

Exodus, Part 10

In our last session, we saw how “the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness” (16:2) because they had no food to eat. They were over a month into their wilderness journey and apparently, they had exhausted their grain for bread and livestock they had brought out of Egypt. They complained to Moses and Aaron, “You have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger” (16:3). Though their grumbling was directed at Moses and Aaron, Moses noted that “Your grumbling is not against us but against the Lord.” As the author of their circumstances, it was God who brought them to the place they found themselves. And it was a test so the Lord could demonstrate His faithfulness to them and build their faith.

The Lord gracefully responded and promised Moses He would give the Israelites quail to eat that evening and “bread” in the morning. The Hebrew word for “bread” is *lechem* and is mostly translated as “bread” but can also be translated as “food”. The quail came in the evening of the day they complained to Moses, and the “bread” or manna came the next morning and each morning thereafter. So the quail came once and the “bread” came every day thereafter. The Israelites were to gather the manna daily, and what they gathered would be sufficient for that day only. Any kept overnight would spoil and be infested with maggots and stink.

There was one exception to that rule. On the sixth day of the week, they were to gather enough manna for two days. The additional day’s worth would be kept and not spoil to be consumed on the seventh day which was declared to be a day dedicated to the Lord, a sabbath. The Israelites would remain in their tents and do no labor including gathering manna. Those who ignored this instruction and went out to gather manna found there was none left by the Lord to gather.

There are lessons here in the timing of these events and these explicit instructions regarding the gathering of the manna. You will note that the quail came only once before the manna showed up the next morning and the following mornings. The quail did not come again. Why?

Unlike the manna which was provided daily the quail came only once and *before* the manna showed up. In order to provide sustenance for the Israelites, the quail, a living breathing creature, had to die. God was teaching the Israelites a lesson here. The quail in its death should be seen as the Cross and the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the quail was nutritional salvation for Israel in the wilderness, Christ is our salvation in the wilderness of our depravity. He died to provide a means of salvation for all who would receive Him and trust in what He did for us. The quail coming only once before the manna and experiencing death to sustain the Israelites represents the completed work of Christ on the Cross. Because the quail pictured the completed work of Christ on the Cross they came only once.

On the other hand, the manna (bread) was provided every day of the week counting the double portion on the sixth day to cover the seventh. For Israel, the manna represented their being sustained daily in the wilderness. They had to gather the manna daily to supply that day's needs, and since it could not be saved for future use because it spoiled, they had to have faith that a fresh supply would be available each day. The manna is then a picture of the Christian's daily walk in faith and being spiritually and physically sustained with the believer's daily needs fully provided by our Lord.

Matthew 8:11 Give us this day our daily bread ...

John 6:32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

"Gives life to the world" refers to our eternal life that the believer possesses now and can use daily. It is our walk of faith (Galatians 5:16) through which the Holy Spirit supplies the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), that nine-word description of the very lifestyle that Christ lived here on earth and the believer can experience (live) here and now.

Colossians 1:27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Our walk of faith means that Christ is formed in us and we can live the very same lifestyle He lived when He was here on earth, what Paul in Galatians called the Fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

This fruit is the very lifestyle of our Lord, the lifestyle the believer will experience in glory, but we can experience it (our eternal life) right here and right now. How? By walking in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Ephesians 3:16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

So the quail represents the one-time event of the Cross and salvation while the manna represents our “daily bread,” our daily walk with God and His support. For our salvation, we need to trust in the spilled blood of the “quail” (our Lord) only once, but we need His sustaining provisions (the manna from Heaven) to see us through each day, and we should never be in fear that all that our daily needs will not be provided.

These two food sources, the quail and the manna, are grace products from God. The Israelites did not deserve this grace. They did nothing to earn it. They had only complained to Moses and, in the process of blaming him for their situation, they were really blaming God. And that is especially troubling considering their recent deliverance through the Red Sea and the bitter waters of Marah becoming sweet. Did not these two miracles, not to even mention the ten plagues in Egypt, convince them of God’s benevolence and ability to provide for their needs? Apparently not. The

moment they hit a new test they fail it and return to complaining. This is a troubling pattern with these Israelites and also among many believers today. Too quickly we forget the source of our blessings, and when something goes wrong, we revert to “complaining”.

When we find ourselves bewildered in the wilderness of life, doubts creep in, and we focus on the blessing (or lack thereof) and not the source. These tests are designed to teach us something about God and ourselves. Who are we going to trust? Do we believe God knows of our situation and has a solution? Or do we prefer to think we are doomed and seek a human viewpoint solution? There is always a solution if we seek it in the right place.

Dr. David Jeremiah said, “If you’ve never had a test, you can’t have a testimony.” How we respond to a test tells us what kind of a Christian we are.

Water from the Rock

Exodus 17:1 All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ² Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?” ³ But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” ⁴ So Moses cried to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.”

The children of Israel continued their journey to Mt. Sinai where they would receive the Mosaic Covenant (The Law). They eventually came to Rephidim where they found no water. For the fourth time, the people complained. This time they went beyond grumbling; they *quarreled* with Moses. The word means to strive or contend. It is an attitude that God is insufficient in difficulties.

At Marah they had asked Moses, “What shall we drink?” At Rephidim, after the three food miracles they had already witnessed along the way, they demanded that Moses produce water as if he were the source.

Moses considered himself powerless. Quarreling with *him* would do them no good. He warned them that they were putting God to the test with their demand. Hebrews 3:7–13 refers to this incident and concludes that such “quarreling” leads to hardness of heart and loss of standing with God.

Hebrews 3:7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

“Today, if you hear his voice,

⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,

⁹ where your fathers put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.

¹⁰ Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart;
they have not known my ways.’

¹¹ As I swore in my wrath,
‘They shall not enter my rest.’ ”

¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving
heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one
another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may
be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

They continued to accuse Moses of leading them out into the wilderness to their deaths and were on the verge of stoning him to death. This drove the prophet to his knees where he went to God for help.

Such quarreling, Moses said, was putting the Lord to the test (v. 2), that is, they were challenging the Lord or trying His patience (v. 7) rather than trusting Him. One would think by now the Israelites would have gotten the message from all the previous miracles, and yet, they did not. And at this point, you would think that Moses had enjoyed about as much of this complaining bunch as he could stand. His frustrations with them are indeed beginning to show. But this isn’t the last time he will have to contend with them. They continued to fall into a lack of faith in the God who was leading them.

But then don't we all?

We want our "problem" solved right now and exactly the way we think it ought to be solved. I believe we are seeing that here. They are angry that they are in this situation and that the problem of the lack of drinking water has been *allowed* to reach a point where they are now facing extreme discomfort and maybe even death. Where is the "leadership" that *allowed* this to happen? They seek someone to blame, and since God isn't handy, but His representative Moses is, he becomes their target in God's absence.

Exodus 17:5 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 staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ 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, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

God was patient with His disobedient and grumbling people. The Lord directed Moses to leave the camp and take some of the elders with him to serve as reliable witnesses. He told Moses to take the staff with which he had struck the Nile River (7:20) and to strike a rock at Horeb (17:6). This "staff of God" (4:20; 17:9) was a symbol of power; holding it was a sign of dependence and trust in God. But the rock should be seen as a picture of Christ as suggested in First Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 10:1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ

Though Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai, Israel did not camp at Sinai until later (19:1). However, "Horeb" can also mean the Sinai region,

thus it would be close to Mt. Sinai. There is a rock near the mountain identified as Mt. Sinai in Arabia that appears to be split, and the rocks around it exhibit water erosion.

In Moses' striking the rock, the Lord was pleased to satiate His thirsty people with an abundant supply of water. So the Lord provided for them through another miracle. Because the people had tested the Lord there, Moses called the place by two names: Massah ("testing") and Meribah ("quarreling").

Here we have yet another nugget buried in the text. Compare the following verses with what happened at Horeb.

Isaiah 53:4 Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53:8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?

Isaiah 53 is an Old Testament picture of our Lord's death on the Cross. It uses the same terminology as the Exodus passage that speaks of "striking" the rock of Horeb to produce water. In Isaiah 53, the Lord was "smitten by God" (v. 4) and "stricken for the transgression of my people" (v. 8). The rock was struck and gave the blessings of abundant, life-saving water. It was through the "striking" of our Lord on the Cross that we have the potential for the great blessing of life-giving salvation. What we have is another picture of the Cross.

This incident at Horeb will be repeated later but will play out a bit differently.

Israel Defeats Amalek

Exodus 17:8 Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim.

Who is Amalek? The Amalekites are the descendants of Esau. Esau was the son of Isaac and the twin brother of Jacob who traded his birthright for a bowl of soup. Jacob deceived his father and gained the blessing intended for Esau, the elder son, and was forced to flee for his life. Esau settled east of the Dead Sea and fathered the Edomites and Amalekites.

Genesis 36:15 These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: the chiefs Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz,¹⁶ Korah, Gatam, and Amalek; these are the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah.

The Amalekites had a long history of open hostility to the Israelites beginning with this incident here in Exodus. In verse 16, where we are told “The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation”. This prophecy came true as demonstrated in numerous passages in Scripture. Here are just two.

Psalms 83:4 They say, “Come, let us wipe them out as a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no more!”

⁵ For they conspire with one accord;
against you they make a covenant—

⁶ the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites,
Moab and the Hagrites,

⁷ Gebal and Ammon and Amalek

Judges 6:3 For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. ⁴ They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey. ⁵ For they would come up with their livestock and their tents; they would come like locusts in number—both they and their camels could not be counted—so that they laid waste the land as they came in.

Because of their long history of hostility and specifically for their attack on the Israelites of the Exodus generation God decreed their destruction.

1 Samuel 15:1 And Samuel said to Saul, “The Lord sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the Lord. ² Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. ³ Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’ ”

Saul did not fully follow God’s instructions and spared Agag king of the Amalekites and the choicest of their livestock (1 Samuel 15:7-9). This disobedience angered God, and He rejected Saul as king (1 Samuel 15:26) and selected his replacement, David (1 Samuel 16).

Meanwhile back in Exodus 17 ...

The Amalekites are attacking Israel.

Exodus 17:9 So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.” ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

Having heard of the Israelites’ journey through the wilderness and the miracles performed by their God, the Amalekites were attempting to preemptively dislodge the Israelites from this oasis and secure their territory from intrusion. In this crisis, Moses called on Joshua, who is mentioned here for the first time. Though Joshua entered into battle with zeal, the victory was secured in a unique fashion in order to demonstrate God’s power.

Exodus 17:11 Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses’ hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other

on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

Moses' holding the staff of God above his head with both hands symbolized Israel's total dependence on the power of God. When Moses lowered his hands we have a picture of the lack of dependence and the enemy was winning. When Moses held up his hands again, the Israelites would once again gain the advantage in the battle. This went on all day.

But Moses' arms grew so tired he could hold them up no longer, and once more the battle shifted to the Amalekites. Aaron and Hur took a stone and arranged it so Moses could sit on it while they held up his arms. With the assistance of Aaron and Hur, Moses' hands remained uplifted and a great victory was secured.

Little is known of this person Hur. He is mentioned only here; 17:12; and in 24:14; 1 Chron. 2:19–20; the Hur mentioned in Ex. 31:2; 35:30; 38:22 is probably another person. According to Rabbinic tradition, Hur was the son of Miriam, thus Moses and Aaron's nephew. The Talmud states that Caleb, a descendant of Judah, married Miriam and fathered Hur. However, Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews* states that Hur was the husband of Moses' sister Miriam.

Exodus 17:13 And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.

What is the meaning of all this?

Incidents in Scripture often have spiritual significance, as we have been seeing. Esau's grandson Amalek retained that jealous spirit and became Israel's arch-enemy throughout history (Numbers 14:25; Judges 3:13, 6:3, 10:12; Psalm 83:7). Amalek often appeared at critical moments in Israel's history which teaches us important principles for today. The nature of this murderous hatred of Jews is jealousy over Israel's calling and election for world redemption, its inheritance of the Land, and the blessing passed down from Abraham to Isaac and Jacob and his twelve sons. It is also part of the spiritual warfare going on around us.

We see the spirit of Amalek today in organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah. “The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation” (v. 16). This same demonic spirit of violence was on display in the brutal Hamas slaughter of innocent Israeli civilians. Israel report that 80% of the Hamas victims identified were raped and/or tortured. Over 240 were taken hostage.

However, Amalek is distinct from other historic enemies like Egypt or Babylon in its declared purpose to annihilate the Jewish people. “They have said, ‘Come, and let’s wipe them out as a nation so that the name of Israel will no longer be remembered.’” (Psalms 83:4)

The severe judgment from Heaven (v. 14) was due to the type of conflict waged by Amalek. They were vicious and bloodthirsty. Amalek’s main targets were the faint and weary, the stragglers in Israel’s camp. They mainly targeted civilians – like today’s modern version Hamas. That is why Jacob was afraid for his wives and children. Amalek kidnapped the women and children in David’s time and still does so today. Finally, in Esther’s day, all of Israel was targeted men, women, children, and the elderly which sounds a lot like Hamas today.

Not only was Amalek’s objective to protect themselves and destroy a potential enemy, but there was a spiritual motive undergirding their actions. As a spiritual war, Satan is by definition involved, and his objective at Rephidim was twofold: Not only did Satan hope to destroy Israel, but he also intended to prevent the giving of the Law.

When Amalek attacked Israel at Rephidim, the Israelites were at their very last stop before Mt. Sinai and that most transforming moment in the Old Testament, the giving of the Law where God would reveal His perfect righteousness and His expectation that those who were His would meet its perfection. Not only was the Law designed to reveal God’s perfect righteousness but its purpose was ultimately to demonstrate such perfection was impossible by human effort alone. It would take the indwelling Holy Spirit to make such compliance possible, and that would not become universal for all believers until the dispensation of the Church Age. At this point and until the Church Age, the power of the Holy Spirit was given only to divinely selected individuals and for specific ministries.

The sacrifices for sin in the Law would foreshadow the perfect Lamb of God at the Cross as the only acceptable sacrifice. Through faith in that, mankind can find salvation to have imputed to them the perfect righteousness of God and be declared righteous in God's eyes.

Exodus 17:14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." ¹⁵ And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The Lord Is My Banner, ¹⁶ saying, "A hand upon the throne of the Lord! The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

After Israel's victory at Rephidim, Moses built an altar and inscribed on it, "The Lord Is My Banner". All of Israel needed to realize that they fought under the banner of their God. The hand raised toward heaven, the throne room of God, was a symbolic gesture of intercession.

Moses proclaimed a perpetual hostility of Yahweh toward the Amalekites. Those who attack the people of the Lord incur the wrath of God (17:15).

All these battles involving Amalek had one thing in common – they were won through prayer and fasting. This story in Exodus makes several significant statements we should consider:

1. Prayer moves heaven. Moses made a rather amazing statement after this battle. *Yad al Kiseh Adonai* – "The hand on the throne of the Lord!" Moses understood that as he prayed, he touched the very throne of Heaven. His prayer moved the heavenly realm and released heavenly armies to battle on Israel's behalf.
2. In every generation, an Amalek will arise against the Jewish people. It was a great challenge in biblical times and throughout history. Its latest manifestation was witnessed recently in the western Negev.
3. Amalek's ultimate fate is already sealed. "Amalek was the first among the nations, but its end is utter destruction" (Numbers 24:20).

What all this means is if we apply the strategy of Moses, we can expect victory! This is a critical time, not just for Israel but also for the Church. It is

no longer enough to just profess our love for Israel, it is time for action.
Concerted prayer and fasting are urgently needed.