Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only）

Numbers 20: 2-13

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time to read the bible again. We continue to read Numbers chapter 20. Today, we are reading verses 2 through 13.

The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for nearly 38 years; more than half of the first generation of Israelites had died, and the new generation of Israelites had also grown up into adults. By the first month of the 40th year of the exodus from Egypt, they came to Kadesh, and Miriam died and was also buried at Kadesh.

Verse 2: "Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron."

38 years earlier, when they passed through Kadesh, they did not contend over water, because at that time Kadesh was still an oasis. After 38 years, the water of the oasis had dried up, and the congregation had no water to drink, so they rose up to attack Moses and Aaron. Who was it that began contending again?

Verse 3: "And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: 'If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!'"

The people who contended with Moses said: "If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!" So the ones contending were still the first generation of Israelites. They recalled how at Kadesh the ten spies who brought the bad report died by the plague, and how they themselves were ordained to wander in the wilderness and finally to die in the wilderness. They also thought of how, in the incident of Korah's rebellion, another 14,700 people died of the plague. So they said, "our brethren died before the LORD." What they said may count as fact;

however, the next sentence, "If only we had died when they died," is really far too exaggerated. Although they had wandered in the wilderness for 38 years, God still supplied manna, God still supplied living water. Because of their unbelief they could not enter the promised land, but they could look forward to the new generation of Israelites succeeding them and entering the good land. Therefore they ought to have nurtured them well and taught them well, lest the new generation of Israelites be like them and fall into the outcome of unbelief. However, after 38 years of wandering, they were still just as hardened; they had grown old in years, yet their spiritual life had not grown, and when they met difficulty they still complained.

Dear brothers and sisters, the hardest thing to handle in the church is a large group of old Christians who have been saved for a very long time, yet whose spiritual life is very childish. As for spiritual things, they know them all, yet do not fully know them; they have a smattering of knowledge but have no spiritual experience; when they encounter something they still handle it in the old way, just like these Israelites who had grown old but had not died: 38 years earlier they contended when there was no water to drink, and 38 years later they contended just the same.

Verse 4: "Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here?"

Even their lines of speech were the same as 38 years earlier: "Why have you brought the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness?" They were still manufacturing conflict between Moses and Aaron and the congregation of Israel. They knew that the congregation was the assembly of the LORD; then what qualification did they have to speak on behalf of the assembly of the LORD? Moses and Aaron were the leaders God had already shown clearly, and naturally they could lead the congregation of Israel according to God's will.

They seem to have forgotten that it was their unbelief that resulted in God's not letting them enter the promised land, that it was God who wanted them to die in the wilderness; God promised the new generation of Israelites that they could enter the good land with their cattle and sheep. God did not make all the Israelites

and their animals die in the wilderness. In their speech, truth and falsehood were mixed; their purpose was to stir up people to rise against Moses and Aaron. This situation was exactly the same as 38 years earlier. We know that the real rebel is actually Satan, whose purpose is to destroy the order God has established, and the methods Satan uses are likewise unchanging.

Verse 5: "And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink."

Why have you forced us to come out of Egypt? The new generation of Israelites were born in the wilderness and grew up in the wilderness, and knew nothing of Egypt at all. These Israelites who had grown old but had not yet died, after such a long span of time, were still thinking of Egypt; only they forgot that back then in Egypt they were slaves, all day long burning bricks for Pharaoh, with no straw given to them, and that it was they who cried out to the LORD God, and only then did God send Moses to rescue them.

The long days in the wilderness had made them even more hardened, to the point of rebuking Moses and Aaron: why did you force us to come out of Egypt? Why did you bring us to this evil place? Here one cannot sow, there are no fig trees, vines, or pomegranate trees, and there is not even water to drink. In the wilderness, of course, one cannot sow, and there are no fruit trees of any kind; but in the land of Canaan there are all of them, and in great abundance — all twelve spies reported that it was a land flowing with milk and honey. The reason they were wandering in the wilderness was precisely their unbelief, so that they could not enter the promised land. That there was no water to drink was indeed a fact: 38 years earlier at Kadesh there was still water to drink, but now the source of the water had dried up.

Verse 6: "So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them."

Moses and Aaron were still the same as 38 years earlier: attacked by the Israelites, they did not answer back, did not defend themselves, but only left the congregation and came to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and fell on their faces and pleaded with God, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them. The first generation of Israelites must have been greatly afraid; in the past when they contended, Moses and Aaron also fell on their faces, and as soon as the glory of the LORD appeared, judgment immediately followed. The new generation of Israelites were personally experiencing the sight of the glory of the LORD for the first time, and perhaps did not yet have a heart of fear, and may even have had a measure of excitement and curiosity, wanting to see what God would do.

Verses 7-8: "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.'"

Truly unexpected! God was not angry at this contention caused by having no water, and His way of handling it was quite gentle and peaceful. God charged Moses to take the rod and go forward. This rod had followed Moses for nearly 80 years: after he was 40 he fled to Midian, and it was this very rod he used to shepherd sheep in the wilderness; in the year he turned 80, when he was called by God to go to Egypt to rescue the Israelites, he used this rod to perform the ten plagues in Egypt; at the time of the exodus, he used this rod to part the Red Sea, letting the Israelites walk across on dry ground; he used this rod to make the Red Sea close again, drowning Egypt's pursuing troops; at Rephidim he used this rod to strike the rock, and the rock poured out water so that the people could drink. Now God still wanted him to take this rod, and to have Aaron gather the congregation.

Moses' rod represents God's authority, and Moses was to take the rod and, before the people, speak to the rock to yield water. This is different from the situation at Rephidim; at that time, God told him to strike the rock, but this time there was no need to strike — he needed only to speak, and the rock would pour out water for the Israelites and their animals to drink. Water is a necessary condition for sustaining life, and God did not sternly rebuke their contending over having no water to drink; especially since the new generation among them had not yet seen the miracle of water from the rock, this was an excellent opportunity for them to experience God's faithfulness.

Verse 9: "So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him."

Moses fell on his face at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and after hearing God's charge, took his own rod. The Bible specially adds the phrase "took the rod from before the LORD," and some expositors, on the basis of this phrase, mistakenly suppose that Moses entered the Most Holy Place and took Aaron's budding rod. That rod was Aaron's, and was to be placed before the mercy seat, to remind the Israelites that the priestly office must issue from a life that has died and been resurrected, so as to prevent the incident of Korah from happening again. Moses had the authority of administration, and his rod was a rod of authority; his taking the rod before the tabernacle of meeting was taking the rod before the LORD, and this rod represents God's authority. God charged him to hold the rod in his hand and, in God's authority, to speak to the rock to yield water.

Verse 10: "And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, 'Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?'"

Moses and Aaron, according to God's charge, gathered the whole congregation of Israel before the rock. I believe that those Israelites who had grown old but had not yet died challenged Moses once again; they provoked Moses' anger, and Moses'

words must have been a response to their provocation. Moses said: Hear now, you rebels, must I bring water out of the rock for you? The sense in Moses' words is full of unwillingness: you attack me like this, and I must still bring water out of the rock for you and quench your thirst?

Of course, when Moses and Aaron gathered everyone before the rock, the new generation of Israelites perhaps did not know what Moses was going to do, but the old generation of Israelites had experienced Moses striking the rock at Rephidim and water flowing out, and so they knew that Moses was going to bring water out of the rock. Since they knew it and yet the attacks from their mouths still did not stop, Moses naturally could not contain his anger and also began to speak words of anger: must I still bring water out of the rock for you? Moses' anger may perhaps be understandable, but Moses forgot that God's charge was given mainly for the sake of the new generation of Israelites; they needed to have the experience of water from the rock, and by way of speaking to it, the rock would pour out water to quench their thirst. Moses was provoked to anger by the old generation of Israelites, and he too began to greatly manifest the flesh.

Dear brothers and sisters, our flesh is continually seeking opportunities to provoke us, to make us forget that we should be living in the new man. If we let the old man come to the fore, we have already fallen into Satan's scheme. Once we respond in a fleshly way, we have failed, and Satan has won. Even one as seasoned as Moses did not easily overcome the flesh.

Verse 11: "Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank."

Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with the rod. God wanted Moses to speak to the rock, but Moses, in his anger, did not keep God's charge, and instead struck the rock twice. On the surface it appears to be an unintentional fault, yet this fault brought exceedingly serious consequences to Moses and Aaron; this point we will expand on in the next verse. Although Moses did not act according to God's charge, and still used the old method of before — he had once struck the rock at

Rephidim — Moses struck the rock once again, and once again much water flowed out of the rock; those contending members of the congregation drank, the onlooking members of the congregation drank, and their animals all drank too.

God did not stop the supply of water because of Moses' disobedience. God's servant committed an error, and God still supplied the need of all through this servant; this is God's faithfulness and grace. Otherwise, how could servants as weak and useless as we are still be used by God to supply the need of the church? Far too often, God goes beyond our limitations and uses us to meet the need of His people. Only a fool would be smugly pleased with himself and think himself very capable. The real supply comes from God; it is God who uses unworthy people to supply His people. We are unworthy, and yet God is willing to use us; for us, this is already an exceedingly great grace and reward — how then would we dare to take credit for ourselves?

Verse 12: "Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.'"

The spiritual lesson of this verse is extremely serious. Moses did not obey God's charge to have the rock yield water, but struck the rock. We may perhaps think that this was merely an unintentional fault, but God's judgment is extremely severe. Moses' disobedience became Moses' unbelief, and Aaron, standing beside him without stopping Moses, also became Aaron's unbelief. They deviated from God's charge — even if only a little — and this became a failure to hallow God before the Israelites. Their punishment was that they could not enter the good land of Canaan that God promised, and this is truly very severe.

Moses personally led the Israelites out of Egypt; how many difficulties they passed through in between, how many stations they traveled through, and Moses was always faithful, while Aaron also always stood beside Moses, serving the Israelites in the capacity of high priest. The two of them had both merit and painstaking labor; why, for committing only this one error, could they not enter the promised

land? Is this punishment not too heavy? We must understand this matter from the truth of the New Testament, and only then will we truly understand the seriousness of this matter.

In 1 Corinthians 10:4, "and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." The Israelites in the wilderness drank the water flowing out of the rock, and Paul tells us that this rock was Christ. In Exodus 17:6: "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." This was the first time Moses, according to God's charge, struck the rock with the rod at Rephidim, and the rock poured out water. Moses' rod typifies the law; Jesus was born under the law and was originally completely without sin, yet He bore the sins people had committed and was judged according to the law — this is the striking of the rock with the rod, and the rock poured out water to quench people's thirst.

Let us read John 7:37-39, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Here Jesus first foretells that out of His innermost being will flow rivers of living water, and these rivers are the Holy Spirit, able to quench everyone's thirst. John 19:34: "But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out." Jesus was nailed to the cross, and a soldier took a spear and pierced His side, and water and blood came out. The blood washes away man's sin; the water supplies life and quenches man's thirst.

John 20:22, "And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" This was on the evening of the day of His resurrection, when Jesus came to the place where the disciples were gathered and showed them the spear wound in His side, and breathed on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. At this point, the striking of the rock, with the rock yielding water to quench people's thirst, this prophecy pointing to Jesus Christ was completely fulfilled. Those who believe in the Lord can at any time take the living water flowing out of

the rock, which is the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit can quench every spiritual thirst.

For the new generation of Israelites, God wanted Moses to speak to the rock to yield water, because redemption has already been accomplished; there is no longer any need to strike the rock — one need only speak to the rock, and the living water will flow out. This concerns God's eternal plan of redemption. Christ accomplished redemption once for all, ascended to the heights, and gave the Holy Spirit; whoever believes in Jesus obtains salvation and has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, becoming a child of the heavenly Father; he need only draw on it and there is abundant supply.

Hebrews 6:6, "if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame." The writer of Hebrews especially warns us that we must not crucify Christ again, for this is to put Him to an open shame. So Moses, in his anger, struck the rock, violating the truth of God's plan of redemption. On this point, God is extremely strict, and cannot allow even the slightest error that would make the truth become blurred. Aaron, standing beside Moses without stopping him, likewise could not, just as Moses could not, enter the promised good land. Dear brothers and sisters, I hope that this matter leaves a deep impression on us all: the truth does not permit any deviation whatever, and God's requirement of His servants concerning the truth is exceedingly strict; we must all take warning from this.

Verse 13: "This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them."

This water is to be called the water of Meribah; the meaning of Meribah is contention. The Israelites, because of thirst, contended with God, and God brought water out of the rock and was hallowed before the Israelites. Very particularly, in Exodus chapter 17, God told Moses to strike the rock to bring forth water, and in 17:7, Moses named Rephidim Meribah, to commemorate that they had contended before God. In both contentions, the people of Israel had water to drink, but for

Moses as the leader there was a different outcome. The contention at Kadesh became the regret of Moses' whole life, because he could not enter the good land.

Psalm 106:32-33, "They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses on account of them; because they rebelled against His Spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips." The psalmist records the two contentions at Meribah, and especially how the second one made God angry, and even Moses suffered loss, and the reason Moses suffered loss was that the Israelites provoked his spirit, so that Moses spoke rash words with his mouth.

Generally speaking, when our soul is stirred up, it can still be calmed by the spirit; but if the spirit is provoked, the soul will become stirred up along with it, and the mouth of the body will speak unsuitable words. And who, apart from Satan, is able to provoke a person's spirit? The writer of the Psalms points out that this is a spiritual warfare; if a person is not continually under the control of the Holy Spirit, it is very hard to resist Satan's schemes. Moses' failure this time caused him to lose the blessing of entering the good land, which truly makes one feel it is a pity — he who was so faithful in all God's house of Israel according to God's will.

If we look ahead, the five books of Moses end at Deuteronomy chapter 34. In Deuteronomy 34:1-5, God brought Moses up Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, and God gave Moses a view of the whole land of Israel, and told Moses that this was the good land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Although Moses could not enter in, he did see it with his own eyes; this was God's extra grace.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. Because Moses struck the rock a second time, he lost the blessing of entering the good land; this is to remind us that the truth of redemption does not permit the slightest deviation. This concerns God's eternal will. Keep us always living under the control of the Holy Spirit, and do not let our flesh come to the fore. We know that Satan uses every kind of opportunity, continually seeking to provoke our spirit so that our flesh will come to the fore. We ask the Lord to help us, in all things and at every moment, to seek spiritual covering. Only when we can continually live under the control of the Holy Spirit will we not

lose spiritual blessing. May God bless my daily life. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.