

22 Rephidim

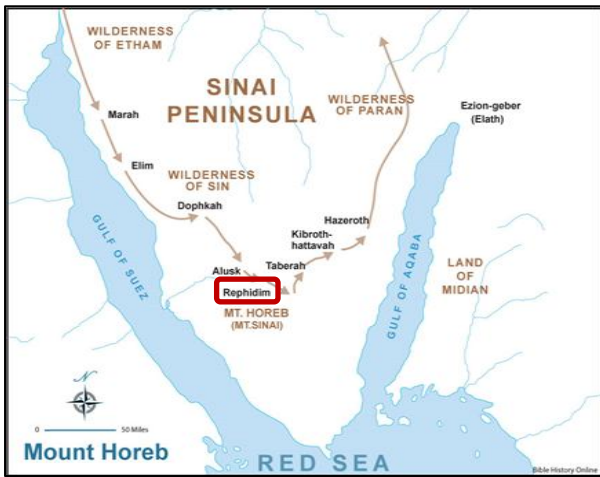
Names (also known as)

Rephidim, Wadi Feiran

Etymology

Strong’s # H7508 - רִפְדִים - *rîphîdîym* – baluster or railing; BDB - places of rest or stay.

Location/Description



Rephidim is identified with Wadi Feiran, a wide stony valley that leads from the coastal plain into granite mountains through which it twists and turns on its way to Sinai. The valley constantly ascends to the plateau on which Mount Sinai is located. The entrance to the wadi is stony and difficult to travel. It leads to the oasis of Rephidim. Rephidim is noted for its clusters of palm trees, being fed from underground springs. Israel would have seen evidence of fertility, but found no water.

Given the significance of the place, Wadi Feiran is littered with the ruins of dozens of ancient churches; some dating back to 4th century AD when Wadi Feiran began to develop into a stop for monks and pilgrims, many on their way to Mt. Sinai.

Scriptural references

Old Testament

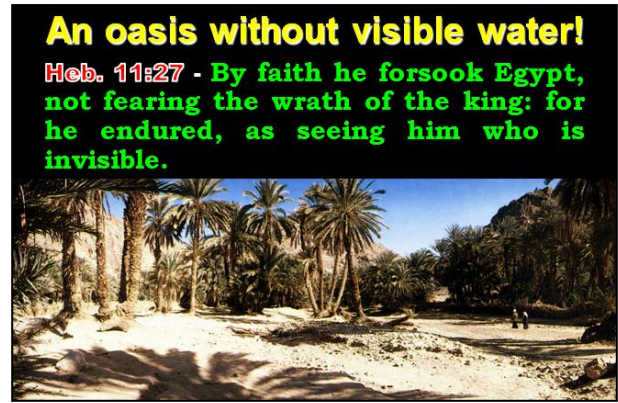
Exodus 17:1,8, 19:2, Numbers 33:14-15

Famous characters

Moses, Aaron, Hur, Joshua

The children of Israel

The Amalekites



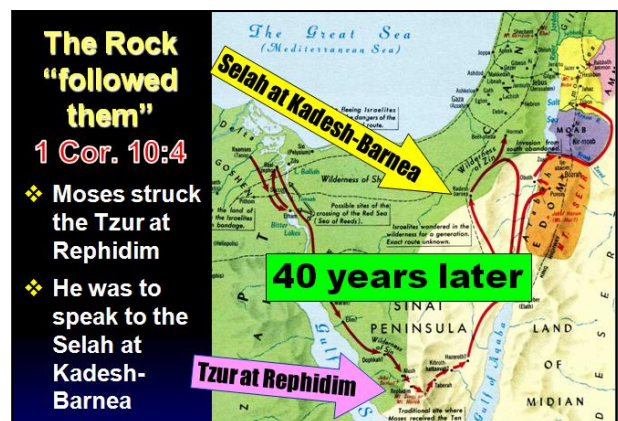
The Rephidim Principle

The meaning of the name Rephidim, as a place of rest, on the surface seems like a misnomer. It was no place of rest for the body, for there was no water. It was no place of rest for the nation, for they were attacked by the Amalekites. As Moses called it, it was a place of testing, strife and chiding. Rephidim was a place of unbelief, the Israelites tempted Yahweh, by questioning, ‘Is Yahweh among us or not?’ They did not see the invisible.

The place of rest prefigured here is obviously not a place of temporal rest but rather a pointing forward to the way eternal rest might be attained.

There are two principal events at Rephidim; (1) water being provided for the people out of the smitten Rock, and (2) the war with Amalek. Both of these point to the redemptive work of Christ.

In giving his people water out of the rock, we have the rock representing Christ (1 Cor. 10:4), smitten with the serpent rod (a symbol of sin Ex. 4:2-3, and of the cross here) in the sight of the elders of Israel (those who put Jesus to death – Matt. 27:25). The life-giving water flowing out of the rock pointed to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 7:37-39).



In the war with Amalek we have the work of the Lord Jesus foreshadowed. Apart from the reference to their land in Gen. 14:7, this is the first time the Amalekites appear in Scripture. It is also the first time we read of Joshua whom Jewish tradition says was freed from slavery in the turquoise mines at Dophkah where Israelite prisoners were incarcerated and used as slave workers.

So a beautiful type emerges in the events involving Moses, Aaron, Hur, and Joshua. We have a picture of what the Lord accomplished in his work as the promise of Gen. 3:15 is set forth in type. In Moses we see the imagery of the Lord Jesus on the cross, both his hands held above his head grasping the serpent rod until the ‘going down of the sun’ (death), supported by Aaron (the high priest elect) and Hur (the prince of the royal tribe of Judah). With Moses seated on the “stone” (*eben* – foundation stone of a family), Aaron and Hur presented Christ with a vision of “the joy that was set before him” if he endured the cross. He would become the high priest and king-elect when raised to glory.

In Joshua, we see Christ in the days of his flesh who went out among his brethren and fought against the serpent power (Amalek) with the Word of God (“sword” Ex. 17:13).

That Amalek is a type of the serpent is made clear in Ex. 17:14-16 – **“And Yahweh said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Yahweh-nissi (He who will be manifested on a *nes* - pole): For he said, Because Yahweh hath sworn that Yahweh will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”**

Several important considerations arise from this passage:

1. Why would Joshua need to have the events of that day rehearsed? Surely he knew them well. No, this was not for Joshua of old, but for the antitypical ‘Joshua’ – Yahweh’s salvation – Jesus Christ who would later read this record and see himself and his mission spelt out in it.
2. The altar (pointing to sacrifice) was named Yahweh-nissi. The word ‘*nissi*’ is actually the Hebrew *nes* and this is its first occurrence in the O.T. The next occurrences in Num. 21:8-9 speak eloquently of the sacrificial work of Christ

on the cross. Christ refers to the serpent on the pole lifted up by Moses in the context of his own crucifixion to fulfil the promises of God in providing a redeemer – John 3:14-17.

3. The declaration that Yahweh will have war with Amalek from generation to generation is clearly a reference to Gen. 3:15 about the ultimate destruction of the serpent. This would be accomplished in three stages – firstly in one man – Christ, then in his saints at the Judgement Seat and the setting up of the Kingdom, and then finally in the complete abolition of sin and death at the end of the Millennium. This is further illustrated by Amalek making a final appearance in Scripture in Rev. 20 where the ‘old serpent’ is finally destroyed. The Gog and Magog of Rev. 20:8 are not those of Ezek. 38 and 39, but the final political representatives of Agag (‘Gog’ in Lxx. for Num. 24:7) the Amalekite.

Little wonder Israel were commanded to wage continual warfare against Amalek - **“Therefore it shall be, when Yahweh thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which Yahweh thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.”** – Deut. 25:19.

In all of the above, Israel’s experiences at Rephidim were types for us – **“All this kept happening to them with a figurative meaning; but it was put on record by way of admonition to us upon whom the ends of the Ages have come”** (1 Cor. 10:11 - Weymouth). We partake of the life giving fountain that comes from the sacrifice of Christ; we commit in baptism and take upon us the name our God; we seek the destruction of Amalek (the serpent within) in our own lives. This fight (every day) is against the serpent power of sin that would take that life-giving water from us. If we would have the rest of Rephidim, then we are called upon to put to death the Amalek-spirit within ourselves and daily take up our cross to follow our ‘Yahshua’ in whose ears the events at Rephidim were rehearsed.

Sources:

Exodus, The Expositor Series, Brother HP Mansfield

(Compilers – Jeff Cooper/Jim Cowie)