

CLARIFYING MORE
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BIBLICAL PASSAGES

CHAPTER FIVE

“MOSES SAID ‘ PLEASE!
BEHOLD!’”

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V

MOSES SAID “PLEASE! BEHOLD!”

There are two accounts in the Bible of Moses’ striking a rock in the wilderness in order to provide water for thirsty and contentious Israelites. The first account appears in Exod 17: 1–7, which tells of the Israelites’ camping at Rephidim¹ as they moved from the wilderness of Sin to Mount Sinai. The account (vss 5–7) reads as follows:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה עֲבֹר לִפְנֵי הָעָם
 וְקַח אִתָּךְ מִזְקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִטֶּבֶד
 אֲשֶׁר הִכִּיתָ בוֹ אֶת-הַיָּאֵר קַח בְּיָדְךָ וְהִלַּכְתָּ:
 הֲגִנִי עֹמֵד לְפָנֶיךָ שָׁם עַל-הַצּוּר בְּחֶרֶב
 וְהִכִּיתָ בַצּוּר וַיֵּצְאוּ מִמֶּנּוּ מַיִם
 וְשָׁתָה הָעָם וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן מֹשֶׁה לְעֵינֵי זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
 וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם מַסָּה וּמֵרִיבָה
 עַל-רִיב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל גִּסְתָּם
 אֶת-יְהוָה לֵאמֹר הֲיֵשׁ יְהוָה בְּקִרְבָּנוּ אִם-אֵין:

And the LORD said to Moses, “Pass on before the people,
 taking with you some of the elders of Israel;
 and take in your hand the rod
 with which you struck the Nile and go.

Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb;
 and you shall strike the rock,
 and water shall come out of it, that the people may drink.”

And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah,
 because of the faultfinding of the children of Israel,

and because they put the LORD to the proof by saying,
 “Is the LORD among us or not?”

Aside from the uncertain location of Horeb, Rephidim, Massah, and Meribah, Exod 17:1–7 provides few serious problems for commentators.² Conspicuous in the Hebrew text, though not obvious in translations, is the etymology of the names Massah and Meribah. The former, meaning “Place of Testing,” is from נִסָּה “to test”; the latter, meaning “Place of Contention,” is from רִיב “to dispute, to contend.”

The account in Numbers 20, of Moses’ striking a rock to get water, is far more problematic. Verses 20:8 and 10 require careful reconsideration. The texts read

קח אֶת־הַמִּטָּה וְהִקְהַל אֶת־הָעֵדָה
 אֹתָהּ וְאַהֲרֹן אֶחָיִךְ
 וּדְבַרְתֶּם אֶל־הַסֵּלַע לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְנָתַן מִימֵי
 וְהוֹצֵאתָ לָהֶם מַיִם מִן־הַסֵּלַע
 וְהִשְׁקִיתָ אֶת־הָעֵדָה וְאֶת־בְּעִירָם:

וַיִּקְהֲלוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶת־הַקָּהָל אֶל־פְּנֵי הַסֵּלַע
 וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהֶם שְׁמְעוּ־נָא הַמְּרִים
 הַמִּן־הַסֵּלַע הַזֶּה נוֹצֵיא לָכֶם מַיִם:

RSV

Take the rod, and assemble the congregation,
 you and Aaron your brother,
and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water;
 so you shall bring water out of the rock for them;
 so you shall give drink to the congregation and their cattle.

And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together
 before the rock,
 and he said to them, “*Hear now, you rebels;*
shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?”³

The words above highlighted in italic bold font rightly translate the Hebrew MT; but a different translation—based upon a repointing of three words in the MT—will be offered in the following paragraphs. But, by way of introduction to clarifying the unresolved problems in Num 20:8 and 20:10, a word about the relationship between Num 20:2–9 and Exod 17:1–7.

Milgrom (1990: 49–50) noted

The remarkable parallels in both content and style between Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 have led most critics to posit two variant accounts for the same incident. This possibility was not lost upon one of the medieval Jewish exegetes, Joseph ben Isaac of Orléans, France, known as Bekhor Shor. He postulates the existence of duplicate narratives in our text not just for the rock incident, but also for the stories about the manna and the quail. . . . Thus the possibility exists that the two episodes of Moses’ drawing water from the rock are but variants of the same tradition. Yet they cannot be equated because of one major difference: In Exodus, Moses is told to strike the rock; in Numbers he is told to speak to it.

Milgrom followed the suggestion of Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (1194–1270 C.E.) to transpose the וְדַבַּרְתֶּם and the אֶל-הַסֵּלֶע, so that Num 20:8 reads, “You and your brother Aaron take the rod and assemble the community *at* the rock and speak in their presence so that it will yield its water.”

Milgrom concluded, “the command *vedibbartem*, ‘you shall speak,’ like *va-yo²mer lahem* (v. 10) is therefore directed to the people, not to the rock.”⁴

Thus, the punishment announced in Num 20: 12,

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them,”

was not due to Moses’ disobediently *striking* the rock instead of obediently *speaking* to the rock. Milgrom (1990: 448) commented and questioned: “Down through the ages, the sin of Moses, as described in Numbers 20:1–13, has been regarded as one of the Gordian knots of the Bible. The punishment is clear; but what is the crime?”

Although Num 20:24, speaking of Aaron, states “you rebelled against my command” and Num 27:14, speaking of Moses, states “you rebelled against my word,” the exact nature of that rebellion was not spelled out.⁵ Moreover, if the MT **וְדַבַּרְתֶּם אֶל-הַסֵּלַע** really meant “and you [plural for Moses and Aaron] shall speak to the rock,” there is no hint in the Hebrew text as to how and what they were to say to the rock. Was it to be a duet or two solo speeches? Who was to go first? The RSV, NRS, NAB, NLT, and NJB circumvent the problem by treating the indicative **וְנָתַן מַיָּמָיו** “it will give forth its waters” as the infinitive “to yield its water.”

The Gordian knot can be untied by recognizing four unusual words which were not widely used in the Judean dialect of Hebrew and, consequently, never made it into the standard lexicons of Biblical Hebrew. First, the **דַּבַּר** which appears in Num 20:8 is *not* the verb meaning “to speak.” Secondly, the

עין which appears in the same verse is *not* the word meaning “eye.” Thirdly, the מַרְיִם in 20:10 is *not* the plural participle of the root מָרָה “ro rebel.” Fourthly, the הַ of the הִמָּן in 20:10 is *not* the interrogative particle הַ attached to the preposition מָן. My alternative interpretation of these words now follows, using this same sequence.

Standard lexicons of Biblical Hebrew (like BDB 180–185) recognize the following definitions and cognates of דָּבַר :

- דָּבַר “to speak,” with its Arabic cognate being دَبَّرَ (*dabbara*) “to consider, to relate”;
- דָּבָר “pestilence, with its Arabic cognate being دَابَّرَ (*dabara*) “to depart, to follow behind, to perish” and دَبَّرَ (*dabr*) “departure, death”;
- דְּבִיר “the innermost room of Solomon’s temple,” with its Arabic cognate being دُبُر (*dubur*) “back, hindmost”;
- דְּבוּרָה “Deborah,” meaning “(honey) bee, wasp,” with its Arabic cognate being دִּבְר (*dibr*) “swarm of bees.”⁶

A fifth definition needs to be added to this list, namely that דָּבַר which was the cognate of Arabic دَبَّار (*dibâr*) “ridges of earth, which retain water for irrigation” and دَبَّارَات (*dibârat*) / دَبَّارَات (*dibârât*) “channels, rivulets that flow through a land” (Lane 1867: 845). The verb וְדָבַרְתֶּם in Num 20:8 needs to be repointed as וְדָבַרְתֶּם, and then וְדָבַרְתֶּם אֶל-הַסֵּלַע means “you will make channels up to the rock.”⁷ The plural verb includes more than Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation of Israelites were to participate in the preparation for

the miracle of water flowing from a rock. Working from the periphery to a rock at the center, everyone was expected to facilitate an efficient distribution of the water when it came by having small streamlets flowing down throughout the camp.

This interpretation of the plural suffix **תם-** of the **ודברתם** leads to the second of the four misunderstood words cited above, namely the **לְעֵינֵיהֶם**, meaning literally “to their eyes” but paraphrased in the Septuagint as $\xi\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\iota\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omega\tau\omicron\varsigma$ “before them.” One would expect the verb “to speak” to be followed by the phrase “in / into their *ears*,” rather than “to their *eyes*.”

However, the **עין** of the MT **לְעֵינֵיהֶם** was probably not the original reading. In the context of Num 20:8, where the verb **ודברתם** means “you will make rivulets/streamlets,” the MT **עין** should be corrected to **עון** so that the **לְעֵינֵיהֶם** “to their eyes” becomes **לְעוֹנֵיהֶם**, meaning “with their help” or “with their assistance—with the possessive pronoun referring to the whole congregation (**הָעֵדָה**).⁸ (Translating the **ל** here as “with” matches a similar use of the **ל** in the phrase in Gen 23:16, **כֶּסֶף עֹבֵר לְסַחֵר** “silver passing *with* the merchant” [BDB 512, sub definition 5]).⁹

The Hebrew lexeme **עון** “help, aid, assistance,” is the cognate of Arabic **عون** (*‘awn*) “help, aid, assistance. . . an aider, a helper, or an assistant” (Lane 1874: 2203; Wehr 1979: 772). Thus, in 20:8 the reconstructed phrase **וְדַבַּרְתֶּם אֶל-הַסֵּלֶע לְעוֹנֵיהֶם** means “and make channels up to the rock *with their help*”—with the singular collective “help” translating the Hebrew plural **עונים** “helps” to accommodate English idiom.

In support of this translation of Num 20:8 are three other passages where this stem עוּן has been identified, namely,

- Deut 33:27, where מְעַנֶּה אֱלֹהֵי קְדָם in context means “(Your) Savior/Helper is the God of Old.”
- Deut 33:28, where the MT בָּרַד עֵין יַעֲקֹב should be re-pointed to בָּרַד עֵין יַעֲקֹב, meaning “By himself he helped Jacob.”
- Psalm 18:36, where the MT וְעִנֹתֶיךָ תִרְבִּינִי appears in the RSV as “and thy help made me great.”¹⁰

The third word listed on page 48, above, which is not what it appears to be is the מְרִים in the phrase הַמְרִים נֹא שְׁמַעוּנָא in Num 20:10. Although vocalized as the plural participle of the מָרָה “ro rebel” it needs to be vocalized as מְרִים (scriptio defectiva for מְרִיִּים), the *Hiph[‘]il* participle plural of מָרָה, matching the singular *Hiph[‘]il* participle מְרִי, “he who waters, water carrier, drawer of water” found in Prov 11:25.¹¹

To be sure, the verb מָרָה “ro rebel” does appear in Num 20:24 and 27:14, which speak of Yahweh’s charging Aaron and Moses with rebellion at Meribah. And Deut 9:7 and 9:24 contain that same charge against the Israelites in general, stating מְרִים הָיִיתֶם עִם־יְהוָה, “you have been rebellious against Yahweh.”¹² Thus, there is no problem, *per se*, with Moses’ calling the Israelites מְרִים “rebels.” But in the context of the theophany in 20:6, וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד־יְהוָה אֲלֵיהֶם, “the glory of Yahweh appeared to them,” and the polite imperative שְׁמַעוּנָא “Please listen!” in 20:10, it staggers the

imagination to have an *angry* Moses saying “Please!” to a bunch of rebels. Once the shift is made from מְרִיִּים “rebels” to מְרִוּוֹת / מְרִוּוֹתִים “water carriers,” it becomes easier to accept the idea that Moses actually said “Please!” Thus, there is no need to delete the אֵל or to ignore this particle of entreaty to accommodate what some commentators see as a very *angry* and indignant Moses denouncing some very thirsty people—an interpretation based solely on one word in the MT, מְרִיִּים “rebels.” It is more likely that the theophany mentioned in 20:6 made Moses and Aaron glow with excitement—glowing enough to make even Moses cordial and polite to the מְרִוּוֹת / מְרִוּוֹתִים, “the water carriers” who waited around the rock.

The fourth word listed on page 48, above, which is not what it appears to be is the הֵּ of the MT הֵּ מֵן in 20:10. It has been consistently read as the interrogative particle introducing a question, as in the Septuagint which reads μή ἐκ τῆς πέτρας ταύτης ἐξάξομεν ὑμῖν ὕδωρ, “must we out of this rock bring you water?” The הֵּ is better read as the interjection הֵּ or הֵּ (without an אֵל) as in the interjection הֵּ אֱלֹהֵי הֵּ “By God!” (Jastrow 1903: 67, 328; BDB 21). This Hebrew אֵל הֵּ “Behold!” was uttered by Joseph in Gen 47:23, along with the more widely used interjection הֵּ הֵּ. Also in Ezek 16:43, אֵל הֵּ “Behold!” appears in the oracle of Yahweh against Jerusalem, “therefore, behold (אֵל הֵּ), I will requite your deeds upon your head.”

The elision of the אֵל in Hebrew was quite common. For example, in 1 Sam 2:16 and 20:2, the negative particle אֵל /

לֹא appears simply as לוֹ. A sampling of other words where the לֹ was elided include¹³

- וַיֵּתֵא for וַיֵּאתֵא, from the stem אָתָא “to come,” in Deut 33:21;
- יֵהֵל for יֵאָהֵל, from the stem אָהֵל “to pitch a tent,” in Isa 13:20;
- הֵתִיּוּ for הֵאָתִיּוּ, from the stem אָתָא “to come,” in Isa 21:14;
- וַיִּסֶּר for וַיִּאָסֶר, from the stem אָסַר “to tie, to bind” (rather than סָוַר “to turn aside”), in Exo 14:25;
- הֵסוּרִים for הֵאָסוּרִים, from the stem אָסַר “to tie, to bind,” in Ecc 4:14.

In light of this evidence, reading the הֵ of the MT הֵפְנוּרִים as הֵה—the defectively spelled equivalent of הֵה “Behold!”—seems preferable to the speculation as to whether the question of a somewhat befuddled and angry Moses meant (1) “*Must* we bring you water out of this rock?” or (2) “*Shall* we bring you water out of this rock?” or (3) “*Can* we bring you water out of this rock?”¹⁴

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The word studies presented above permit the following new translations—cited in italic bold font—of the problematic phrases in Num 20:7–10.

Then Yahweh said to Moses,
 “Take the rod, and assemble the congregation,
 you and Aaron your brother,

*and make channels up to the rock with their help.
It will yield its water.*

You [Moses] shall bring water out of the rock for them;
and you shall give drink
to the congregation and their cattle.”

Moses took the rod from before Yahweh,
as he commanded him.

Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together
before the rock, and he [Moses] said to them,

“Please listen! Behold, O water carriers!

We will bring forth water for you out of this rock!

A series of small scribal errors produced great difficulties for exegetes and much speculation by commentators as to what Moses did at Meribah which made him a “rebel,” precluding his entering the Promise Land. The errors included two words in which a ך was replaced by a ך (עון became עין and מרום became מרים) and two cases of defective spelling (הא became ה and מרוים became מרום/מרים). Two words in these verses never made it into the standard Hebrew lexicons: דבר “to make rivulets/streamlets” and עון “help, aid, assist”—even though their cognates were cited by Castell (1669: 651 and 2701, respectively) and by Lane (1867: 45 and 1874: 2203).

These corrections to the Hebrew text and the new translations they permit bring into clear focus the ways in which Moses ignored Yahweh’s instruction, resulting in his being labeled a “rebel” and being denied the gift of entering the Promise Land. If these corrections and translation prove to be correct, the conclusions of some scholars that Exodus 17:1–7 and Num 20:2–13 are variant traditions of the same event

become highly implausible.

In just four simple Hebrew words Moses was instructed to organize a community project of digging small ditches from the periphery of the encampment up to a designated rock from which water would soon flow. But there is not a single Hebrew word in the text telling of Moses’ implementing this order. Yes, he and Aaron assembled the congregation before the rock, but there was no making of rivulets or water channels. The congregation became only spectators of a miracle, not participants along with Moses and Aaron in initiating it.¹⁵ Participation in the process would have promoted anticipation and appreciation of Yahweh’s power and presence, and would have strengthened their faith in him.

Moreover, Moses was instructed by verbs in the second person masculine *singular* to (1) produce water from the rock and (2) give drink to the assembly and their animals. But when Moses politely (נָא-) and excitedly (וְהִנֵּה) addressed the assembled *water carriers* (מְנַרְתִּים) he used a verb in the first person *plural*, “we will bring forth for you,” the plural obviously referring to Moses himself and to Aaron.¹⁶ Thus, he struck the rock twice, once for Aaron and once for himself. If only Moses had said וְהִנֵּה “He will bring forth” instead of נִצַּיִן “we will bring forth,” Yahweh’s presence and power would have been fully acknowledged.¹⁷

Arden (1957: 52) was correct in stating, “It isn’t a question of God splitting hairs with Moses and meeting out punishment capriciously.”¹⁸ As stated in Num 20:12, Yahweh’s pronouncement against Moses and Aaron is quite specific:

לֹא־הֶאֱמַנְתֶּם בִּי
לְהַקְדִּישֵׁנִי לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

You [Moses and Aaron] did not *bring about faith* in me,
to sanctify me in the eyes of the sons of Israel.

Ordinarily the *Hiph^cîl* of אָמַן means simply “to believe, to have faith,” not “to cause one to have faith, to make one believe.” Jepsen (1974: 299) noted though the difficulty in properly interpreting this verb.

The whole discussion about the meaning of the hiphil of אָמַן, the purpose of which is to clarify first of all whether the hiphil here is to be understood as a causative, a declarative, or an internal transitive, cannot be resolved. First we must learn how the word was used; then perhaps we will be in a position to determine the category in which the hiphil form *he³emin* belongs.

The verb אָמַן in Num 20:12 is clearly an exception to the rule—if the rule is that אָמַן in the *Hiph^cîl* can *never* be a causative. The phrase לֹא־הָאֵמַןְתֶּם בִּי, “you did not bring about faith in me,” is elliptical. The full phrase would have been “you did not cause *the sons of Israel* to have faith in me.” (Another way to explain it is that “sons of Israel” at the end of the verse does double duty and goes with both verbs in the verse.)

The failure of Moses and Aaron to obey the command of Yahweh to prepare water channels in anticipation of a great miracle was their *sin of omission*. It was counter-productive for deepening the faith of their fellow Israelites. Their taking all the credit for producing the miraculous water from the rock was their *sin of commission*. Hubris had subverted humility, with very negative results. Weary Israelites had quenched their thirst at Meribah (Num 20:11); but by the time they set out from Mount Hor they were as faithless as ever,

complaining anew to God and to Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food” (Num 21:5).

Milgrom (1974: 448–456) provided an excellent critique of ten different rabbinic interpretations of Num 20:1–13. Even though nothing in rabbinic exegesis about Moses’ sin and punishment supports the emendations and translations presented above, Milgrom’s comments (452) about the punishment of Moses and Aaron provide a fitting conclusion here.

In the face of the magnitude of this sin, all prior incidents of Moses’ petulance and doubt pale. Here in a direct address to his people, Moses ascribes miraculous powers to himself and Aaron. Indeed, by broadcasting one word — *notsi*⁹, “we shall bring forth”—Moses and Aaron might be interpreted as having put themselves forth as God. Considering that Moses’ generation had hardly been weaned from the bondage of Egypt, his error was neither slight nor pardonable. Israel had to be released from more than chains; it still had to be purged of its pagan background. In being redeemed from Pharaoh, it had yet to be bound to its God.

NOTES

1. Vilnay (1978: 341), as cited by Seely (1992), called attention to a tradition which related the name *Rephidim* to the stem רָפָה “meaning ‘to relax, weaken, dishearten’ because ‘Israel cast off the commandments of the Torah’ and because of this an enemy (Amalek) rose up against them.” However, were that the derivation, the name should have been *Repha⁹im*, rather than *Rephidim*. A more likely derivation of the *Rephidim* is רַפַּד, a

cognate of the Arabic رفد (*rafada*) “he gave a gift, he assisted, aided,” with special attention given to the رفد (*ruffida*) and رفدوا (*raffadû*) of form 2, meaning, respectively, “[such a one] was made lord, or chief; and was made great, or magnified, or honored,” and “they made [such a one] a lord, or chief, made him great or magnified him” (Lane 1867: 1119). If this is the derivation of *Rephidim*, then Numbers 17:1 to 18:7, provide an excellent commentary, especially 18:6–7,

“Behold, I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the people of Israel; they are a gift to you, given to the LORD, to do the service of the tent of meeting. . . . I give your priesthood as a gift, and any one else who comes near shall be put to death.”

2. See Childs 1974: 305–309, who concluded his comments by calling attention to Psalm 95:8–11, “Harden not your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers tested me, and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. For forty years I loathed that generation and said, ‘They are a people who err in heart, and they do not regard my ways.’ Therefore I swore in my anger that they should not enter my rest.”

3. The Septuagint reading here is very close to the MT.

λαβέ τὴν ῥάβδον καὶ ἐκκλησίασον τὴν συναγωγὴν
 σὺ καὶ Ααρων ὁ ἀδελφός σου
 καὶ λαλήσατε πρὸς τὴν πέτραν ἔναντι αὐτῶν
 καὶ δώσει τὰ ὕδατα αὐτῆς
 καὶ ἐξοίσετε αὐτοῖς ὕδωρ ἐκ τῆς πέτρας
 καὶ ποτιεῖτε τὴν συναγωγὴν καὶ τὰ κτήνη αὐτῶν
 καὶ ἐξεκκλησίασεν Μωσῆς καὶ Ααρων
 τὴν συναγωγὴν ἀπέναντι τῆς πέτρας
 καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς ἀκούσατέ μου οἱ ἀπειθεῖς
 μὴ ἐκ τῆς πέτρας ταύτης ἐξάξομεν ὑμῖν ὕδωρ

Take thy rod, and call the assembly,
 thou and Aaron thy brother,
 and speak ye to the rock before them,
 and it shall give forth its waters;
 and ye shall bring forth for them water out of the rock,
 and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.
 And Moses and Aaron assembled
 the congregation before the rock,
 and said to them, Hear me, ye disobedient ones;
 must we bring you water out of this rock?

4. This solution also required reading (or emending) אֶל “to” as על “at” and paraphrased לְעֵינֵיהֶם “to their eyes” as “in their presence.”

5. Compare Ashley (1993: 383–384) who argued that Moses’ penalty was due to his disobedience or his anger and self-centeredness, stating simply, “. . . inexact obedience on the part of leaders (and others) is the same as disobedience.”

6. The name דְּבוֹרָה “Deborah,” however, is best derived from the Hittite-Luwian *t/dapara* “ruler, governor.” The word דָּבַר appears in Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac, and Ugaritic—all meaning “to rule, to govern, to manage the affairs (of a province, not just a flock), a leader” (Lane 1872: 844b; Gordon 1965: 383–384, no 641; J. Payne Smith 1903: 82–83; R. Payne Smith 1897–1901: 815a; Jastrow 1903: 279, 731). Thus דְּבוֹרָה means “Lady-governor, Ladyship,” much like שָׂרָה “Princess” and מַלְכָּה “Queen.” For a full discussion and bibliography see McDaniel 1983: 108–125; 2003: 73–81.

7. The verb דָּבַר, stem 5, could well be a denominative, and like שָׂאַל “to ask, to *make* a request,” a *Hiph’il* form of the verb is not

required for רבר to mean “make a streamlet” or “to irrigate.” Thus, there is no need to emend the consonantal text from the *Qal* וְהַרְבִּירְתֶּם to a *Hiph^{cl}* וְרַבְרַתֶּם.

8. Other examples where עין and עון were confused include (1) Psa 73:7, where עֵינָמוּ “their eye” was read as עֵוְנָמוּ “their iniquity” by the Septuagint translators who rendered it as ἡ ἀδικία αὐτῶν; and (2) Zech 5:6, where עֵינָם “their eye” was also read as עֵוְנָם “their iniquity” by the Septuagint translators who again rendered it as ἡ ἀδικία αὐτῶν. For many other examples of the scribes’ confusing the י and the ו, see Delitzsch 1923: 103–105, §103^{a-c}.

9. This phrase was variously paraphrased as (1) ἀργυρίου δοκίμου ἐμπόρους “silver approved of merchants” in the Septuagint, (2) “silver, according to the weights current among the merchants” in the RSV, and (3) “silver, commercial standard” in the NAS.

10. For a fuller discussion of עון “to help, to aid, to rescue,” see McDaniel 1983: 70–86 and 2000: 53–60, 109–110.

11. The Arabic cognates of רָוַה, listed by Lane (1867: 1194–1196), are as follows:

- روى (*rawiya*), “he drank enough to quench his thirst”;
- رى (*riyy^{un}*) “the state of having drunk enough to quench the thirst”;
- رآو (*ra^owi*) “one who brings water to his family”;
- رآء (*rawwā^{o un}*) “(a man) whose habitual work, or occupation is the drawing of water.”

As used in this verse **רָוָה** is the synonym of **שָׁאב** “to draw water,” and the masculine plural participle which makes “the drawers of water” to be men parallels the **יְשָׁאֲבוּן הַנְּעָרִים** “the young men draw (water)” in Ruth 2:9. It is also possible that the Hebrew **מְרִים** is related to **מָר** “drop of water” and to its Arabic cognate **مرمر** (*marmar*) “he made water to pass, or go upon the surface of the ground” (Lane 1875: 2700). On a humorous note, this question comes to mind: Could Moses have been using slang (**מְרִים** instead of **מְרִים**) analogous to “drip” in English, saying, “Hey, please listen, you drips!”?

12. Note also Psalm 106:32, “They angered him at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account.”

13. Note also the variants **וּתְאֹזְרֵנִי** and **וּתְזַרְנֵנִי** in the parallel texts of Ps 18:40 and 2 Sam 22:40. In 11QpaleoLev **וִירַת** appears for **וִירָאת** in Lev 25:36; **חַטַּתִּיכֶם** for **חַטַּאתִיכֶם** in Lev 26:18; and **תְּבוּ** for **תֵּאָבוּ** in Lev 26:21 (Freedman and Matthews 1985: 45–46, 80). See also GKC 68^{hk} and Delitzsch 1920: 21–22, §14a–c.

14. See, for example, Ashley 1993: 383, n. 17.

15. Arden (1957: 52) rightly noted that

The clear implication is that the people will rejoice at the sight of abundant water, and they will doubly and trebly rejoice at the knowledge that their God is with them and is showing himself by one of his happiest miracles.

All the more so if Moses, as instructed by Yahweh, had engaged them in preparing the channels through which the waters would flow. Arden’s next statement, however, needs to be modified in light of Moses’ having said “*Please listen, Behold!*”

It is this circumstance which Moses, in a fit of indignation, turns into a bitter denunciation; he curses the people, and in smiting the magic rod against the rock, destroys the hallowed moment that God had so clearly intended.”

16. Compare Arden (1957: 52) who interpreted Moses’ use of the pronoun “we” to mean Moses and God, stating

Only Moses shows his exasperation, his famous temper, and his astonishing egotism: “Hear now, ye rebels; must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?” Num 20: 10). Moses in his anger takes it on himself to assume that God is exasperated too, that the two of them, Moses and God, are one in their response. The tone in which he addresses the people is that of annoyance and condescension; the “we” is blasphemous.

Arden obviously ignored Moses’ use of the particle אָנֹכִי when he said שְׁמַעוּ-אָנֹכִי “Please listen!”

17. Milgrom (1974: 451) provides a brief summary of Jewish exegetes who thought that Moses sin was in his saying נוֹצִיא, “we will bring forth,” instead of יוֹצִיא, “He will bring forth.”

18. As noted above, Ashley (1993: 383–384) argued that Moses’ penalty was due to his disobedience [by striking the rock instead of speaking to it] or his anger and self-centeredness. Cole (2000: 327–328) also considered Moses’ striking the rock instead of speaking to it to be the sin for which he was punished. He commented, “Instead of addressing the rock, he launched into a diatribe against the complaining community. . . . Moses struck the rock not once but twice . . . so striking the rock was in a sense a striking out against God.” Cole also ignored the אָנֹכִי particle of entreaty used by Moses when he said שְׁמַעוּ-אָנֹכִי “Please listen!”