

Exodus 17 - Lack of Water at Rephidim

I. Exodus from Egyptian bondage: Israel's redemption, liberation, and preservation (Ex 1:1—18:27)

(3) Preservation (Ex 15:22—18:27)

(C) Preserved from thirst through the water from the rock at Rephidim (17:1-7)

(D) Preserved from defeat from Amalek by Joshua, Aaron, and Hur at Rephidim (17:8-16)

Exodus 17

(C) Preserved from thirst through the water from the rock at Rephidim (17:1-7)

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1 The whole congregation of the Israelites set out from the desert of Sin, traveling from place to place according to the command of the LORD. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.

1 And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink.

- Again the Israelites complained, this time because there was no water to drink when they camped at Rephidim (Cf. 15:24); at Marah there was bad water, now there was none.

- "...Rephidim" - located near the wilderness of Sin (Cf. 19:2; Num 33:15) and the Horeb (Sinai) range of mountains (v6)

— Israel made at least two stops between the wilderness of Sin and Rephidim, Dophkah and Alush (Num 33:12-14), but Moses did not record anything that happened there

Every difficulty God permits us to encounter will become either a test that can make us better or a temptation that can make us worse, and it's our own attitude that determines which it will be. [Wiersbe]

2 So the people **quarreled** with Moses and said, "Give us water so that we may drink!" And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?"

2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?"

2 The people quarreled with Moses: "Give us water to drink."

Moses told them, "Why are you quarreling with me? Why are you testing the LORD?"

2 Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?

- "...quarreled" - demonstrated their lack of faith, since God had demonstrated repeatedly that He would supply their needs

— The Israelites would only be happy if God acted like they wanted Him to, rather than waiting for Him to provide as He saw fit. This is how they "tested" the Lord (Cf. 1 Cor 10:10).

— This is the fourth instance of the Israelites complaining against Moses (God), this time again about lack of water (Cf. 15:24)

3 But the people were thirsty for water there; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why is it that you have brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

3 But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

3 But the people were thirsty there for water, so they complained against Moses: "Why did you bring us up from Egypt to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?"

3 And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What am I to do with this people? A little more and they will stone me!"

4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me."

4 So Moses cried out to the LORD: "What am I to do with these people? Just a little more and they'll stone me."

4 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

- One of Moses' most characteristic and praiseworthy traits was that he took his difficulties to the Lord (Cf. 15:25; 32:30; 33:8; Num 11:2,11; 12:13; 14:13-19, et al)

5 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your **staff** with which you struck the Nile, and go.

5 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

5 Then the LORD told Moses, "Go over in front of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you. Take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

5 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.

- "...staff" - demonstrated that God was still enabling Moses to perform miracles

6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at **Horeb**; and you shall **strike the rock**, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

6 I'll be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. You are to strike the rock and water will come out of it, so the people can drink." Moses did this in front of the elders of Israel.

6 Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

- "...Horeb" - may refer to the mountain range at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula (Cf. 3:1; Deut 1:2; 1 Kings 19:8). Mount Sinai may be a specific mountain in that range.

- "...strike the rock" - pictured the coming death of the Messiah

— Water to satisfy the people's thirst came from the rock that was struck, just like living water to satisfy spiritual thirst would come from the death of Jesus (Cf. Deut 32:30-31,37; Is 53:10; Zech 13:7; John 4:10,14; 7:37; 1 Cor 10:4)

7 Then he named the place **Massah** and **Meribah** because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"

7 He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"

7 He named the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelis quarreled and tested the LORD by saying: "Is the LORD really among us or not?"

7 And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

- "...Massah" - means "testing" or "proof"; commemorated the Israelites testing of God
- "...Meribah" - means "murmuring"; commemorated the Israelites quarreling with Moses
- With the exception of Joshua 9:18 and Ps 59:15, all other references to grumbling in the OT occur in Ex 15-17 and Num 14,16-17
- God had assured the Israelites, while still in Egypt, that He would bring them into the Promised Land (3:8,17; 13:5,11). Thus, all their grumbling demonstrated a lack of faith.
- This second instance of complaining about lack of water was more serious than the first because God had previously provided good water for them in the desert (15:25).

(D) Preserved from defeat from Amalek by Joshua, Aaron, and Hur at Rephidim (17:8-16)

As with all of Israel's experiences after leaving the Red Sea, and before arriving at Mt. Sinai, God was using this encounter to teach the Israelites how they were to live as His chosen people. They were not to expect God to continue to operate as He had during the plagues but were to trust and obey Him on the basis of all of His previous revelations to them. God did not deal with the Amalekites as He had dealt with the Egyptians.

8 Then **Amalek** came and fought against Israel at Rephidim.

8 Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim.

8 After this, the Amalekites came and fought with the Israelis at Rephidim.

8 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

- "...Amalek" - the Amalekites; they were a tribe of Semites, descendants of Esau (Gen 36:12) who had moved into the Sinai that Israel now occupied. They also inhabited an area in southern Canaan (Gen 14:7).

— They likely confronted Israel because they felt threatened

9 So Moses said to **Joshua**, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek.

Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the **staff** of God in my hand."

9 So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek.

Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand."

9 Moses told Joshua, "Choose some men for us and go out to fight against the Amalekites. Tomorrow I'll stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand."

9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

- "...Joshua" - first mention; Moses selected Joshua to lead Israel's army of warriors

- "...staff" - God used Moses' staff as the means to accomplish miracles for Israel, and to identify those miracles as coming from Himself

10 Joshua did just as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and **Hur** went up to the top of the hill.

10 Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

10 So Joshua did as Moses told him and fought against the Amalekites, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

- "...Hur" - the son of Caleb (1 Chr 2:19); this Caleb was not the same Caleb who was Joshua's sidekick in the books of Numbers and Joshua

— Josephus said Hur was the husband of Miriam, Moses' sister

— Hur was possibly the grandfather of Bezalel, the architect of the tabernacle (Cf. 31:2)

— Whatever his relations were, he was an important man in Israel (Cf. 24:14)

11 So it came about, when Moses **held his hand up**, that Israel prevailed; but when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed.

11 So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed.

11 Whenever Moses raised his hand, the Israelis prevailed, but when his hand remained at his side, then the Amalekites prevailed.

11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

- "...held his hand up" - the lifting up of the hands has been regarded almost with unvarying unanimity as the sign or attitude of prayer

— The lifting up of the staff secured to the warriors the strength needed to obtain the victory, from the fact that by means of the staff Moses brought down this strength from above (i.e. from Almighty God); not by a merely spiritless and unthinking elevation of the staff, but by the power of his prayer.

— There is no other way in which we can explain the effect produced upon the battle by the raising and dropping of the staff in his hands

— God had not promised him miraculous help for the conflict with the Amalekites, and for this reason Moses lifted up his hands with the staff in prayer to God, that he might secure the assistance of Jehovah for His struggling people

— After awhile, he became exhausted, and with the falling of his hands and the staff he held, the flow of divine power ceased, so that it was necessary to support his arms, that they might be kept firmly directed upwards until the enemy was entirely subdued.

— The significance is that Israel's strength lay only in a continuous appeal to the Lord's power and a continuous remembrance of what He had already done for them

12 And Moses' hands were heavy. So they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. So his hands were steady until the sun set.

12 But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set.

12 When Moses' hands became heavy, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other, and so his hands were steady until the sun went down.

12 But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

We see here, then brethren, the beautiful combination of action and prayer. One part of Israel is fighting, the other is praying—both at the same time. Which, it might be asked, gained the victory? Both contributed towards it. To have prayed alone without fighting would have been presumption; to have fought without prayer would have been still worse.

13 And Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

13 So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

13 Joshua defeated Amalek and his army using swords.

13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Jehovah used the attack of Amalek on Israel, at the very beginning of their national history, to demonstrate to His chosen people the potency of intercession. The event reveals a mighty means of strength and victory which God has graciously afforded His people of all ages.

I am convinced beyond any doubt that virtually all advances for Christ come because of believers who understand and practice prayer. [R Kent Hughes]

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "**Write this in a book** as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that **I will utterly wipe out the memory of Amalek** from under heaven."

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

14 Then the LORD told Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua: 'I'll certainly wipe out the memory of the Amalekites from under heaven.'"

14 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

- "...Write this in a book" - this is the first of five instances in the *Torah* where Moses was instructed by the Lord to write something down (Cf. 24:4,7; 34:27; Num 33:1-2; Deut 31:9,24)

— Clearly Moses could write, something which critics of the Bible have questioned

- "...I will utterly wipe out the memory of Amalek" - God promised the eventual destruction of the Amalekites to strengthen Moses' faith in God's help against all of Israel's enemies

— God later commanded the Israelites to exterminate the Amalekites after they conquered Canaan (Deut 25:19)

— Scripture mentions the Amalekites for the last time in 1 Chr 4:43, when a remnant of them perished in Hezekiah's day

15 And Moses built an altar and named it **The LORD is My Banner;**

15 Moses built an altar and named it The LORD is My Banner;

15 Moses built an altar and named it "The LORD is My Banner."

15 And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi:

- "...The LORD is My Banner" - *yehōvâ nissî*, the altar commemorated God's victory, as well as His self-revelation as the One who would provide victory for Israel against her enemies

— Jehovah-nissi is the name of the altar, not a name of God Himself; the altar was used to worship God, who Moses identified with this symbol of Israel's victory

16 and he said, "Because the LORD has sworn, the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation."

16 and he said, "The LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation."

16 "Because," he said, "a fist has been raised in defiance against the throne of the LORD, the LORD will wage war against Amalek from generation to generation."

16 For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

- God set Himself against the Amalekites because they set themselves against His people and His purposes through them

— They attacked God's sovereignty by attacking His people

In all the various crises the Israelites had faced since they left Egypt, God was teaching them to look to Him. They should look to Him for deliverance from their enemies (at the Red Sea), for health and healing (at Marah), and for food and guidance (in the wilderness of Sin). They should also look to Him for water and refreshment (at Massah-Meribah), and

for victory over their enemies in battle (at Rephidim). He was teaching them how dependent they were on Him, and that they should turn to Him in any and every need (Cf. John 15:5).

Much of the grumbling, distress, and failure that the Israelites experienced later came on them because they forgot these basic lessons. God had promised to meet their needs, and had done so faithfully in the past. Likewise, Christians get into trouble when we forget these basic lessons. God Himself is a sufficient resource for His people.