Num. 20:1, 2, 3, 5-9, 11 Moses and the water from the rock

1Then came the children of Israel, *even* the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month:

“*Then —*To wit, after many stations and long journeys here omitted, but particularly described, chap. 33., and occupying the space of thirty-eight years, during which time the Lord was executing judgment upon the rebels, whose carcasses were sentenced to fall in the wilderness. *The desert of Zin —*A place near the land of Edom, distinct and distant from that *Sin,*. *The first month —*Of the fortieth year, as is evident, because the next station to this was in mount Hor, where Aaron died, which was in the fifth month of the fortieth year, [Numbers 33:38](http://biblehub.com/numbers/33-38.htm)” (Benson Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

Congregation in Hebrew is edah which means “company, assembly, multitude, gathering” ([www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org), Strong’s 5712).

2And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

“**And there was no water . . . —**Kadesh may have comprised a considerable portion of the wilderness of Zin, and there may have been a supply of water in some parts of the district and a scarcity in others; or the supply may have proved insufficient for the wants of so great a multitude; or the miraculous supply which was given at Rephidim may have continued, with more or less frequent intermissions, up to the time to which this statement refers, and may have been suddenly withdrawn at this time in order to try the faith of the Israelites” (Ellicott’s commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

Water in Hebrew is mayim which means “waters, watersprings, watercourse, pour out water, to flow through as water” ([www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org), Strong’s 4325).

3And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!

Chode in Hebrew is riyb which means “plead, strive, contend, debate, strive physically and with words, to make complaint, to quarrel, content against” (([www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org), Strong’s 7378).

*“when our brethren died before* **Jehovah**] in the revolt of Korah (ch. 16)” (Cambridge Bible, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“And the people chode with Moses,.... Contended with him in a wrangling and litigious manner, showing no reverence nor respect unto his person on account of the dignity of his office, and the many favours they had received from him; and this at a time, when, instead of quarrelling with him, they should have condoled him on the loss of his sister, and bewailed their own loss also of one who had been a prophetess to them, and a leader of them, [Micah 6:4](http://biblehub.com/micah/6-4.htm).

“and spake, saying, would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord; either at Taberah by fire, or as Korah and his company in like manner, or as the fourteen thousand and seven hundred by a pestilence, [Numbers 11:1](http://biblehub.com/numbers/11-1.htm) which they thought a much easier death, either of them, than to die of thirst: they might well call them brethren, not only because of the same nation, and nearly related to them, but because they were of the same temper and [disposition](http://biblehub.com/commentaries/numbers/20-3.htm), and indeed brethren in iniquity; and they seem to use this appellation, as being of the same sentiments with them, and in vindication of them, and adopt almost their very language; see [Numbers 14:2](http://biblehub.com/numbers/14-2.htm)” (Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible, www.biblehub.com).

5And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it *is* no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither *is* there any water to drink.

“And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt,.. They represent that affair in such a light, as if they were forced out of Egypt by Moses and Aaron against their wills; or at least were overpersuaded by them to do what they had no inclination to, namely, to come out of Egypt; though they were in the utmost bondage and slavery, and their lives were made bitter by it, and they cried by reason of their oppression, and the hardships they endured; but this was all forgot. Aben Ezra says, it is a strange word which is here used, which shows the confusion they were in:

“to bring us unto this evil place; dry and barren, where there were neither food nor drink, as follows:

“it is no place of seed; or fit for sowing, any sort of seed, as wheat, barley, rye, rice, &c.

“or of figs, or vines, or pomegranates; it is not a soil fit to plant such trees in, nor would they grow were they planted:

“neither is there any water to drink; for them and their cattle, and therefore must be a miserable place for so large a body of people to subsist in” (Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible, www.biblehub.com).

6And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them.

“Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly—Here is a fresh ebullition of the untamed and discontented spirit of the people. The leaders fled to the [precincts](http://biblehub.com/commentaries/numbers/20-6.htm) of the sanctuary, both as an asylum from the [increasing](http://biblehub.com/commentaries/numbers/20-6.htm) fury of the highly excited rabble, and as their usual refuge in seasons of perplexity and danger, to implore the direction and aid of God” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly,... Like fugitives, they fled from them through fear, lest they should rise and fall upon them, and stone them, as their fathers were ready to do in a like case, [Exodus 17:4](http://biblehub.com/exodus/17-4.htm). It is very likely this assembly gathered about the tents of Moses and Aaron, who went from thence unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; where the Lord had promised to meet Moses, and speak unto him, [Exodus 29:42](http://biblehub.com/exodus/29-42.htm).

“and they fell upon their faces; to pray, that God would forgive the sin, of the people, and not break forth in his wrath against them, as he sometimes had done, and as their sin deserved, “and that he would grant them what was needful for them. In the Vulgate Latin version the following words are added as their prayer,"and they cried unto the Lord, and said, Lord God, hear the cry of this people, and open to them thy treasure, the fountain of living water, that they being satiated, their murmuring may cease.

“and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them; either to Moses and Aaron, to encourage them to expect their prayers would be answered; or to the people, to terrify them, and silence their murmurings; see [Numbers 16:19](http://biblehub.com/numbers/16-19.htm)” (Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible, www.biblehub.com).

7¶ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

8Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.

“**Take the rod.**—It has been supposed by some, from the fact that the rod is represented as being taken “from before the Lord” ([Numbers 20:9](http://biblehub.com/numbers/20-9.htm)), that the reference is to the rod of Aaron which was kept “before the testimony” ([Numbers 17:10](http://biblehub.com/numbers/17-10.htm)). On the other hand, the natural presumption that the rod was the same as that with which some of the previous miracles in Egypt and those at the Red Sea and at Rephidim had been wrought is confirmed by the facts that the name of Aaron is not mentioned in this verse until after the mention of the rod, and that Moses is said, in [Numbers 20:11](http://biblehub.com/numbers/20-11.htm), to have smitten the rock “with his rod”” (Ellicott’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“Take the rod—which had been deposited in the tabernacle (Nu 17:10), the wonder-working rod by which so many miracles had been performed, sometimes called "the rod of God" (Ex 4:20), sometimes Moses' (Nu 20:11) or Aaron's rod (Ex 7:12)” (Jamieson-Fausset- Brown Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“**Question: "Why was Moses not allowed to enter the Promised Land?" Here is one scholar’s explanation:   
  
Answer:**In [Numbers 20:8](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Num%2020.8), the Lord told Moses, "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink." [Numbers 20:9-11](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Num%2020.9-11) records Moses' response: "So Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence, just as He commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, ‘Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?’ Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank." The Lord was displeased with Moses’ actions: “Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them” ([Numbers 20:12](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Num%2020.12)).  
  
What did Moses do that warranted such a severe penalty from the Lord? First, Moses disobeyed a direct command from God. God had commanded Moses to speak to the rock. Instead, Moses struck the rock with his staff. Second, Moses took the [credit](http://d.7769domain.com/r/rd.html?#http%3A%2F%2F7769domain.com%2FAd%2FGoIEx2%2F%3Ftoken%3DaFFXaml6RFFkM1h3T2QzSFYrNWltZHNqdjdXY0ZxZzdSNUtpdUNnTmQ3WFZrK0ViREdpUWQwc1pQWWlLZ1YwVkgzeFM2cnVQcTMxTnpZMi95ZTJtM3VDV3J1QmJQMHI4cThJUk9lMkdaVnE5NTU3WXk5NHJhR0tmVGR3ZnZaTTRkTm9HVHBWeVgrMVUrUVZGc0FHejMycnVpZFczM2p5U0pieXpFaE1kbWdnPQ2) for bringing forth the water. Notice how in verse 10 Moses says, "Must we [referring to Moses and Aaron] bring you water out of this rock?" Moses took credit for the miracle himself, instead of attributing it to God. Third, Moses committed this sin in front of all the Israelites. Such a public example of direct disobedience could not go unpunished. . . ” (ww.gotquestions.org/Moses-promised-land.html)

“The command [Numbers 20:8](http://biblehub.com/numbers/20-8.htm) was "Speak ye unto the rock." The act of smiting, and especially with two strokes, indicates violent irritation on the part of Moses” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

9And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him.

11And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts *also*.

“and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also; there was enough for them and their cattle; for it came out in great quantities, in large streams, so that it ran down like a river, and which gave them drink as out of the great depths, [Psalm 78:15](http://biblehub.com/psalms/78-15.htm), where the Psalmist makes mention of rocks in the plural number, for there were two that were smitten in two different places, and at two different times; the one was at Rephidim, the other, as here, in Kadesh; the one was in the first year of Israel's coming out of Egypt, this in the fortieth year of it; that was struck but once, this twice; of this second stone no mention is made by any traveller but one (a), who coming from Mount Sinai, says,"we passed by a large rock on our left hand, in which, as in the other rock which Moses struck with his rod, appear, from the bottom to the top, openings where water hath gushed out.''

” (Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).