

Trusting in the Lord: *Moses & God's Provisions* (Exodus 15:22-27; 16:1-15; 17:1-7)

"We, too, pass through the Red Sea, through the desert, across the Jordan into the promised land. With Israel we fall into doubt and unbelief and through punishment and repentance experience again God's help and faithfulness. All this is not mere reverie but holy, godly reality. We are torn out of our own existence and set down in the midst of the holy history of God on earth. There God dealt with us, and there He still deals with us, our needs and our sins, in judgment and grace."

~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer

I. Investigation: An Examination of Exodus 15:22-27; 16:1-15; 17:1-17

A. Introduction

Exodus 15:22 through Exodus 19:25 has been titled "The Journey to God". This portion of the Exodus narrative describes the journey of the Israelites from the Song of the Sea to Mount Sinai. We will examine three episodes during their track to Sinai. In these three events, the Israelites are faced with the lack of food and water—essential physical needs. However, the Lord utilizes these lessons to reveal their spiritual needs. This journey was an opportunity for the Lord to reveal Himself and teach His people. Similar to the Israelites, our problems and persecutions are meant to teach us to depend upon the Lord and remain faithful.

B. Lessons for the Israelites

1. Bitter Waters at Marah (15:22-27)

a. Problem

b. Israelites' Response

c. God's Response

The Lord calls for His people to find life through obedience (cf. Deut 5:33; 6:2; 30:15-16).

2. Lack of Food in the Desert of Sin (16:1-15)

a. Problem

It has been approximately one month since Israel left Egypt (cf. Num 33:3). Note that the “Wilderness of Sin” is not named after their shortcomings, but the name refers to a geographical location (i.e., part of the Sinai area).

b. Israelites’ Response (vv. 2-3)

What was once “the people” murmuring (15:24), now the “entire congregation” participates in the complaining. So great is their grumbling, that the narrative reiterates it four times in this chapter (vv. 7, 8, 9, 12)!

Several issues exist with their grumbling. First, their complaint concerning their lack of food isn’t exactly true because in Exodus 17:3, they indicate that they do have livestock—a source of milk and meat. Second, they exaggerated their former situation. It is highly improbable that Pharaoh furnished them with meat. And finally, the Israelites impugned the motives of their leaders. Of course, their discontentment and dissatisfaction was ultimately directed against God.

c. God’s Response (vv. 4-12)

vv. 4-5 - The “need to know” indicates God’s desire for a response and a relationship with His people. It seems rather odd in light of all the Israelites have experienced. Would they not know this YHWH who defeated the Egyptians? It would seem that the point of the narrative is a call for the Israelites to start regarding God, and not Moses, as their true leader.

vv. 6-8 - Observe that the Lord never indicates the “how or when”; He simply promises provisions for the Israelites.

vv. 9-10 - The presence of God’s glory highlights that He is not only aware of their difficult situation, but that He is also present with them. The Israelites need to stop complaining and start trusting. Ryken makes a very important point in his commentary on Exodus, “God did not perform this miracle simply because his people begged for it. He provided them bread for his own glory” (p. 427).

vv. 13ff. - The Scriptures describe this manna as follows: (1) small, thin seed which is easy to pick, (2) white, thus easy to spot, (3) clean and safe to eat, (4) possesses a sweet taste, (5) edible either raw or cooked, and (6) satisfied one’s hunger. Scholars have debated on the identification of this substance. Even the etymology of the word is debated. One scholar argues the best rendering is: “Whatchamacallit”(cf. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 255). The Apostle Paul refers to manna as “spiritual food” (1 Cor 10:3; also, cf. Ps 105:40).

Once again, there is a call for obedience and loyalty to the Lord (cf. Deut 8:3 - “So he humbled you by making you hungry and then feeding you with unfamiliar manna. He did this to teach you that mankind cannot live by food alone, but also by everything that comes from the LORD’s mouth.”).

3. Lack of Water at Massa and Maribah (17:1-7)

