

12.11 No Water at Rephidim (Exodus 17:1–7)

(The teacher might combine this story with “12.12 Holding Up Hands.”)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools

- “Life of Moses” Series 2 Flash-a-Cards from A Beka Book and/or pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- (optional) *Herein Is Love Commentary Series; Exodus, A Commentary for Children*, by Nancy Ganz, Shepherd Press, 2002. Ideas or quotes from this source will be noted by (*Ganz*).

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *wilderness*: a “wild” uninhabited area
- *to stone*: to kill someone by throwing stones or rocks at the person
- *staff or rod*: long stick used by shepherds
- *elders*: older men who are leaders

Scripture: (NASB)

Exodus 17:1 Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water that we may drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?” 3 But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, “Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” 4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me.” 5 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us, or not?”

32:3 “For I proclaim the name of the LORD;
Ascribe greatness to our God!
4 “The Rock! His work is perfect,
For all His ways are just;
A God of faithfulness and without injustice,
Righteous and upright is He.

Psalm 78:15 He split the rocks in the wilderness
And gave them abundant drink like the ocean depths.
16 He brought forth streams also from the rock
20 And caused waters to run down like rivers.
“Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out,
And streams were overflowing;

105:41 He opened the rock and water flowed out;
It ran in the dry places like a river.

42 For He remembered His holy word
With Abraham His servant;
43 And He brought forth His people with joy,
His chosen ones with a joyful shout.

114:7 Tremble, O earth, before the Lord,
Before the God of Jacob,
8 Who turned the rock into a pool of water,
The flint into a fountain of water.

Isaiah 48:21 They did not thirst when He led them through the deserts.
He made the water flow out of the rock for them;
He split the rock and the water gushed forth.

1 Corinthians 10:1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

Introduction/Review:

Three times the sons of Israel had murmured against Moses, Aaron, and, most importantly, against God Himself. Two times they had wished to be back in Egypt rather than supposedly to die in the wilderness in which they found themselves.

Can you name the first murmuring? Hint: it was at the Red Sea. [Students do not need to give as complete an answer as this text does: With no way to escape the Egyptians, they cried, “Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness” (Exodus 14:11, 12)]. How did God take care of the people in this case? [Provided a way for them to cross the Red Sea on dry ground; drowned the Egyptians.]

What was the second murmuring? Hint: it was at Marah, which means “bitter.” [“What shall we drink?” when the water was bitter.] Scripture does not record a desire to go back to Egypt when they murmured this time. How did God provide in this case? [Moses threw a tree into the bitter water; the water became sweet.]

The third murmuring occurred when the people had run out of bread. What did the people say? [“Would that we had died by the LORD’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”] What did God do in this case? [Gave them quail at night and manna every morning.]

Story:

Quarreling

The journey continued. Now it required ✓climbing into mountainous territory and camping at a place called Rephidim. *Rephidim* means “resting places.” However, how could one rest in a place with no flowing mountain stream? No water—no water at all—could be found in this place.

“Give us water that we may drink,” the quarrelsome people demanded of Moses.

Moses answered, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?”

Listen to the contention of the people: “Why have you brought us up from Egypt to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” ✓Some of these people might even have picked up a few rocks with the intention of hurling them at Moses (Ganz).

Praying

Was it Moses' fault that there was no water? No. Had God led them to this place? Yes. Had God proved Himself to be faithful before? Yes, at least three different times. Then why were the people so contentious now? Because they were humans who complain just as we do.

Moses went to the Lord in prayer, beseeching, "What shall I do to this people? A little more [trouble] and they will stone me."

God answered Moses with precise instructions: "Pass in front of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you. Be sure you take your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go to the rock at Horeb. I will stand before you there. You shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it so that the people may drink."

What were God's instructions? [To go with elders and his rod to the rock called Horeb; to strike the rock.] What would happen when Moses struck the rock? [Enough water would come out to satisfy all the people.] How much water was that? ✓If a railroad track had run out into this wilderness, it would have taken the water of 550 tanker cars on over five miles of track to satisfy these people for only one day. That is eleven million gallons that would be needed for each day (*Pulpit Helps* 1997, author unknown; and <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0763098.html>). But no railroad tankers or tracks had been invented yet. God would miraculously have to supply huge amounts of water to quench the thirst of these people.

Providing

Could the Lord provide that much water? Absolutely! Moses took his staff and with some of the elders of Israel went to the rock at Horeb,* the same place where God had called him at the burning bush. He struck the rock with his staff, and—what happened? Water came gushing out of that flinty rock!

Listen to how some other Scripture passages describe this event:

- "He split the rocks in the wilderness and gave them *abundant drink like the ocean depths*. He brought forth *streams also from the rock* and caused *waters to run down like rivers*. Behold, He struck the rock so that *waters gushed out, and streams were overflowing*" (Psalm 78:15, 16, 20, emphasis added).
- "[T]he God of Jacob . . . turned the rock into *a pool of water*, the flint into *a fountain of water*" (Psalm 114:7, 8, emphasis added).

This was a mighty miracle! Yet, it was also the fourth time the people had complained against the Lord. Therefore, Moses named the place Massah, which means "testing," and Meribah, which means "quarreling," because the people tested the LORD and because they quarreled against Him, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"

What had these people meant—"Is the Lord among us or not?" Wasn't the pillar of cloud and fire with them? Wasn't that the presence of the Lord? Oh, how they doubted God. May we not be like them but trust even in the difficult times.

*The actual rock is described at <https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=gill&b=2&c=17> under "Verse 6."

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
He is the Water of Life (John 4:14; Revelation 22:1, 17).
"[The people] were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). He was "struck" once in His crucifixion for the sins of His people.

- How we need to beware of complaining! God is able to do anything. Every trial should turn us to Him.

Activities:

- Play dough: staff; rock
- Snack: Blue Jello® and chocolate “rocks.” For chocolate rocks, microwave 7–8 ounces of chocolate pieces for 2 minutes. Stir until melted. Mix in ¼ cup peanuts, ¼ cup chopped or sliced almonds, and ¼ cup coarsely chopped cashews. Place by spoonfuls on a foil-covered pan and refrigerate one hour. For each serving, place the chocolate rock in a small bowl of blue Jello® that has set.
- Discuss the importance of water, besides drinking, in our daily lives: cleaning, dissolving, cooking, gardening, washing.
- Sing (tune: “Mulberry Bush”) and do actions for the following song. Have students make up other words.

This is the way we wash our clothes, water our plants, swim for fun.

This is the way we take a drink of water God has given.

- Have a sword drill using other Scriptures referring to this event: Psalm 105:41; Psalm 78:15, 16; Psalm 114:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 10:4; John 4:13, 14; John 7:37, 38; Isaiah 48:21
- Tell about some famous rocks. Secular information is found at the links listed after each rock. *Rock of Gibraltar* (go to “Wednesday, October 11” at <http://toknowhimtoday.com/spain-trip-report-cadiz-paul-jacks-strange-fascination-gibraltar/>); *Haystack Rock* (ignore the “millions of years ago” under “Geology” at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haystack_Rock); *Plymouth Rock* (<https://www.tripsavvy.com/visit-the-plymouth-rock-1599133>).
- Review questions: (Game: Prepare Dixie® cups by writing each student’s names on one and filling the cups with water. For each correct answer, students may take a swallow of water from his or her cup.)
 1. What was the problem at Rephidim? [No water.]
 2. With whom did the people quarrel? [Moses.]
 3. To whom did Moses refer the people? [To God.]
 4. What did the people say as they grumbled against Moses? [“Why have you brought us up from Egypt to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”]
 5. What did Moses do when the people grumbled? [Went to God; prayed.]
 6. What were the people about to do to Moses? [Stone him.]
 7. Tell one thing God said to do. [1. Pass before the people; 2. Take with you some of the elders of Israel; 3. Take your staff; 4. Strike the rock.]
 8. What happened when Moses did as God instructed? [Much water gushed out of the rock.]
 9. Why did Moses name this place Massah and Meribah? [The words mean “testing” and “quarreling”; this is what the people did at this place.]
 10. What had the people said that showed they were not believing God? [“Is the LORD among us, or not?”]

Memory Verse[s]: (NASB)

- Deuteronomy 32:3, 4—I proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! “The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He.”

Handwork:

- See <https://27crosses.com/2017/02/15/water-from-a-rock/> for instructions for this craft. The site also has ten practical lessons from this Scripture passage.



wilderness

to stone

staff/rod

elders

The Exodus From Egypt

Nuweiba Beach Crossing -- Sinai at Jabal al-Lawz



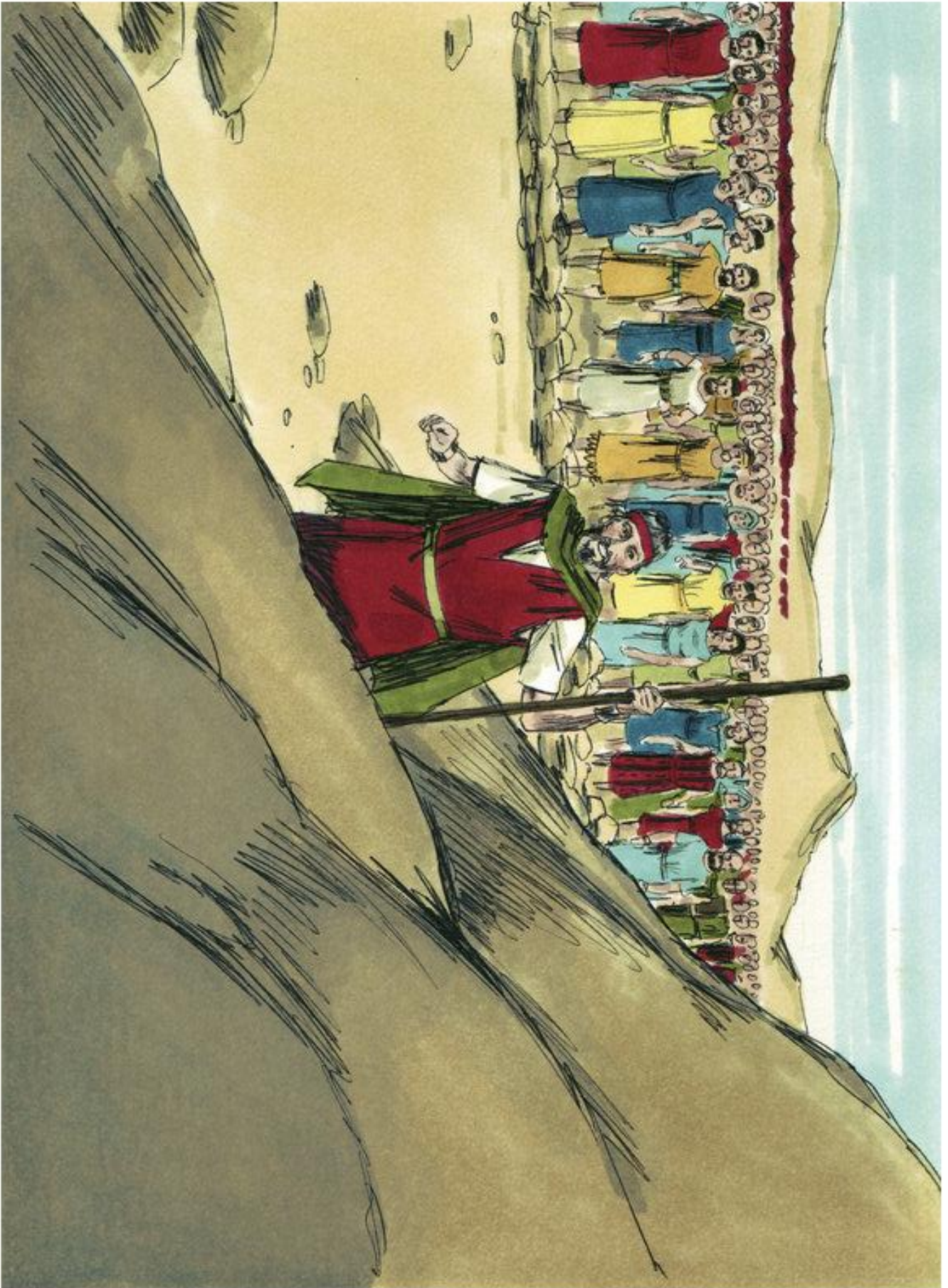
Copyright © 2014 by Joe Anderson. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

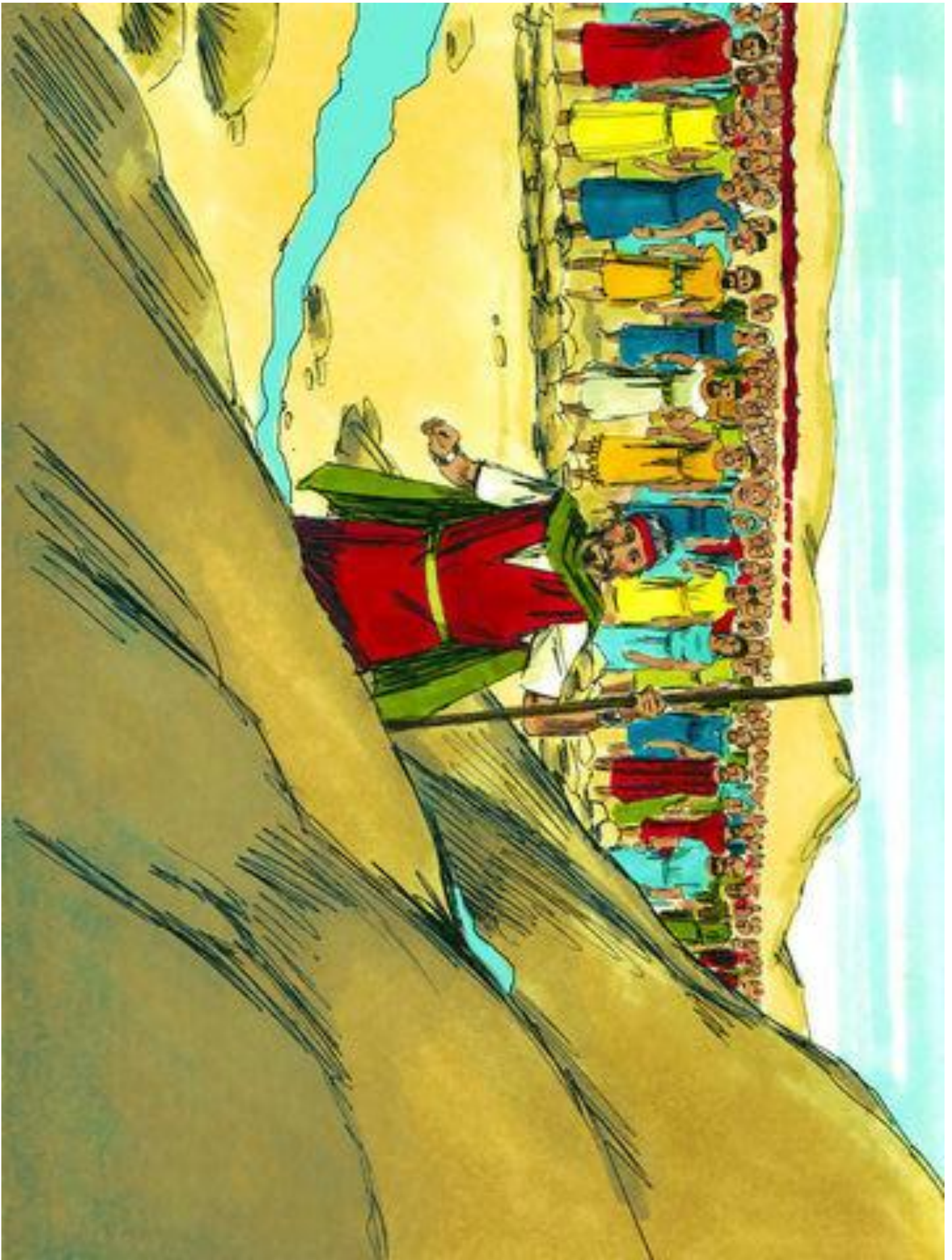
www.headwatersresources.org













Rock of Gibraltar (<https://www.quora.com/What-does-the-Rock-of-Gibraltar-symbolize>)



Haystack Rock off the Oregon coast (<https://www.pandotrip.com/haystack-rock-a-signature-landmark-in-oregon-usa-16290/>)



Plymouth Rock (<https://www.tripsavvy.com/visit-the-plymouth-rock-1599133>)