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GRACE**

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## **Exodus 17**

(2020)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Exodus 17.

(A brief overview of the main topics).

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### Topics.

- Israel travels from the wilderness of Sin and camped at Rephidim.
- The people quarrelled against Moses saying, "Give us water to drink.
- The LORD tells Moses to strike a rock with his staff and water will come.
- Moses strikes the rock and called the place Massah and Meribah.
- Amalek comes out to war against Israel at Rephidim.
- Moses stands on the top of the hill with the staff of God in his hand.
- Joshua fights Amalek while Moses, Aaron and Hur are on the hill.
- While Moses hand was up Israel prevailed, when lowered Amalek prevailed.
- Aaron and Hur hold Moses hands up when he grew weary.
- Joshua conquers Amalek, Moses built an altar, the LORD is my banner.

**INTRODUCTION:** in the book of Exodus, God fulfilled His promise to Abraham by multiplying Abraham's descendants into a great nation delivering them from slavery in Egypt to journey to the Promised Land, and then binding them to Himself with a covenant at Mount Sinai. Moses, under the direct command of God and as leader of Israel, received the Ten Commandments from God, along with other laws governing Israel's life and worship. He also led the nation in building the Tabernacle, a place where God's presence can dwell among his people and where they can make sacrifices for sin. Most Jews and Christians recognise Moses as the author, writing sometime after the Exodus from Egypt (about 1445 B.C.). Note: the promise God made to Abraham will be perfectly fulfilled when Christ returns in glory and all those (Jews and Gentiles) who belong to God's Kingdom are gathered to him. (See also the introduction to chapter one).

**NOTE:** for information of people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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**Israel grumbles against Moses again:** Israel leaves the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD and travel to Rephidim were they camp, but once again there was no water to drink.

**Massah and Meribah:** not long after Israel had crossed the Red Sea and before they'd reached Mount Sinai (Num. 33:15) they are camped at Rephidim in the wilderness. There was no water for the people to drink, so they quarrelled with Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us with thirst? Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" Then Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." The LORD said He would stand on the rock at Horeb (Mount Sinai), and told Moses to take the staff that he struck the Nile with and strike the rock and water will flow out, Moses struck the rock in the sight of the elders of Israel and water flowed out, he named the place

Massah meaning tempting and Meribah because of the striving of the children of Israel and because they tempted Jehovah. Israel had tested God by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" They had seen the mighty and awesome miracles and extraordinary wonders of the LORD and should have had faith that He would provide. (Exodus 17:1-7).

**Forty years later we read of a similar story:** Moses is told to speak to the rock at Kadesh just before Aaron dies (Num. 20:22) Aaron death is recorded in (Num. 20:22-29) (Num. 33:36-39). The people committed the same sin once again, when they thirsted. They grumbled against Moses saying, "Why, have you brought us into this wilderness, that we should die here?" This time the LORD commanded Moses to speak to the rock to show His glory to the people, but Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it, nevertheless water flowed out but Moses and Aaron were forbidden to enter the Promised Land (Num. 20:1-13).

**The symbolism:** since the smiting of the rock happened before the covenant was established at Sinai some say that it symbolized Christ being smitten to establish the new covenant. While the speaking to the rock at the end of the forty years wanderings was to represent Christ's return to redeem the world, but Moses ruined the intended symbolism by smiting the rock. After having said this, it should be highlighted that Moses was not punished for ruining a symbolism, but for striking the rock instead of speaking to it.

**Meribah and Massah:** Meribah comes from the Hebrew word (*Me<sup>e</sup>riyah*). From Strong's Concordance it means quarrel, provocation and strife and the word, Massah comes from the Hebrew word (*Maccah*). From Strong's Concordance it carries the idea of testing, temptation or trial of men or of God (i.e., complaining against God).

**Moses holds his staff up:** Amalek came to war against Israel at Rephidim so Moses told Joshua to choose men to go out and fight against Amalek, Joshua did as Moses told him and went to war against Amalek. Hur, Aaron and Moses with the staff of God in his hand went to the top of a hill, whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, but whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.

**Israel defeats Amalek:** Aaron and Hur took a stone and put it under Moses to sit on and held Moses' hands up. When they became weary, one stood on one side, and the other stood on the other side, so Moses hands were steady until the going down of the sun and Joshua overwhelmed Amalek. The LORD said that He would utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.

**An altar Jehovah-nissi:** Moses built an altar and called the name of it, the LORD is my banner and wrote upon it, "A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." This is because the LORD said that He would utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.

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**FOOTNOTE:** there are moments in the Bible and in our own lives as well that can seem so totally random. I sometimes try and think what it would have been like to witness firsthand some of the events described in the Bible and how I might have reacted had I seen what they saw. For example, in this chapter we are given the account when Amalek come out to fight against the children of Israel. Joshua is going out to fight and Moses, Aaron and Hur are going up to a hill so that Moses can hold his staff in the air. Here is what the account says, as long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it and Aaron and Hur held his hands up one on one side, one on the other side so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So, Joshua overcame the army of Amalek (v11-13).

Now imagine yourself fighting at the bottom of the hill. It really doesn't matter how hard you fight. If Moses is holding his hands up, you are going to win. If Moses isn't holding his hands up, you are going to lose. You may only be vaguely aware of what is going on up on the hill as you are pretty busy fighting armed Amalekites. As a soldier fighting hand to hand against the warriors of Amalek, this weird scenario with Moses holding his staff might be very frustrating as well as appear to be totally arbitrary. However, God doesn't do things randomly. He is always working for the good. The immediate lesson for the children of Israel is the important idea that God was giving them the victory. In other words, no matter how well prepared and valiantly they fought, without God on their side, no victory would be forthcoming. The victory was God's, not theirs.

Yet, maybe in this seemingly random story, there is a beautiful symbolism of Christ to be found. Ponder the question, "Why did God ask Moses to raise his arms holding his staff?" God could have told Moses to pray, read some scrolls, cite some Scriptures or speak some positive affirmations etc., rather than holding his hands up for a whole day. All Christians are engaged in their own battles in this world. They are soldiers for Christ and fighting the good fight of faith. We all like those men of ancient Israel, look up on a hill and see a man with his arms outstretched on a bloodstained pole - the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary - with two men at his side.

Yet, unlike Moses the outstretched arms our Saviour are not being held up by those who love him, but by the tortuous nails of our sin. We do not have the victory over death because of our own self-effort no matter how hard we may try, but because of the outstretched arms of the man on the hill. Our victory over the law and its sentence of death is because our sinless Saviour willing allowed the torturous nails of our sin to pierce his body until he breathed his last breath. Added to this our Joshua (the Hebrew name for Jesus) is not only in heaven cheering us on as he looks down on us, but also down in the valley of the shadow of death by our side. When things get rough or seem very random, remember we have Saviour working with us and for us until that glorious day when he returns in glory.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*