

Numbers 20:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.

Analysis

God instructs Moses to speak to the rock to produce water, demonstrating divine power to supply Israel's needs through means requiring only faith-filled obedience. The command 'Take the rod' refers to Aaron's budded rod that confirmed God's choice of Aaron's priesthood (Numbers 17:10). This rod symbolized divine authority and miraculous provision. The phrase 'gather thou the assembly together' emphasizes that the miracle would occur publicly, vindicating God before the congregation. The central command—'speak ye unto the rock before their eyes'—requires only verbal address, not physical striking as Moses did at Rephidim forty years earlier (Exodus 17:6). The change from striking (Exodus) to speaking (Numbers) may symbolize progression from Law's demands to grace's provision—Christ the Rock was struck once (crucifixion), but now we simply ask in His name. God promises: 'it shall give forth his water'—the rock will respond to spoken command. The comprehensive provision—'give the congregation and their beasts drink'—demonstrates God's care extends to all needs.

Historical Context

This event occurred near the end of Israel's forty years of wandering, during the first month of the fortieth year (Numbers 20:1). The location was Kadesh in the

wilderness of Zin—ironically, near where Israel's unbelief had begun their wilderness sentence forty years earlier. The congregation's complaint about water shortage (20:2-5) paralleled their ancestors' complaint at Rephidim (Exodus 17:1-7). However, Moses' response here diverged from God's instructions: instead of speaking to the rock, he struck it twice in apparent anger (20:10-11). Though water still flowed (demonstrating God's grace), Moses' disobedience cost him entry into Canaan (20:12). This incident illustrates that even great leaders face consequences for presumption and failure to honor God's exact instructions.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What does the change from striking to speaking reveal about God's progressive revelation and grace?
2. How does Moses' subsequent failure (striking instead of speaking) warn against presuming on past experience?
3. In what ways does the rock symbolize Christ as the source of living water?
4. What does God's command to act 'before their eyes' teach about public witness and testimony?
5. How should we balance confidence in God's provision with careful obedience to His specific instructions?

Interlinear Text

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| בְּעֵד הָאָתָּה וְמִקְרָב לְפָנֶיךָ | so thou shalt give the congregation |
| Take the rod and gather | so thou shalt give the congregation |
| H3947 H853 H4294 H6950 | H5712 |
| אַתָּה וְאַבְרָהָם אֶחָד יְבָרֶךְ מְדָבָר מִלְּאָכָל לְעֵד מִלְּאָכָל | out of the rock |
| H859 together thou and Aaron thy brother and speak | H413 H1696 H5553 |
| H175 H251 | |
| לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְיִנְתַּחֲרֶת מִן יָמָם וְיִהְזְכַּר מִלְּאָכָל | before their eyes and it shall give forth his water and thou shalt bring forth |
| before their eyes and it shall give forth his water and thou shalt bring forth | H0 |
| H5869 H5414 H4325 H3318 | |
| אֶת וְשַׁקְיִת מִן לְעֵד מִלְּאָכָל | out of the rock |
| his water H4480 out of the rock drink | H853 |
| H4325 H5553 H8248 | |
| בְּעֵירָם: וְאַתָּה בְּעֵד הָאָתָּה וְמִקְרָב לְפָנֶיךָ | so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts |
| so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts | H1165 |
| H5712 | |

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 4:17 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.

Revelation 22:17 (Parallel theme): And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Isaiah 43:20 (Parallel theme): The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.