme): Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

Exodus 17:7 (References Lord): 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?

Deuteronomy 33:8 (Holy): And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah;

Deuteronomy 32:51 (Holy): Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org