

Numbers 21:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves. And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah:

Analysis

The song celebrating the well 'which the princes digged, which the nobles of the people digged, with the scepter, and with their staves' shows joyful cooperation in obtaining God's provision. The imagery of leaders digging with their official staffs (normally not used for manual labor) suggests that even those in authority humble themselves for the community's benefit. The well represents God's provision through human instrumentality—God provides water, but people must dig to access it. This balances divine sovereignty with human responsibility.

Historical Context

This incident at Beer ('well') provides positive contrast to earlier water complaints. The well's location 'in the wilderness' where no natural water existed emphasizes God's miraculous provision. The 'scepter' and 'staves' were symbols of authority, making their use for digging significant—leaders served rather than merely commanded. This prefigures Christ who came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does God combine sovereign provision with calling His people to active participation in obtaining His blessings?
2. What does leaders using their authority symbols for servant-work teach about Christian leadership?

Interlinear Text

בָּשָׂר מִנְדִּיבָּר כְּרָבָבָר שָׁרֵם כְּפָר וְבָא רַבָּא
the well dug The princes dug the nobles of the people
H875 H2658 H8269 H3738 H5081 H5971

בְּמַחְקֵק קָרְבָּן מִשְׁעַנְתָּמָר וּמִפְּדָבָר
it by the direction of the lawgiver with their staves And from the wilderness
H2710 H4938 H4057

מִתְנָה:
they went to Mattanah
H4980

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