

Mayim Chayim

Drash on parashah 39; Chukat

By Kevin Phipps (aka Oriyan)

Because the community had no water, they assembled themselves against Moshe and Aharon. The people quarreled with Moshe and said, "We wish we had died when our brothers died before Adonai. Why did you bring Adonai's community into this desert? To die there, we and our livestock? Why did you make us leave Egypt? To bring us to this terrible place without seed, figs, grapevines, pomegranates or even water to drink?" Moshe and Aharon left the assembly, went to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces; and the glory of Adonai appeared to them. Adonai said to Moshe, "Take the staff, assemble the community, you and Aharon your brother; and before their eyes, tell the rock to produce its water. You will bring them water out of the rock and thus enable the community and their livestock to drink." Moshe took the staff from the presence of Adonai, as he had ordered him. But after Moshe and Aharon had assembled the community in front of the rock, he said to them, "Listen here, you rebels! Are we supposed to bring you water from this rock?" Then Moshe raised his hand and hit the rock twice with his staff. Water flowed out in abundance, and the community and their livestock drank. But Adonai said to Moshe and Aharon, "Because you did not trust in me, so as to cause me to be regarded as holy by the people of Isra'el, you will not bring this community into the land I have given them." This is M'rivah Spring [Disputation Spring], where the people of Isra'el disputed with Adonai, and he was caused to be regarded as holy by them.
[B'midbar/Numbers 20:2-13]

Here we see, once again, the people of Isra'el complaining against Moshe about their living conditions in the wilderness. This time it is their lack of water and the fear of death in the wilderness. This time, we see a different response from God as from earlier. He simply tells Moshe and Aaron what to do to provide for their need. He is answering their grumbling with a display of His power and provision for them. He is going to do something that would otherwise be thought impossible. He plans on bringing forth water from rock. This water would provide the much needed fluids they and their livestock would need to survive. There is more to this water and this rock than meets the eye, however.

He came to a town in Shomron called Sh'khem, near the field Ya`akov had given to his son Yosef. Ya`akov's Well was there; so Yeshua, exhausted from his travel, sat down by the well; it was about noon. A woman from Shomron came to draw some water; and Yeshua said to her, "Give me a drink of water." (His talmidim had gone into town to buy food.) The woman from Shomron said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for water from me, a woman of Shomron?" (For Jews don't associate with people from Shomron.) Yeshua answered her, "If you knew God's

*gift, that is, who it is saying to you, 'Give me a drink of water,' then you would have asked him; and he would have given you living water." She said to him, "Sir, you don't have a bucket, and the well is deep; so where do you get this 'living water'? You aren't greater than our father Ya`akov, are you? He gave us this well and drank from it, and so did his sons and his cattle." Yeshua answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I will give him will never be thirsty again! On the contrary, the water I give him will become a spring of water inside him, welling up into eternal life!" "Sir, give me this water," the woman said to him, "so that I won't have to be thirsty and keep coming here to draw water."
[Yochanan/John 4:5-15]*

When we read about water and rock in the Tanakh, we have to see more than rock and water. In fact, with all of God's creation we need to learn to see more than the physical creation, and see the God who created it and controls it and put us in it to live. The psalmist tells us that the heavens declare the glory of God and if we fail to praise Him, the very rocks will cry out. When water came from this rock in the wilderness, there was no trickle. It was a river. There was enough for all of Israel and their livestock and I suspect much more. This was not only a display of God's provision, but His abundance.

Yeshua said that if we drink of the water He gives us we will never thirst. This is mayim chayim, or living water. Certainly He gives us our daily portion, for if He gave us a whole lifetime of living water we would drown in His blessings and provision. However, as we go to Him every day, He gives us what we need to live and not only to live, but live life abundantly. Mayim chayim is taken within us. It fills us, and in its absence we die. Yeshua is the Rock of our salvation, and it is from Him that we get the water we need to live.

O God, you are my God; I will seek you eagerly. My heart thirsts for you, my body longs for you in a land parched and exhausted, where no water can be found. [Tehellim/Psalms 63:1]

As we go through life, we have to learn that it is not the world's provisions that we need first in our life. Yeshua stated that it is no good for us to gain the whole world, and yet lose our soul. Until we see that He is our bread, He is our water, and He is our life, we will always be in want and die in the midst of our need. It is God's desire that we not forget the reality of our need and those of others, but we see Him as the answer to those needs. If we go the way of the world, and fill our lives with that which is not of God, then, as Israel did, we will suffer the consequences of forgetting our God when He has provided for us in abundance already.

Be aghast at this, you heavens! Shudder in absolute horror!" says Adonai. "For my people have committed two evils: they have abandoned me, the fountain of living water, and dug themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water! [Yirme'yahu/Jeremiah 2:12-13]

" 'For their hunger you gave them bread from heaven; for their thirst you brought forth for them water from the rock. You ordered them to enter and possess the land you had sworn with your hand to give them. " 'But they and our ancestors were arrogant; they stiffened their necks and ignored your mitzvot; they refused to listen and paid no attention to the wonders you had done among them. No, they stiffened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a leader to return them to their slavery. But because you are a God of forgiveness, merciful, full of compassion, slow to grow angry and full of grace, you did not abandon them.

[Nechemyah/Nehemiah 9:15-17]

This shows us the great love God has for His people. He provides for them in abundance and they reject Him, and yet He does not abandon them. He disciplines them, but neither leaves them nor forsakes them. It is important for us not to take advantage of His grace. His grace allows us to see the error of our ways and return to the source of our mayim chayim. We have to see that He is still with us today as He was with His people in the wilderness.

For, brothers, I don't want you to miss the significance of what happened to our fathers. All of them were guided by the pillar of cloud, and they all passed through the sea, and in connection with the cloud and with the sea they all immersed themselves into Moshe, also they all ate the same food from the Spirit, and they all drank the same drink from the Spirit – for they drank from a Spirit-sent Rock which followed them, and that Rock was the Messiah. Yet with the majority of them God was not pleased, so their bodies were strewn across the desert. Now these things took place as prefigurative historical events, warning us not to set our hearts on evil things as they did. Don't be idolaters, as some of them were – as the Tanakh puts it, "The people sat down to eat and drink, then got up to indulge in revelry." And let us not engage in sexual immorality, as some of them did, with the consequence that 23,000 died in a single day. And let us not put the Messiah to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by snakes. And don't grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the Destroying Angel. These things happened to them as prefigurative historical events, and they were written down as a warning to us who are living in the acharit-hayamim. Therefore, let anyone who thinks he is standing up be careful not to fall! [1Corinthians 10:1-12]

What is important for us to see in this event in the wilderness is that nobody is exempt from falling! God was not angered with the complaining of the people because this test was for the leader of His people, Moshe. Earlier in Shmot/Exodus God had Moshe strike the rock to produce water. This time He changed His instructions and told Moshe to tell the rock to produce water instead. Here, the unquestionable Moshe faltered. He struck the rock. God still glorified His name by causing the water to flow anyway, but Moshe paid the consequences by not being able to enter the Promised Land.

Yitro had set up a system of leadership for Israel to enable Moshe to lead such a great nation, but God had set up a system of accountability within Torah, not only for Moshe, but for all kings, priests, and prophets of Israel that would come later. Not only were they accountable to each other, but the people had laws within Torah governing

the appointment of kings, the consecration and anointing of priests, and the discernment of false prophets, which were to be put to death by the people. This is despite the fact that true prophets of God had the authority to go to kings and priests to warn them when they fell into sin and the consequences if there was no repentance. Every time we see the people complain against Moshe, and God judges them for it, it is not because they dared to question Moshe, but they did so outside of the guidelines of Torah. If they had done so, they would have seen that they had no grounds for complaint or rebellion. In this one final incident, however, a gentle reminder from Aaron, of God's instructions may have helped both of them get to the Promised Land.

Today, we have the same Torah, and our Aaron, the Cohen Hagadol, is Yeshua, who is our example of what is to be a priest, prophet, or a king. We are filled with the Spirit of God, who is our Mayim Chayim, the proof of God's reality, power, and provision of our life. It is important that we are all partaking of that same living water. We need to all hold each other accountable for living a life according to the abundance God has given us. However, as we do so, we must do it in love and according to the guidelines of Torah. As we continually strive for the Promised Land, it is not a race. The first will be last and the last will be first. We have to have the humility to know that we exist as a community to help each other get to the place God has prepared for us. As we seek God's will in our lives, we need to know the difference between striking and speaking and listen when others may be reminding us which God has instructed us to do and where we are going.

Next the angel showed me the river of the water of life, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. [Revelation 22:1]