

Water and Weakness: Rephidim



"And they removed from Alush, and encamped at Rephidim, where was no water for the people to drink," Numbers 33:15.

Only a hint of detail regarding the *tikkun* (lesson/test) of this tenth campsite, is recorded in Numbers Chapter thirty-three. But, the lessons and experiences of Israel, which took place at the camp of *Rephidim*, are some of the most important in their wilderness journey. For this reason, the abbreviated account in Numbers is greatly enhanced by the details found in Exodus Chapter Seventeen.

*And all the congregation of the Children of Israel... pitched in Rephidim; and there was no water for the people to drink.*²*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?*³*And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?*⁴*And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me.*⁵*And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod... Behold I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.*⁷*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? Exodus 17:1-7.*

Israel's experience at *Rephidim* was multi-faceted. So much so, in fact, that Moses felt one name wasn't sufficient. Thus, this campsite was also named *Massah* and *Meribah*. So let us progress point-by-point as we carefully examine the vital lessons associated with this place.

Numbers 33:14 tells us the pilgrims left *Alush*, the place of "leavening and kneading," still looking for water. *Rephidim*, the "railing, or place of weakness," was the site of an on-going and ever-increasing trial over thirst. For this reason, Moses called this place "*Massah*" and "*Meribah*." Not only were the people weak and railing, even to the point of threatening Moses' life, the Bible record says that Israel quarreled and tested the Lord.

This was the Children of Israel's fourth provocation of Yahweh. Yet, they didn't seem any nearer the virtues of trust and patience than they had been at the beginning of their wilderness journey.

LEAVENED BY PROXY?

There were likely some faithful folk among the Children of Israel. Typically, God has a remnant, in every age. But those who bore the fiery thirst quietly are not mentioned in the account. Before God, the multitude is viewed as "leavened in bitterness." This is because sin,



like leaven, permeates the whole mass. In Scripture we find the principle of "leavening" associated with Babylon, ending with the warning to flee lest you partake of her sins. In other words, "depart from associating with Babylon, or you will be leavened by her false teachings and attitudes."

All of us have been in the presence of someone spewing out negative words. The whole atmosphere is tainted by the "leaven." Thus, if anyone finds himself in such company, while trying to maintain pure faith, that person must leave as soon as possible. Even then, the godly-minded one must war against the demons of discouragement or

condemnation, which come with the briefest encounter. By proximity, the spirit is strained. And by association the same judgments apply.

Here are a few examples to demonstrate the Bible stance on judgment by association. Consider the record of Lot, dwelling in the vile city of Sodom. When Lot was confronted with impending judgment, he was told to flee lest he be consumed in the wrath poured out upon the wicked, (Genesis 19:12-15). Had he remained in Sodom, Lot and his household would have met the same fate as the iniquitous Sodomites, although he was deemed righteous.

Another example is found in Isaiah's prophecy of "the day of the LORD," (Isaiah 13:9-14). Isaiah warns the righteous to get away from the wicked, or they will be destroyed with them.

The Bible is replete with such examples. Consider Jeremiah's warning to the end-time people of Yahweh:



Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance... Jer. 51:6.

At a later station in our wilderness travel with the Children of Israel, we will read of Korah's rebellion, (Numbers 16:26). For our current illustration purposes, let us suffice it to say that Moses instructed the innocent to move away from the tents of the wicked, lest they be consumed together.

Throughout Paul's writings, he warns, by direct statements and by inferences, that we are to flee from evil, lest we be influenced by it, and ultimately destroyed by association. When Babylon is destroyed at last, it is because of her wickedness from which we have been called out, so as not to partake of her sins and receive of her plagues,

(Revelation 18:14). Sin, truly is a leavening agent. We cannot remain in the corporate “dough,” where it is present, without being influenced by it ourselves.

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty,” 2 Corinthians 6:17-18.

“Sin truly is a leavening agent. We cannot remain. . . where it is present, without being influenced by it ourselves.”

ROCKS, THIRST AND A FAILURE IN SUFFERING

True physical thirst is not a pleasant experience. Dehydration can be painful, as we have already mentioned in the chapter about *Marah*. Extreme thirst may produce such symptoms as headaches, muscle cramps, a sudden episode of visual “snow,” decreased blood pressure, dry mouth and thick saliva, and dizziness or fainting when standing up. Some hallucinate; some have seizures. Untreated, dehydration generally results in delirium, unconsciousness, swelling of the tongue and in extreme cases death. People over fifty are most susceptible to dehydration symptoms, since the sense of thirst diminishes with age.¹¹⁹

Having passed through the mere discomfort of thirst in *Alush*, by *Rephidim* the need for water had reached a fevered pitch. Throughout the camp, could be found misery, uncertainty, the bellowing of cattle, the sobs of children, the curses of strong men, and the complaining of the worried women. The joys of *Pi Hahiroth*, *Etham* and *Dophkah* were long forgotten. Gone also, with the good times and victories, was the spirit of patience and praise. Yet, it is especially in times of trial that we are most instructed to rejoice.

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations: Knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience, But let

patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing, James 1:2-4

To review the events which took place while Israel camped at *Rephidim*, read the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Exodus. As the Scriptures plainly record, *Rephidim* was a place of chaos, bitterness, and rowdiness.

While this chaos was overtly caused by dehydration, in truth thirst was only the catalyst. The backsliding, faithlessness, and murderous thoughts, (Exodus 17:4), manifested at *Rephidim* were rooted in self-absorbed rebellion and in a lack of submission and trust toward Yahweh.



Moses was burdened and deeply troubled. Seeking to meet the people's angry demands, he walked with the elders out of the camp looking for water, and asking Yahweh for direction. The Heavenly Father revealed to him a large rock near Mount Horeb. Moses assembled the elders and struck the rock, and water gushed out, (Exodus 17:6). This was no small miracle. For the volume of water which sprang from this rock had to fill a moderate lake, or it never could have assuaged the

thirst of a few million people and their livestock.

Actually, the idea of striking a rock in order to release water isn't as foreign as it may sound. The late archaeologist, Michael Blaine, after traveling extensively through this area, noted that the native Bedouins use a similar technique to find water. Calcium deposits form over the places where water has been, as the moisture from the last rain disappears. By striking the calcium crust, which has formed over the water source, it can be broken away. This allows the water below the crust to flow again, making it appear that striking the rock has produced water, when actually the strike merely released it.

But, as archaeological evidence amply proves, the miracle in *Rephidim* cannot be explained by the Bedouin rock-striking technique.

LIFE AND WATER FROM A ROCK?

The Bedouin technique simply allowed water from an underground spring to flow again, which formerly flowed through a crack in the rock. But, the water Yahweh provided at *Rephidim* didn't flow through the rock, having been sourced from a hidden spring. It flowed from the



rock, itself, as it says in Exodus 17:6:



"Behold I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink."

Ron Wyatt, of Wyatt Archaeological Research, located the rock Moses struck at *Rephidim* (pictured above and on the left). Documented in Wyatt's visits to *Jebel el Lawz*, in the 1980's, and later by Jim and Penny Caldwell, in 1992; there is compelling evidence to support Wyatt's claim that this is indeed the Rock Yahweh used to provide water for the multitude. First, the rock is monumental in size, standing nearly six stories tall upon a two-hundred foot tall mount. It is located near

Rephidim at the foot of Mount Horeb. As the pictures reveal, it is split through the middle, yet the split does not fully cleave the rock in half (the visitor, pictured, is standing at the base of this massive rock). It is still joined at the base, lest anyone question whether the water actually came from the rock itself.

Mr. Wyatt brought in a team of geologists to study the rock. They noted that it and the surrounding terrain showed ample evidence of water erosion and indicated “that numerous streams came forth in several directions” from it.¹²⁰ Observers noted that the rock had “marks in the granite” that appeared to be “channels cut out by water.” And in the surrounding area were found, “various depressions” that looked as though “water had pooled up all over the valley at some point in time.”¹²¹

*“Water is a symbol
of the Water of
Life, (representing)
the Spirit’s life-
giving work in the
heart and soul.”*

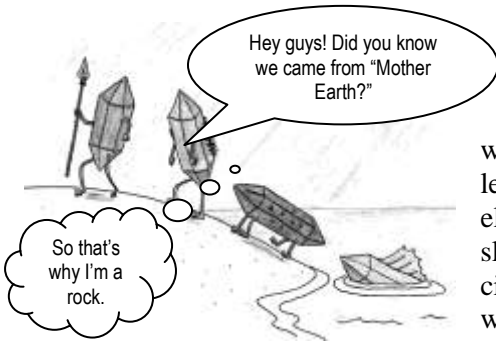
About 200 yards from this rock, stands an altar constructed of stones. This is also consistent with the Exodus record of what took place at *Rephidim*.

*“And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi,”
Exodus 17:15.*

This region also features a plain, large enough to accommodate a battle. But, let us not get too far ahead of our story. First, we will delve into the spiritual significance of the water having flowed from a rock.

Water, here, is a symbol of the Water of Life, which is representative of the Spirit’s life-giving work in the heart and soul. The Children of Israel were physically thirsty, but their spiritual need for Living Water was even greater. Having been reduced to backbiting, rebellion, and murderous rage; the people amply revealed the harsh dryness of their own spiritual condition. This deeper thirst could not be quenched by any water to be found in the world around them.

One must note with a bit of irony that Yahweh chose to bring water, symbolic of life, from a rock. Evolutionists teach that all life on earth came from the earth itself. In other words, they claim life came from a rock. Yet, in making this claim, they have failed to reverence and worship the right “Rock.” Yahshua is the only true Rock, from which the Water of Life can flow. Nothing else will substitute. There is no Source of Life, other than Yahshua, the true Rock.



Likewise, we will find no alternate "water" in this world to satisfy our spiritual thirst. All the world's wealth, possessions, fame, learning, pleasures, or whatever else this world offers, will not slake this thirst. The world's cisterns are broken. All its wells are dry pits. All its oases are mirages. Everything this

world offers to satisfy our spiritual need is, in the words of Solomon, "Vanity," meaning "emptiness," "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity," (Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14; 2:19; 3:19; 12:8).

To quench our spiritual thirst and in provision for our deepest need, we are brought to the foot of the "Mighty Rock." From Messiah, the stricken Rock, flows water to bring life and strength to repentant sinners.

"Surely He (Yahshua) hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed," Isaiah 53:4-5.

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It is out of His mercy, rather than any merits of our own, that Yahweh provides the water. That same, Life-giving water, which, in symbol, flowed from the riven Side of the Saviour – the Lamb of God, is still available to the spiritually thirsty today. Yahweh is faithful to provide for our needs, just as He has promised. Literally and figuratively, we serve the One Who fills even the harshest deserts with pools of Living Water.

"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongues fail for thirst, I the LORD, will hear them; I the God of

Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water," Isaiah 41:17.

RAPHIM AT REPHIDIM

In the not-too-distant future, we will likely experience the misery of dehydration and extreme thirst. Should the Father test our faithfulness in this way, will we complain and rue the day we started our spiritual journey? Will we respond as Israel did at *Rephidim*, with bitterness, rebellion, and rage? Or will we learn from the failings of ancient Israel, who would never enter His rest? We needn't wonder as to the answer. In fact, we cannot afford to wait to find out. Our future fidelity is determined by today's devotion.

The word "*Rephidim*," as this campsite is named, is from the same Hebrew root as the word "*raphim*." *Raphim* means to be "neglectful of the Word of God." At *Rephidim*, Israel was *raphim*. By their neglect of the Word, they were weakened, and fell easily into sin. Thus, by their foolish *raphim*, Yahweh was provoked and Israel was set up to fail.

"... The level of strength we'll have to face tomorrow's tikkuns (lessons/tests) is being determined today."

Throughout the wilderness journey, one key point stands out: the level of strength we'll have to face tomorrow's *tikkuns* is being determined today. We are effecting our potential success or failure in the coming crises by our response to lesser tests encountered daily. This is because we are developing a pattern of faithful obedience or complacent concession in our routine lifestyle. As we gain victory in the smaller tests, of the here and now, we are prepared and strengthened to gain the greater victories of the future. Whether we will stand in our coming *Rephidim*, depends upon whether or not we neglect His Word or are standing faithfully, now.

UNDER HIS WINGS OR OUT ON YOUR OWN?

Ancient Israel seemed unaware of their own tendency toward spiritual weakness. They carped and complained, asserting their rights to have water. When this supposed right wasn't satisfied in what the people deemed a reasonable amount of time, they viciously blamed Moses, - even considered stoning him, -and they blasphemed God, (Exodus 17:2-4). Here is an example of the unbelief into which God's people often fall, when deprived of their comforts. Please note that the Bible equates "unbelief" with "tempting God," (Isaiah 13:14-15). Unbelief is actually a form of blasphemy.

In spite of the multitude's rancor, Yahweh provided them water, the symbol of offered Life. But, because of their unbelief and chiding, He provided no protection. For us it is the same. The Water of Life is offered to the worthy and unworthy alike, but the protection of Yahweh, against the gathering "giants," is promised only to the faithful believer.

The threat of advancing giants wasn't in and of itself a matter of great concern. The real issue was whether God was with Israel or not. If Israel faced the gathering Amalekite threat under the "Wings of the Almighty," the giants would fall like paper dragons. But, without Yahweh's protection to keep them, the Israelite "grasshoppers" were in very grave danger indeed!

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Observing the confusion and chaos among the camp, the Amalekites sensed Israel's weakness. With the spiritual "laser vision" with which most heathens can discern hypocrisy, the sons of Anak discerned Israel's vulnerability and seized the opportunity to attack. All along, the enemy had been quietly waiting for the right conditions to launch their assault. With the cloud behind them, Israel had been protected from the advancing Egyptians. But the murmuring in the camp, had spread like a cancerous rot, leaving Israel spiritually weak in the face of the advancing threat.¹²¹

From this experience, final Israel is to gain wisdom and insight. By learning from the failures of our forefathers, our response to similar tests will be victorious, where theirs was weak. Thus, the sobering message of *Rephidim* is that when we are rebellious, there is no protection, no matter what we believe. The "cloud of His Presence" will not abide with murmuring, accusing, bitterness, and wrath!

Had ancient Israel only realized their true "nakedness," they might have quickly repented of their foolish pride and even yet been covered under the wings of the Almighty. Yet, the Amalekites advanced unnoticed, preparing to strike, even as the oblivious people drank their fill.

So subtle and insidious was the Amalekites' advance that Scripture uses it as a metaphor to describe the devil's assaults. He is a roaring lion that seeks the right person and the right moment to devour. Stalking his weakened prey, like the Amalekites, the devil moves with stealth, patiently waiting for the moment when his intended victims are "out on their own."

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Like the names of the two campsites prior to this tenth one, the word "*Rephidim*" has both a positive and a negative connotation. It can mean either "the weakening" or "the strengthening of hands," *Rephidim* can also mean to "spread them" or to "scatter them."¹²³ Consequently, we might draw a conclusion about the necessity of prayer and remaining under Yahweh's Wings when we face giants. Most assuredly, if we are

without protection, we will be scattered and defeated.

STRENGTHENED TO FACE THE FOE

While we cannot possibly stand against the giants on our own, we cannot possibly fail while we under the Wings of the Almighty. But, how can we be safely under His protective "feathers" since we have failed Him numerous times, just as did Israel of old. The solution is

found in spreading our weak hands before a Mighty God. We are to prayerfully acknowledge our own unworthiness, confess our sins, and then seek His indwelling power to strengthen us for future victory.

While it is true that yesterday's faithlessness further weakens us for today, in fact taking us out of Yahweh's protection entirely; as long as the door of grace remains open to man, we may still repent and be reclaimed by Heaven.

When we repent, submit to God, and acknowledge our weakness, He turns weakness into strength.

*For My strength is made perfect in (your) weakness, 2 Cor. 12:9.
...Out of weakness were made strong...Hebrews 11:34.*

And the Source of the strength, then as now, is the Rock, from which flowed the Water of Life, offered literally and figuratively to Israel. The apostle Paul, centuries later, referenced this event:

*"...All our fathers ... drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ,"
1 Corinthians 10:1-4.*

That "spiritual drink" is available now, just as it was available then. But the Children of Israel looked only for the satiation of their physical thirst, thus missing the far more vital spiritual fulfillment. Israel was still focused on their perceived right to survive. God owed it to them to quench their physical thirst! This very attitude revealed a lack of submission to Yahweh and a lack of faith. For when we follow Yahweh in full trusting obedience, we will say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him," (Job 13:15).

"Faith" is defined as "Visualizing what God intends to do in a given situation and acting in harmony with it." The opposite of Faith is "Presumption," defined as prideful arrogance.¹²⁴ The Saviour once asked the piercing question: When I return, will I find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8). He could have asked, "When I return, will I find spiritual perception on the earth?" "When I return, will I find fidelity to Me?"

In every act of disobedience, in every impatient word, in every unkind or impure thought, there is presumption canceling out Faith. Yet, the Bible is clear that to walk in faith is the **only** way to reach the Heavenly land. Still, the vast majority of those who joined churches and bands of “believers,” or claimed to “belong” to spiritual Israel, have overlooked this spiritual reality. Nevertheless, in every age there have been faithful Enochs, Daniels, Abrahams, and Isaiahs.

God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, John 4:24.

Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, John 3:5.

To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name, John 1:12.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ (Yahshua), who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. ²For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ (Yahshua) hath made me free from the law of sin and death, Romans 8:1,2.

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The walk through the wilderness can only be accomplished by following the Spirit of God. That Presence was in the fire and cloud, but the multitude of "Promised Land travelers," then and now, have focused on the things of the flesh: Self-preservation, self-esteem, self-respect, self-justification, and self-righteousness. Israel is tempted to be self-made people claiming "The Message," but "denying the power thereof!" 2 Timothy 3:5 says, from such to "turn away." The law of the flesh states: "If you sin you will die," and they died in the wilderness, just as we will, if we focus on physical survival before spiritual preservation.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, 2 Peter 3:3,4.

Unless we learn from their failure, we are doomed to repeat the same mistakes through this maze of “thorns,” “clay,” and trials.

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him, Romans 8:9.

When we acknowledge the weakness of our own hands, we are ready to receive the strengthening of our hands in His. That is a vital part of the lesson to be learned at *Rephidim*. We see it in the prayer posture of the suppliant in ancient Israel, (1 Kings 8:54). When we are down on our knees, but reaching up to Heaven, victories are gained!

“The greatest victories to the church of Christ, or to the individual Christian, are not those that are gained by talent or education, by wealth, or the favor of men, -they are those victories that are gained in the audience chamber with God, when earnest, agonizing faith lays hold upon the mighty arm of power.”¹²⁵

ONSLAUGHT OF HIDDEN LOCUSTS

While the camp was in confusion, Yahweh’s protective Cloud withdrew. This was the moment when the Amalekites staged their attack. The name "Amalek" denotes "hidden locust"¹²⁶ which is a fit description of their battle tactics. A paragraph from a nineteenth century German writer shows the style of warfare carried on by the Amalekites, in this confrontation with Israel:

“At the first onslaught Joshua led forward the men whom he had armed with the large Egyptian shields and lances, and these, fired by their valiant leader, made a good stand, particularly as the narrow defile into the field of battle hindered their wild opponents

from taking full advantage of their superior numbers. But when the men on foot presently withdrew, and a troop of warriors on dromedaries rushed down on the Hebrews, many of them were scared at the strange sight of these creatures, known to them only by description. They cast away their shields and fled with loud outcries, and wherever a gap was made the riders drove in their dromedaries and thrust down at the foe with their long, sharp javelins. At this the herds-men, unused to such an attack, thought only of saving themselves, and many turned to fly, for sudden terror seized them as they saw the flaming eyes and heard the shrill, malignant cry of the enraged Amalekite women, who had rushed into the fight to add fuel to their husbands' courage and terrify the enemy. They held on to the humped brutes by leathern straps hanging down from the saddles, which they clutched in their left hands, and allowed themselves to be dragged whithersoever the riders went. Hatred seemed to have steeled each female heart against fear of death, compassion, and womanly feeling; and the hideous cry of these Negaeras broke the spirit of many a brave Hebrew.”¹²⁷

The Amalekites had found Israel's "weakest link:" hypocritical presumption. It seemed Israel would never make it to the Mountain of Yahweh, let alone reach the Jordan River and cross into the land of their ancestors. In a representation of the final struggle under the symbolic "beast" and "antichrist" attacks just ahead, Israel fled from a power far greater than their own, rightfully fearing annihilation.

BATTLING ON TWO FRONTS

But, God did not leave His failing people to face a well-deserved demise unaided. He interposed for them by impressing His faithful ones to intercede. The Bible says Moses took Aaron and Hur, the priests of Yahweh, to a solitary place to pray. Moses chose a vantage point to fight the hosts of “spiritual wickedness in high places,” (2 Corinthians 10:5), while Joshua descended into the valley to physically take on the Amalekites with his men of valor.

In this picture, we find a powerful lesson to apply in our own lives. The battle with our “giants” is faced on two levels. The first level is the shadow of conflict and struggle with the enemy, emblemized in the valley itself. While the second level is the top of the rocky mountain, representing the sure Foundation of Christ Himself, in and through Whom we may approach God’s Throne, in intercessory prayer. Thus, the battle was fought on foot, but established on the “stone”- a type of Yahshua.

Indeed the whole battle picture is rife with meaning for us. Moses was set upon a "stone" while Aaron and Hur held up his hands so that they remained steady till sunset. The word “stone,” *aben*, in Hebrew, refers to the Father in the Son, Who reconciles us to Himself.¹²⁸ It was this action that caused Joshua to overcome in the combat, as Moses held the Rod of God toward Heaven. Like a channel of authority, a "lightning rod" bringing power to the powerless, such is the effect of intercessory prayer on the behalf of the embattled.

Joshua went into the “battle zone” while Moses went into the “prayer zone.” Joshua fought a PHYSICAL WAR; Moses fought a SPIRITUAL one. As long as Moses’ arms were raised, in a symbol of continued intercession, Joshua and warriors of Israel prevailed. But, as the battle waged on, Moses grew very tired; his bones ached and his arms were stricken with pain. Unable to sustain them aloft, Moses’ hand, holding the Rod, dropped to his side. And as soon as this symbol of intercessory prayer ceased, the battle tides turned in favor of the Amalekite “locusts.”

*The battle with our
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of conflict, and the
mountain of
intercessory prayer."*

Thus, Aaron and Hur sustained his arms as Moses sat upon "the stone." And by their support, his arms remained uplifted in supplication until the sun set. Hearing the intercession of these three faithful men, Yahweh strengthened Joshua’s feeble forces and routed the Amalekites. Here we find a vital principle for intercessory prayer:

"Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them," Matthew 18:19-20.

From his mountain top vantage point, Moses could "see" all that was



taking place in the valley below. This perspective aided to target his prayers most effectively. To the untrained eye down on the battlefield, Joshua appeared like the

"force" to be reckoned with. But, the greatest warriors of Israel flailed helplessly when the arms were dropped and the prayers were stopped. Joshua had the soldiers, while Moses had the priests. Joshua's army fought with swords, while Moses' "army" fought with the Word and prayer.¹²⁹ Ultimately, the giants would not be defeated without the battle taking place on these two vital fronts.

Thus, in spiritual Israel's final conflict with the end-time "giants," the battle must be waged both on the scene and in the prayer chamber. This is the giant-fighting template given to us in the *Rephidim tikkun*.

THE ARM OF THE LORD AND ROD OF GOD

Not only were Moses' outstretched arms a symbol of intercession, they also pointed to the Saviour's arms, extended in sacrifice for us. Moses was a type of Christ; His life was one of self-sacrifice, and his obedience to the Voice of God was a type of the submitted relationship between Christ and the Father. It is because of the Saviour's arms, stretched out on Calvary, coupled with His current Work as our Intercessory High Priest, that the "giants" of darkness are dispelled on our behalf today.



Like the battle which could only be won while Moses' arms were outstretched, our victory over the enemy of souls is assured through the Saviour and Him alone.

Connecting Moses' raised arms with the Saviour on Calvary brings to mind a related term: the "Arm of the Lord." Consider the symbolism of this term, referring to God's great strength.

Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My Law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. My righteousness is near; My salvation is gone forth, and Mine Arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon Me, and on Mine Arm shall they trust, Isaiah 51:7, 5.

On the opposite side of the metaphoric scale is the concept of "spreading weak hands" before our Mighty God. "The weakening of the hands" is a Hebrew idiom, referring to being afraid. In English, the equivalent would be, "weak in the knees" or "shaking in your boots."¹³⁰ But, as Moses held up His arms over the people, so our Saviour holds His arms of intercession and blessing over His own. Only under His authority and blessing can we win in the battles over self, over sin, over Satan. Thus, the "Arm of the Lord" becomes the source of strength to our "weak hands."

O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto Thee? Or to Thy faithfulness round about Thee? Thou hast a mighty Arm; strong is Thy Hand, and high is Thy right Hand. . . Mine Arm also shall strengthen him, Psalms 89:8, 13, 21b.

The full spiritual picture of the “Arm of the Lord” would be incomplete, however, without also considering the “Rod of God.” Moses had gone to the top of a hill “with the Rod of God” in his hand, (Exodus 17:9). This “Rod of God” has special meaning in Scripture. The “rod” here is (*Strong’s* number 4294) *matteh*, which means “a branch, staff, or scepter.”¹³¹ It denotes discipline, punishment, and rulership.

How and when had Moses’ rod become the “Rod of God”? Back at the burning bush, Divine Presence had invested the shepherd’s rod with Heavenly authority.

And Moses took his wife and sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the rod of God in his hand, Exodus 4:20.

Moses had been instructed to cast the Rod down before Pharaoh, (Exodus 7:9), revealing plainly before him the identity of the true God. With the “Rod of God” in his hand, Moses had struck the Nile and it turned to blood. With this same Rod, Moses smote the rock at *Rephidim* to bring forth water, (Exodus 17:5). It had been represented in the Branch that purified the water at *Marah*. Now, in the battle, he was to hold this Branch, this Rod, in symbol connecting the frailness of Israel with the Might of Heaven.

Prior to leading Israel, Moses, had used this same rod as a weapon, against marauders of his flock. It had also served as a tool of guidance for the sheep. All of these roles play a part in understanding the meaning of the Rod. This idiom, “the Rod of God,” came to mean “in Yahweh’s authority.”¹³² Thus, in Mark 6:8, when Yahshua called His twelve into ministry, He instructed them to take nothing but their staff (rod) with them; no money, no food, no extra clothing; only their rod. Thus, in symbology, these early missionaries were

“... (Moses) was to hold this Branch, this Rod, in symbol connecting the frailness of Israel with the Might of Heaven.”

commissioned to go forth in Yahweh's authority and in the power of the Almighty. Nothing more was needed!

Aaron also used the “Rod of God,” which was later placed inside the Ark of the Covenant, signifying that its authority was permanently established.



God’s Rod (hidden in His Word) will provide security (Psalm 2:3) and measuring for judgment (Revelation 11:1). One of the four words translated “rod” in English is sometimes rendered “cord,” such as is used for measurement -a tape measure.

This was the symbol of the scarlet cord in Rahab’s window. In hanging it there, Rahab demonstrated that she was casting her “lot” (another word in this word “family”) with the God of Israel, (Joshua 2:14, 18). This word “lot” is called the “Rod of his inheritance” in Jeremiah 51:19 and Psalms 74:2. Thus, we may broaden our understanding of the “Rod of God,” –the symbol of His authority, chastisement, and rulership, -to include the inheritance given to those who “pass under the rod” of His testing, (Leviticus 27:32; Ezekiel 20:37).

Ezekiel uses this imagery to show Yahweh’s purpose in taking both ancient and future Israel through the wilderness:

And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty Hand, and with a stretched out Arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you Face

to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land from Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the Covenant, Ezekiel 20:34-37.

REPHIDIM: COMING SOON TO A PEOPLE NEAR YOU

The experience at *Rephidim* should be a warning to all who would experientially approach the Mount of the Lord (*Sinai* experientially represents us coming to know and love God's Law). The end-time saints must beware of complacency, of bickering, and grumbling or we will have "weak hands" to face the enemy, and fall defeated before reaching Mount Zion.

But the victory isn't one of earthly wits, or words, or weapons. All physical battles have a spiritual dynamic to them. Thus, we need to deal with conflict from a spiritual perspective, by faith perceiving Yahweh's eternal dealings on our behalf. Preparing to face the "giants" of *Rephidim* is preeminently a spiritual process. And the victory to be gained over the enemy is predominantly a Heavenly triumph.

There are many parallels to be recognized, many lessons to be learned from *Rephidim's* weakness, and ultimate deliverance. Today, the Heavenly Father still promises strength for our "weak knees." He still promises victory over the most intimidating "giants in the land." As Israel gained victory over the formidable Amalekites at *Rephidim*, so we will face down and defeat the evil global powers through the Arm of the Lord, and the lightning Rod of Yahweh's power, through intercessory prayer. Perhaps this is the greatest promise and lesson for us at *Rephidim*.

So what of you? Will the dangers and intensity of *Rephidim* pass you by, as you glide effortlessly into Canaan without breaking a spiritual sweat? Don't think it for a moment, dear one!

Many Christians today think that when they begin their new life in Christ they will be protected from all want and difficulty. But everyone who takes up his cross to follow Christ will come to a

Rephidim in his experience. In mercy to us, Yahweh does not lead us in the easier broad roads; for if He did, in our self-complacency, we would forget to call upon Him in time of need. The testing of *Rephidim* offers vital opportunity for the human to reach out and grasp the hand of the Divine. It is the proving ground whereupon we experientially discover the power and necessity of intercessory prayer. And victory over the *Rephidim* “giants” is assured to all who respond to the crisis with faith in Yahweh. Thus, when your hands are weak, spread them; when another's hands are feeble, lift them. In this manner, the giants will assuredly fall.



SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TEN:

- "*Rephidim*" is a Hebrew word with both a positive and a negative connotation. It can mean either "the weakening" or "the strengthening of hands." It can also mean to "spread them" or "scatter them."
- From *Rephidim* we learn that we can be leavened by proxy. Those Israelites who bore the thirst quietly are unmentioned, although assuredly present. They shared in the judgments which fell upon the complainers just as Lot would have burned had he remained in Sodom.
- The problem with the water rebellion can be traced back to an unsubmitted sense of “rights.” The people were murderously enraged over the denial of their “right” to water. For those facing this test in the latter days, we must display total submission to God, as did Job. We are also to render praise to Yahweh throughout the trial, rather than complaint.
- “Faith” is defined as “Visualizing what God intends to do in a given situation and acting in harmony with it.” Faith’s opposite is “Presumption,” defined as prideful arrogance.
- By bickering, backbiting, and demonstrating wrath; ancient Israel lost the protection of Yahweh, foolishly opening themselves up to enemy attack. We also remove ourselves

from the Yahweh's protection, when we engage in these bitter attitudes.

- Like the name suggests, the giants faced at ultimate "*Rephidim*" will either find God's end-time people weakened and easily scattered; or through the spreading of hands in intercessory prayer, the saints will be strengthened and unconquerable.
- The battle of *Rephidim* is faced on two fronts. Those saints directly involved in the "valley" of conflict are strengthened and supported by the prayers of the intercessors on the mountain.