

STORY

Israel in the Desert - Exodus 15:22-17:16

TEACHER PRAYER

Heavenly Father, sometimes the things of this world seem to occupy my attention to the exclusion of You. I also tend to complain and gripe when I don't get what I want. Create in me a quiet sense of contentment. Feed me with the Bread of Life and the Water of Life that I may share this spiritual food with the children entrusted to me. Thank You for everything You have provided for me and enable me to receive these gifts with thanksgiving that drives out complaining and discontent. Amen.

VOCABULARY

complain - to let someone know that you are not happy with what you have

murmur - the sound of complaining; for example, when someone mutters under his breath

content - to be satisfied with what you have

test - to try a person's faith so that faith may grow and become stronger

manna - bread that God provided for His people (Hebrew word meaning "What is it?")

OUTER AIM

God continues to provide for a complaining people

INNER AIM

God must get tired of our complaints or does He?

BACKGROUND

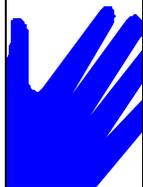
Moses' song of thanksgiving after the deliverance at the Red Sea (Exodus 15:2-18) can be divided into three parts (Ex. 15: 2-5, 6-10, 11-18) showing the power of Jehovah, the destruction of His enemies, and the calling of Israel to be the people of God.

The results of God's deliverance were short-lived with the children of Israel. They came to the wilderness, and after three days under the hot desert sun and the pebbly ground, they had not found water. When they finally came to a pool, it was too bitter for use. They named this place Marah, meaning bitterness. Their outlook seemed hopeless, and they were only three days on the road. Luther remarked that when our provision ceases, our faith is liable to come to an end.

Again God intervened on behalf of His people. He had Moses throw a tree into the water, and it became drinkable. Thus He made for them a statute and an ordinance (principle that the Lord would provide on their journey), and there Jehovah proved the Children of Israel by testing them (Exodus 15:25). God also "proves" us by constantly exercising our faith with challenges that it may grow. Our enjoyment of the blessings of God is made dependant upon a constant exercise of our faith.

A short march brought them to Elim where they found 12 wells of water and 70 palm trees. Here they stayed for a month before venturing into the Desert of Sin (Exodus 16: 1). The Wilderness of Sin was a sandy plain which ran along the shore of the Red Sea to the southern end of the Sinai Peninsula. It was a dreary trek with chalk hills and mountains in the distance.

Once more the Israelites' unbelief surfaced out of concern for their physical needs. They complained about



Moses and Jehovah. The people's displeasure with Moses was really a dissatisfaction with God and His ways. This was a part of God's "proving" or testing His people to see whether they would walk in His ways. In response, God showed them His glory and then met their needs. The food was called Manna (Hebrew for "What is it?"). In this way, God taught them to pray for their daily bread. Jehovah provided enough for each day. Those who tried to store it up found that it decayed. This is a lesson in our attitude toward the things of this world. He also provided quail for the entire camp.

Must the Lord continue to prove Himself? At Rephidim, again there was no water. Had Israel learned to trust the Lord? The answer is a resounding, "No!" The grumbling prompted Moses to go to the Lord. Again God provided water from a rock which was struck with Moses' rod. These places were called Massah (testing) and Meribah (quarreling).

The Lord demonstrated His total protection package by defeating the Amalekites. It was the Lord's battle as evidenced by Moses' hands. As long as Moses' hands were in the air, Israel triumphed over the Amalekites. Israel and Joshua had to learn that Jehovah would deliver them from the hands of their enemies. Israel must fight, but its success would be granted only as long as their fight was carried on under the banner of Jehovah. This is seen from the name given to this place of victory; namely, "The-Lord-Is-My Banner." The banner or ensign was the identifying mark of the regiment.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, all too often it is true that the more You give us, the less satisfied we are. May our faith not depend on how much we have but on You alone. When we need something, instead of complaining, help us to ask You for what we need with thanksgiving. Keep us from complaining and whining. Feed us today on Jesus, Who is the "Bread of Life" and the "Water of Life." Amen.

PRESENTATION

Again, review everything God had done for the nation of Israel as He led them out of Egypt to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The deliverance and mercy of God stands out in sharp contrast to the whining and unbelief of the people of Israel. Have a map handy so that you can trace the journey of the people of God toward Mt. Sinai and then north to the Promised Land.

Tell each of the stories illustrating how, in spite of everything God did for them, the Children of Israel had a very short memory. They continually put God to the test by complaining and revealing their lack of trust in Him.

1. Show how at Marah (Exodus 15:22-27), they complained about the lack of water and how God met their need.
2. Show how in the Wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16:1-36), they complained about the lack of food, and how God miraculously satisfied their needs.
3. Show how at Masseh and Meribah (Exodus 17:1-7), Israel again complained because of the lack of water and God met their great needs.
4. Show how God defeated the Amalakites (Exodus 17:8-16) on behalf of His chosen people.

Review these events in your own words.

APPLICATIONS

- The joy of God's immediate deliverance is all too quickly forgotten. People tend to quickly forget the good things God has done for them. Have the children list the good things God has done them from their own experiences.
- When things are going well, we are vulnerable to temptation from the devil. Prosperity, instead of promoting faith, often leads people to forget about God and His care. How is this true in our country today and in the lives of these children?
- I Corinthians 10 reminds us that all these events were examples for us so that we do not fall into the trap that consumed the nation of Israel. It is a warning that anyone who thinks he stands on his own two feet, he must be careful that he does not fall on his face.
- This is a good opportunity to discuss with the children the danger of complaining against parents, circumstances, teachers, other children, and especially the danger of complaining against God.
- Finally, do not forget the spiritual blessings that God has given us. List these with your children's help.
- Remember that Jesus is called the "Bread" from heaven and the "Water" of life. In a spiritual sense, God meets our deepest spiritual hunger and thirst by sending Jesus to die for our sins and give us everlasting life. Consider the meaning Christians apply to the terms "Bread of Life" and "Water of Life" with the background of these accounts from the Exodus.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Psalms 103:2 - *Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:*

Middle any of the above and...

Psalms 103:1-3 - *Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases.*

Upper any of the above and...

1 Corinthians 10:12 - *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

HYMN CHOICES

"Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" (TLH # 54)

"O God of Jacob, by Whose Hand" (TLH # 434)

"The Lord my Shepherd Is" (TLH # 426)