

The Stone

...The one thing the Middle East does not lack is stones. They are everywhere. Even in the most fertile places in the Holy Land, stones lie readily visible, often marking land or crop boundaries with fences composed of carefully and strategically placed stones. In some places, including the Judean wilderness in Israel, virtually no vegetation exists; all that can be seen are stones.

What makes a stone a stone? Is there any difference between a stone and a rock, or are they synonymous? For instance, David used five smooth stones when going into battle against Goliath. Do these stones differ in any way from rocks? In some way they may. Webster's dictionary defines stone as "the hard, solid non-metallic mineral matter of rock." So can a stone exist within a rock?

This is something worth pondering because the Bible contains many references to both God the Rock and God the Stone. David writes in Psalm 18:1-2, "I love You, O LORD, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge." In presenting Himself as the God who declares and controls all world events past, present, and future, God attests to Himself, asking, "Is there any God besides Me, or is there any other Rock? I know of none" (Isa. 44:8).

An interesting pronouncement occurs in Genesis when the elder Jacob/Israel blessed his children, declaring, "The archers bitterly attacked him, and shot at him and harassed him; but his bow remained firm, and his arms were agile, from the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, *the Stone of Israel*)" (Gen. 49:23-24). Jacob actually indicated two separate designations of the One who would come from the Mighty One of Jacob—namely, the Shepherd and the Stone of Israel.

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