

“Water from the Rock” — Exodus 17:1-7 Study Outline

I. Setting the Scene

- 1. **Immediate context** Ch. 16 = manna (bread); Ch. 17 = thirst test.
- 2. **Geography** From **Wilderness of Sin** → **Rephidim** (wadi-filled valley on the Sinai Peninsula).
- 3. **Why the crisis felt impossible**
 - Expected spring runoff in the wadis—but found *none* (v. 1).
- **Minimum Daily Water Requirement (2M People)**

Condition	Liters / day (≈)	Visual
Normal cooking & bathing	30 million L	12 Olympic pools
Survival-only ration	7 million L	2.8 Olympic pools

Does not include livestock demand.

- Scarcity turns desperation into anger.

II. Israel's Reaction — *Chiding & Tempting* (vv. 2-3)

Term	Hebrew root	Nuance	Implication
“Chide”	<i>rēd</i> (רִיב / alternatively <i>rîv</i>)	contend, quarrel, grapple	Physical confrontation of Moses
“Murmur”	<i>nāsā</i> (“to abide, stay, cease moving”)	Stopped marching; a sit-down strike	“We won’t follow the cloud unless You prove Yourself.”

- **Tempting God** → Parallel to Satan’s taunts in Matt 4 (“If You are the Son of God…”).

- Demand: Not just water, but a miracle on *their* terms.
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III. Moses' Crisis Prayer (v. 4)

- “They are **almost ready to stone me**” — communal execution; aggression now lethal.
 - Leadership lesson: Physical threat often peaks where basic needs feel violated.
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IV. God's Provision Plan (vv. 5-6)

1. **Go on *ahead* (*lipnê*) of the people** — leadership must move forward in faith.
 2. **Take the elders** — witnesses for the whole nation.
 3. **The Sign**
 - “**I will stand before you on the rock at Horeb.**”
 - Strike the rock with the same rod that struck the Nile (contrast of judgment vs. mercy).
 - Water gushes out for the people to drink — unseen reservoir released.
 4. **Christological layer**
 - 1 Cor 10:4 — “*That Rock was Christ.*”
 - The stricken Rock prefigures Jesus, smitten once to give “living water” (cf. Jn 7:37).
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V. Why Lead Them to a Dry Place?

- **The rock lay ahead** on the route; God was guiding them *to* supply, not to disaster.
- Their refusal to advance (murmuring “stop”) cut them off from the provision already planned.

- Principle: God's tests reveal, not produce, unbelief—and redirect trust to Him.
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VI. Key Theological & Practical Takeaways

1. **God tests to teach, not to trick.**
 2. **Basic-need crises** expose the idols of self-reliance.
 3. **Leadership moves first**; elders validate God's work to the community.
 4. **Christ, the stricken Rock, still satisfies** every soul-thirst today.
 5. **Faith keeps walking** even when resources look impossible—provision often lies *around the next bend*.
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