

God as a Rock—Provision, Protection, and Presence

This article explores the biblical revelation concerning the divine epithet *Rock* ascribed to God. Most designations of God have characteristics shared with human beings, such as Father, Son, Lord, Husband, King, Shepherd, Judge, Lawmaker, Witness, Savior, Deliverer, and Helper. *Rock* numbers among the few inanimate predications of God, such as *shield*, *fortress*, *high tower*, *consuming fire*, *sun*, and *light*. God and rock have a number of shared characteristics, including fluidity (in its molten state), solidity, and durability. In the Bible both God and rock are spoken of in reference to not only a source of provision (e.g., water, food, and materials) and protection (shelter and dependability) but also to His presence, His person. Perhaps *Rock* is the only inanimate designation of God used as a vocative title that is capitalized in Bible versions¹ (e.g., Hab. 1:12; Deut. 32:15, 18, 30-31). *Rock* is also the subject or agent of a number of actions usually associated with animate subjects, such as begetting, saving, helping, following, speaking, and living.² According to the divine revelation in the Bible, *Rock* (along with its derivative, *stones*) is a crucial symbol not only of God in His eternal purpose as the source and material of His building but also of His union with the believers through which they enjoy His provision, protection, and presence for their transformation and His building.

Characteristics of Rocks and Stones

There are three kinds of rocks: igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic. Rocks originate from molten, hot material in the mantle layer lying about forty to one hundred twenty-five miles beneath the surface of the earth's crust. This mantle layer is in motion, driven by convection currents that occur due to differences in temperature.³ This causes an upwelling of hot, molten material called magma (from the Greek verb *massein*, meaning "to knead," "to mold"), which cools as it penetrates the crust or flows onto the earth's surface and solidifies or crystallizes as igneous (fire-formed) rock.

When igneous rock is exposed to the earth's atmosphere and the processes occurring on the earth, the mineral matter dissolves, decomposes, or disintegrates into sediment and soil, which is essential for the growth of organic matter on the earth. These sediments, along with decaying organic material, can be carried by water and wind and

deposited in basins where, under the pressure of the weight of sediment over time, they are compressed to form sedimentary rock.

As rocks undergo a combination of pressure and heat (especially at plate boundaries), they are further changed, or transformed, into metamorphic rocks. Rocks can change in texture, and the minerals of rocks are frequently recrystallized. It is during these kinds of processes that gemstone formation occurs.

Rocks have the characteristics of being fluid in origin (able to flow into areas where they did not previously exist), solid in the sense of being dependable (e.g., able to bear weight), and durable (resistant to change and long lasting). However, they may also develop cracks and fissures, which can allow liquids such as water or mineral-rich solutions to flow in (to form gemstones) and flow out. Rocks can also break down into smaller blocks, which can be cut, shaped, and fashioned into smaller segments of material, i.e., stones for building and adornment. Yet, at the same time, they retain the characteristics of the larger mass (e.g., durability, color, etc.).

The Triune God personifies some of these characteristics of rocks. As the Father, He is the deep, hidden source of life, who through incarnation "flowed" with the Son into humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, who "solidified" the Father as "rock," making Him tangible and accessible. The incarnated Christ is a God-man, the mingling of God and man. As the Son of Man, He constitutes "the essence of the building of God" (Lee, *John* 56). Christ was also willing to be broken, pierced, on the cross to release the flowing God as the Spirit into others and to make Himself enterable to the believers. Now in resurrection the life-giving Spirit imparted into us transforms us through the process of mingling Himself with us, thereby making us precious stones for God's building. As we allow the cross to work on us to break our soul, the faculties of our soul are transformed (Rom. 12:1-2), enabling us to flow rivers of living water out of our innermost being into others for their transformation (John 7:38-39).

Words Used for Rocks and Stones

Although sometimes used synonymously, *rocks* and *stones*

usually refer to different aspects of the same substance—the hard, solid mineral material of the earth. As singular mass nouns, *rock* and *stone* emphasize substance. As count nouns, they indicate parts of the mass. *Rocks* usually refers to masses of hard, solid mineral substance exposed on or projecting above the earth’s surface (such as cliffs or crags) or larger distinct portions of such mass (such as boulders) and indicates permanence, protection, or stability. *Stones* usually refers to smaller portions of rock and may be used for building materials (such as foundation stones, cornerstones, or topstones) or for adorning (such as precious stones, jewels, or gemstones).

The two main Hebrew words used for *rock* are *tsur* and *sela’*. *Tsur* may be related to the verb root *tsarar*, meaning “to press, or constrict,” indicating the origin of rock as being from under heat and pressure. This Hebrew word refers to rock as a symbol of firmness and enduring material, as a rocky wall or cliff as a place of security and defense, or as a boulder or large rock. It occurs seventy-three times in the Bible, and twenty-five times it is used as an epithet of God. *Tsur* is compounded in the theophoric names *Tsuriel* or *Zuriel*, “my rock is *El* (God)” (Num. 3:35); *Tsurishaddai* or *Zurishaddai*, “my rock is *Shaddai* (the Almighty, the All-sufficient One)” (1:6); and probably *Pedahzur*, “the Rock has ransomed or redeemed” (v. 10).⁴ *Sela’* also is used for *rock*, especially for an elevated rocky crag or cliff, perhaps sharing the same biconsonantal root *sl* as the verbs *salal* (“lift up”) or *salaq* (“go up, ascend”) (Psa. 139:8). *Sela’* is also a figure of security and often refers to rock that is cleft or fissured—which enables it to be inhabited (Num. 24:21). *Sela* was the name of a city of Edom, an elevated dwelling place, traditionally identified with the Nabatean city Petra, a city similarly situated in rock (2 Kings 14:7; Jer. 49:16-17; Obad. 3). *Sela’* occurs sixty-two times in the Bible and at least five times is used to refer to God as “my rock” (Psa. 42:9; 71:3) or “my crag” (2 Sam. 22:2; Psa. 18:2; 31:3). Five times another Hebrew word, *halamish* (“flint”), is used (Deut. 8:15; 32:13; Psa. 114:8). Flint is a fine, calcified rock that has undergone some transformation below ground before it is brought to the surface.

The main Hebrew word for *stone* is *’eben*. This word refers to a single stone, collections of stones, precious stones, and building materials. It is used in reference to God as “the stone of Israel” (Gen. 49:24) and in the name *Ebenezer*, “stone of help,” in the context of God helping Israel in their battle against the Philistines (1 Sam. 7:12; 4:1).

The main Greek word for *rock* is *petra*. This word is used in the translation of both *sela’* and *tsur* in the Septuagint and refers to rock, a cliff, and a large stone. The noun *petros* occurs more rarely and is also used to refer to stone or rock, but its most well-known use is in the new personal name of Peter, one of the leading apostles (Matt. 16:18). The main Greek word for *stone* is *lithos*. This word is used mostly for the translation of *’eben* in the Septuagint. It is used to indicate small stones, large stones, precious stones, and building stones.

The Split Rock as a Source of Supply— a Type of the Crucified Christ

Tsur is first mentioned in the Bible in Exodus 17:6. The imagery that this word evokes is striking. When the children of Israel came to Rephidim—also called Mas-sah (“testing”) and Meribah (“contention”)—on their way to Mount Sinai, they complained concerning three things: provision—they had no water to drink (v. 2); protection—Moses brought them out of Egypt to be abandoned in the wilderness to die of thirst (v. 3); and God’s presence—they questioned by asking, “Is Jehovah among us or not?” (v. 7).⁵ Jehovah’s response took care of all three complaints. Jehovah stood upon the rock in Horeb and charged Moses to strike the rock with his staff so that water could come out of it for the people to drink (v. 6). Rock elsewhere signifies protection (Psa. 31:2; Exo. 33:22). Jehovah’s standing upon the rock connected His presence with the rock, and the water that came forth out of the rock was the provision that the Israelites were seeking. This picture has striking typological significance:

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The striking of the rock is a clear, complete, and full picture of Christ’s crucifixion...The striking of the rock by Moses’ staff signifies that Christ was put to death on the cross by the authority of God’s law (cf. Gal. 2:19-20a; 3:13).

The water flowing out of the smitten rock typifies the Spirit (John 7:37-39). Through incarnation Christ came to the earth as a rock. On the cross He was smitten by the authority of God’s righteous law to accomplish God’s redemption. His side was pierced, and living water flowed out for God’s people to drink (John 19:34 and note). (Lee, Recovery Version, Exo. 17:6, notes 2 and 3)

Toward the end of their forty years of wandering in the wilderness, when the children of Israel came to Kadesh-barnea, there was a similar demand for the

provision of water because of thirst. This time God instructed Moses by saying, “Take the rod, and gather the assembly, you and Aaron your brother, and speak to the rock [*sela'*] before their eyes, so that it yields its water” (Num. 20:8).⁶ Rather than following Jehovah’s instructions, Moses called the people rebels and struck the rock twice with his rod. Moses’ disobedience had serious consequences, including his being prohibited from entering into the land of Canaan (v. 12; 27:13-14). Moses’ transgression was serious not only because he disobeyed Jehovah, failing to sanctify Him before the children of Israel, but also because he spoiled the type of Christ as the smitten rock by striking the rock twice, which erroneously signifies that Christ needed to be crucified again, thus “putting Him to open shame” (Heb. 6:6).

The recounting of the provision of water flowing out of the smitten rock occurs a number of times in the Bible, using both Hebrew words for *rock*—*tsur* and *sela'*—perhaps reflecting the two distinct accounts of water coming forth from the rock in Exodus and Numbers respectively, although *tsur* is most commonly used in the other references.⁷ In Deuteronomy 8:15 we are told that the rock from which the water flowed was a flint rock (*tsur halamish*). Deuteronomy 32 introduces and develops the notion of food and drink coming out of the rock, saying, “He made him suck honey out of a crag [*sela'*], / And oil out of flint rock [*tsur*]” (v. 13; cf. Psa. 81:16). In Psalms there are several references to the accounts of water flowing out of the rock in Exodus and Numbers. God

split rocks (*tsur*) in the wilderness / And gave them abundant drink, as from the depths. / He also brought forth streams from the rock (*sela'*) / And made water run down like rivers / ...Behold, He struck the rock (*tsur*), / And water gushed out, / And streams overflowed. (78:15-16, 20)

Jehovah “opened the rock, and water gushed forth; / It ran in the dry places like a river” (105:41). God “turns the rock into a pool of water, / The flint [*halamish*] into a fountain of water” (114:8). Isaiah also mentions that Israel “did not thirst / When He led them through the dry places; / He caused water to flow from the rock for them; / And He split the rock, / And the waters gushed out” (48:21). Nehemiah also acknowledges that Jehovah “made water come forth from a rock [*sela'*] for them / For their thirst” (Neh. 9:15).

The Following Rock

Larry Kreitzer in “1 Corinthians 10:4 and Philo’s Flinty Rock” notes, “The fact that the two OT stories come from the beginning and end of the wilderness wanderings respectively gave rise to the many rabbinic stories of the ‘rock of Horeb’ following the people of Israel through the

wanderings in the wilderness” (110). Paul picks up on this notion when he relates the experience of the children of Israel to the believers in Corinth: “All drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock [*petra*] which followed them, and the rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4). By saying that the rock was Christ, Paul strengthens the notion that God, who is embodied in Christ, was identified with the rock at Horeb and that His wounded side pierced for our redemption opens the way for us not only to approach God and partake of the spiritual supply of the divine life signified by the water but also to dwell in Him, protected from attacks from the enemy, and to live in His presence.

The Cleft Rock as a Place of Protection— a Type of the Crucified Christ

Clefts and fissures, such as the opening from which water flowed in Exodus 17 and Numbers 20, allow rocks to be entered and even inhabited. After the first account of water coming from the rock, Moses entered into a cleft in the rock, having requested to see Jehovah’s glory. In the rock Moses was protected from seeing God’s unapproachable presence (Exo. 33:20; 3:6; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1:17; John 1:18). Moses was told, “While My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by” (Exo. 33:22). The Hebrew word translated “cleft” (*neqarah*) implies a hole or crevice produced by boring, picking, or digging (from the verb *naqar*). At least typologically, the cleft points to the crucified Christ and His wounded side. As Witness Lee states, “Christ is the cleft rock, the everlasting rock cleft for us (see 17:6 and notes). Only in the crucified Christ can we see God (cf. Matt. 5:8; Rev. 22:4)” (Recovery Version, Exo. 33:22, note 1).

In the Bible, entering into the cleft of the rock indicates shelter from enemies or a place to hide (Isa. 2:21; Jer. 13:4; 16:16; Rev. 6:15-16; 1 Sam. 13:6; cf. S. S. 2:14). In the New Testament revelation the rock is a picture of our organic union with Christ in whom we dwell and can shelter and hide from the accusations of the enemy through our oneness with Him as the redeeming and regenerating One, from whose pierced side the blood and water flowed (Rev. 12:11). We stand upon His redemptive work. This notion is admirably captured in Augustus M. Toplady’s classic hymn (*Hymns*, #1058): “Rock of Ages, cleft for me, / Let me hide myself in Thee; / Let the water and the blood, / From Thy riven side which flowed, / Be of sin the double cure, / Save me from its guilt and power.”

Witness Lee speaks of the experiential implications of the cleft rock as our hiding place or refuge, saying,

The crucified Christ as the cleft rock is our standing and hiding before the manifested God...[so that] we can

communicate with and contact God[,] [bringing together] the merciful and governmental God and the rebellious, stiff-necked people. (*Divine Trinity* 43)

In Deuteronomy a rock as a refuge or protection is mentioned, in reference to the Israelites in captivity (after being sold by God their Rock) looking to the gods of the nations as a rock for their refuge. This implies that the Israelites should have looked to Israel's God as their only true refuge (32:37). David refers to God as a rock in terms of protection in his song written on the day when Jehovah delivered him from the hand of his enemies, in particular Saul (2 Sam. 22:1). David says, "Jehovah is my crag and my fortress and my Deliverer; / My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; / My shield and the horn of my salvation, my high retreat and my refuge; / My Savior" (vv. 2-3, parallel with Psa. 18:2). In 2 Samuel 2 David also refers to God as a shield and a strong fortress (vv. 31-33). Elsewhere David and other psalmists combine notions of shelter and protection—implied in the terms *crag*, *rock*, *high retreat*, and *refuge*—with military images of fortress, shield, and horn of salvation (31:2; 71:3; 94:22; cf. Isa. 17:10). Since David sought shelter from his enemies in places such as the rock in the cave of Adullam (1 Chron. 11:15; 1 Sam. 22:1; cf. Psa. 27:5), the Rocks of the Wild Goats (1 Sam. 24:2), and the rock in the wilderness of Maon (23:25), he must have realized that his true protection was not in a rock cave but in God as the reality of that protection (Psa. 62:7; cf. Isa. 26:4). Isaiah 32:2 also points to this kind of protection: "A man will be like a refuge from the wind / And a covering from the tempest, / Like streams of water in a dry place, / Like the shadow of a massive rock in a wasted land." Here the man as a massive rock refers to Christ as the Son of Man protecting, covering, supplying, and overshadowing in His ruling during the millennial kingdom (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 2, note 1). One of the psalmists even considered that Jehovah was not just a temporary place of protection; He was a rock of permanent habitation (*ma'on*) (Psa. 71:3; Deut. 26:15). In our union with God in Christ as the rock, we can enjoy His personal presence with His provision and protection.

Rock Indicating God's Person or Presence

The notion of God as Rock in a personal sense is seen when *Rock* is parallel to or modified by another name or title for God (especially in Hebrew poetry), is used as a vocative (especially with a possessive pronoun), and is used with verbs usually associated with animate agents.

In Deuteronomy 32 at least four times *Rock* is used in a personal sense to refer to God, in parallel with *God* in the poetic structure. The Rock is parallel with a God of faithfulness (v. 4), the Rock of Israel's salvation is parallel with the God who made them (v. 15), the Rock who begot them is parallel with the God who travailed with them (v. 18), and the Rock who sold them is parallel with Jehovah who delivered them up (v. 30). Apart from Deuteronomy 32, the appellative 'rock' modifies or parallels *Yhwh* some ten times (2 Sam. 22:47 // Psa. 18:46, 2; 19:14; 28:1; 92:15; 95:1; 144:1; Isa. 26:4; Hab. 1:12), *El* twice (Psa. 18:2; 89:26), and *Elohim*, again, in eleven instances (1 Sam. 2:2; 2 Sam. 22:32 // Psa. 18:31; 2 Sam. 22:47; 23:3; Psa. 42:9; 62:7; 73:26; 78:35; 94:22; Isa. 17:10) (cf. Knowles 308, who has slightly different numbers).

As mentioned above, *Rock* is perhaps the only inanimate epithet of God used as a vocative, as One whom we call on and to whom we may speak (cf. Num. 20); "To You, O Jehovah, do I call out; / My rock, do not be deaf to me" (Psa. 28:1; cf. 31:2); "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart / Be acceptable before You, / O Jehovah, my rock and my Redeemer" (19:14); "O Jehovah, You have appointed them for judgment; / And You, O Rock, have established them for correction" (Hab. 1:12); "I say to God my rock, / Why have You forgotten me?" (Psa. 42:9); and "Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation" (95:1).

God as the rock is very personal. At least twelve times He is the psalmist's rock, referred to as "my rock," and three times *rock* occurs with other personal pronouns. He is also the rock of the psalmist's heart, the one whom he can depend on and trust in (73:26).

As our rock, He is incomparable. There is no rock like our God (1 Sam. 2:2; cf. Deut. 32:31). David asked the question, "Who is a rock except our God?" (2 Sam. 22:32). Isaiah expresses a similar notion, declaring that there no other rock besides God (Isa. 44:8).

Another striking matter related to the personal Rock are the unexpected verbs or phrases used with Him, verbs and phrases not usually associated with an inanimate subject such as a rock: His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice (Deut. 32:4); He begets His people (v. 18); and He sells them (into captivity, v. 30).⁸ As the Rock of Israel, He speaks to David (2 Sam. 23:3). As the psalmist's rock, He teaches his hands for war (Psa. 144:1). God is a Rock of salvation, saving His people (Deut. 32:15; 2 Sam.

One of the psalmists even considered that Jehovah was not just a temporary place of protection; He was a rock of permanent habitation.

22:47; Psa. 89:26; 95:1). God is the psalmist's rock and his salvation (62:2, 6), and Jehovah is called the psalmist's and the Israelites' rock and Deliverer (2 Sam. 22:32; Psa. 18:2) and their rock and Redeemer (19:14; 78:35). Whereas the Old Testament psalmists' experience of the rock of salvation may primarily concern deliverance from physical enemies, we need, as New Testament believers, to consider God as the rock of salvation in light of God's organic salvation that delivers us from inward problems, such as sin and death, and transforms us through the impartation of the divine life and nature into us to make us living stones for God's building.

There are a few other personal references to God as a rock that are related to God's building. Jehovah is an eternal rock in whom we can trust (Isa. 26:4), and on whom God's building is founded. Going to the mountain of Jehovah, where God establishes His dwelling place, is parallel to going to the Rock of Israel, who dwells there (30:29).

In addition to these positive aspects of the rock, God in Christ, as the One appointed for God's building, is presented as a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to those who reject Him. Yet to those who believe on Him, He is revealed as salvation from shame and the means for them to be transformed into living stones as precious materials for God's building (28:16; Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:4-8). Christ, especially Christ crucified, is a rock of offense, or a stumbling block, to the Jewish builders of God's house (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23; Psa. 118:22).

The Rock as the Foundation of the Church

In the New Testament the image of a rock is used at least twice to indicate a proper foundation for a building. The Lord told a parable about those who hear His words and do them being like a prudent man who builds his house upon the rock, which is able to withstand rain, rivers, and winds (Matt. 7:24-25). The church is built upon the rock (Gk. *petra*), the revelation concerning Christ as the unique foundation of the church (16:18; 1 Cor. 3:10-11). The revelation concerning Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, was given to Simon, who was surnamed Peter (Gk. *Petros*; Aramaic *Kepha'*, "stone or broken piece of rock") by the Lord. Although the Lord is the foundation, Peter may be considered part of this foundation. This is because the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20) and because the New Jerusalem is built on twelve foundations inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles (Rev. 21:14).

The foundation of the church is Christ (1 Cor. 3:11). Because the mystery of Christ was revealed to the apostles (3:5-6), the revelation they received is considered the foundation on which the church is built. This corresponds

with the rock in Matt. 16:18, which is not only Christ but also the revelation concerning Christ, on which Christ will build His church. Therefore, the foundation of the apostles and prophets is the revelation they received for the building of the church. (Lee, Recovery Version, Eph. 2:20, note 2)

Christ and the revelation concerning Himself, which was given to the apostles and prophets, is the foundation of the church. The building materials of the church are not rock in its massive sense, but stones, including not only Christ as a living stone, who is the unique foundation stone, cornerstone, and topstone in God's building, but also the believers as precious stones that have passed through transformation and are thus fashioned as materials of the divine building (1 Pet. 2:4-5; Isa. 28:16; Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:12; Zech. 4:7).

Conclusion

The designation of God as Rock signifies God as the source of provision, protection, and His personal presence among the children of Israel. God as a rock points to God's ultimate intention to build Himself into humanity as an eternal dwelling place. The rock constitutes the foundation and also the material for God's building. In order for the material for the divine building to be produced, God "flowed" Himself into humanity through incarnation, and when Christ died on the cross—symbolized by the cleft rock—blood and water flowed from His pierced side for our complete salvation. His cleft side became an opening for us to enter into and dwell in God's presence, sheltered and protected from the attacks of the enemy. In His presence and based on His redeeming blood, we drink the water of life, which transforms us, men of clay, into precious stones that are suitable for God's building. As we allow the Lord's death to work in us, we become channels to flow rivers of living water into others for their transformation.

by Roger Good

Notes

¹Such as NASB, NIV, and ESV, which follow the convention of capitalizing epithets referring to divinity.

²Spirit/breath/wind is another designation of God that shares animate characteristics and predicates.

³It is thought that these convection currents cause the movement of the plates of the earth's surface relative to each other (plate tectonics). Along these plate boundaries earthquakes occur, mountain ranges are formed, and rocks are produced or transformed under tremendous heat and pressure produced by the colliding plates. The Bible also testifies to this activity, along with its speaking concerning Jehovah's work in

the heavens and the human spirit: Jehovah “stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him” (Zech. 12:1). The verbs in this verse are participles in Hebrew, indicating continuous and on-going action; that is, the heavens are still being stretched forth (expanding universe), the foundations of the earth are still being laid (plate tectonics and rock cycle), and the spirit of man is still being formed or worked on (by the operation of the processed Triune God as the consummated Spirit working to transform humanity, beginning from the mingled spirit of man—the human spirit mingled with the divine Spirit—spreading to the soul, and even giving life to his mortal body). While the actions of creating the heavens and the earth and forming the spirit of man have already taken place (Gen. 1:1; 2:7), God’s work on and His purpose with them are still in progress.

⁴Cf. *Pedahel*, meaning “God has ransomed” (Num. 34:28), and *Pedaiah*, meaning “Jah has ransomed” (2 Kings 23:36).

⁵Ryken identifies these three aspects of the Israelites’ complaint (449).

⁶Some consider it noteworthy or typologically significant that *sela’* is used twice in Numbers 20:8 (rather than *tsur*, used in Exodus 17). Based on the biconsonantal root *sl*, meaning “high,” they consider that *sela’* refers to the ascended Christ. To require the ascended Christ to be crucified again is not only an insult to all that He endured on the cross but also a denial of its efficacy in establishing an eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12).

⁷In the accounts of striking the rock in the wilderness, the verbs *split* (Psa. 78:15; Isa. 48:21), *strike* (Psa. 78:20), and *open* (105:41) are used only with *tsur* and never with *sela’*. The only verb used with *sela’* is *come forth* or *bring forth* in reference to water (Neh. 9:15; Psa. 78:16), perhaps reinforcing that Moses’ striking the rock (*sela’*) in Numbers 20 was not ordained by God, whose charge to Moses in this chapter was that he speak to the rock so that he could “bring forth” water (v. 8).

⁸It seems the Septuagint translators struggled with the notion of God as a Rock, substituting θεός (“God”) to avoid the imagery of a literal translation. In places where God is also mentioned in the context, they would often use a more acceptable, abstract notion, such as help or redeemer, in an attempt to “render such language in less chthonic [subterranean] terms” (Thiessen 103). As Staffan Olofsson points out, they translated *tsur* as “God” at least twenty times, “help” or “protector” six times, “guard” four times, and as another divine epithet “Lord” or “Creator” or the adjectives “righteous” or “great” five times. *Sela’* as a reference to God is rendered “strength” or “power” three times and “protector” or “defender” one time (155-156).

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To those who believe on Him,
He is revealed as the means for
them to be transformed into
living stones as precious materials
for God’s building.

Footnote from the Recovery Version of the Bible

“You yourselves also, as **living** stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet. 2:5)

living: We, the believers in Christ, are living stones, like Christ, through regeneration and transformation. We were created of clay (Rom. 9:21). But at regeneration we received the seed of the divine life, which by its growing in us transforms us into living stones. At Peter’s conversion the Lord gave him a new name, Peter—a stone (John 1:42); and when Peter received the revelation concerning Christ, the Lord revealed further that He was the rock—a stone (Matt. 16:16-18). By these two incidents Peter received the impression that both Christ and His believers are stones for God’s building.