

A Grumbling Journey, A Patient God (Ex. 15:22-17:1-16)

The Grumblers:

<sup>22</sup> Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. <sup>23</sup> When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. <sup>24</sup> And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" <sup>25</sup> And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the LORD made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, <sup>26</sup> saying, "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer."

<sup>27</sup> Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water. (Ex 15:22-27)

**Notes:**

"Then" chronologically connects this narrative to the song of Moses. No sooner than they sang their song of victory then complaints arise.

"Marah" Remember the story of Ruth and Naomi? Naomi's name means delightful. When she lost her husband and two sons in law she changed her name to this.

Grumbled...this is the first of six times this Hebrew word is used in Exodus and Numbers. It is even put forward in the sentence for emphasis. "Grumbled, and the people did against Moses."

Log עץ (ets) literally tree, but more generally wood, branch or part of a tree.

**Questions:**

1. How many times do the Israelites grumble? Consider Ex. 15:24,16:2,17:3.
2. Consider Numbers 33:11-15. How many other places had the Israelites visited since being at the Red Sea?
3. Who do the Israelites grumble against? Hint: there are at least three answers! Consider Ex. 16:2, 7-8. And, of course, pitying the Israelites or not, this was not good behavior.

4. What are the chances the phrase “bittersweet” comes from this narrative in the bible?

#### Grumblers Answered:

1. What does God do for his grumbling people? What could he have done? Will he treat the Israelites as he treated the Egyptians? Consider Ex. 16:9. Not only does God hear his people, what else does he do? See Ex. 16:12.
2. But how do the Israelites respond? See Ex. 17:3.
- 3.
4. What is the significance of God using a log to cure the water? See both Ex. 15:25, 2:3. What are the two items of salvation made of? If you still don't see it, consider Gen. 6:14, 7:7. Keep an eye out for this theme. It isn't the last time we'll see God save in this way.

#### More Needs of the Body, or Is it a Need of the Soul?

##### Read Ex. 16:1-35:

They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. <sup>2</sup> And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, <sup>3</sup> and the people of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

<sup>4</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. <sup>5</sup> On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” <sup>6</sup> So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, <sup>7</sup> and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against the LORD. For what are we, that you grumble against us?” <sup>8</sup> And Moses said, “When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.”

<sup>9</sup> Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’” <sup>10</sup> And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the

wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. <sup>11</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, <sup>12</sup> "I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"

<sup>13</sup> In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. <sup>14</sup> And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. <sup>15</sup> When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. <sup>16</sup> This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.'" <sup>17</sup> And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. <sup>18</sup> But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat. <sup>19</sup> And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning." <sup>20</sup> But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. <sup>21</sup> Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

<sup>22</sup> On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, <sup>23</sup> he said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.'" <sup>24</sup> So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. <sup>25</sup> Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. <sup>26</sup> Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none."

<sup>27</sup> On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. <sup>28</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? <sup>29</sup> See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day." <sup>30</sup> So the people rested on the seventh day.

<sup>31</sup> Now the house of Israel called its name manna. It was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. <sup>32</sup> Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, so that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'" <sup>33</sup> And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and

place it before the LORD to be kept throughout your generations.”<sup>34</sup> As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the testimony to be kept.<sup>35</sup> The people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan.<sup>36</sup> (An omer is the tenth part of an ephah.)

Notes:

Grumbled (c.f. John 6:42)

Come near before the Lord...one draws near to God for worship but also to receive his blessing. Proximity with God isn't always a good thing. But being invited to be "before" him is!

Manna (מַן) from the root word for the question what

Omer about 3lbs dry; 2.3 liters wet

Coriander seed....lemony citrus flavor when you crush them. Found in central Asia.

1. Consider what the Israelites say in Ex. 16:2-3. How does God answer? Notice how he does something other than simply attend to the needs of their body. What else does he do? Consider Ex. 16:4-5, 6-7.
2. How does God use the bread and quail to test his people? Consider Ex. 16:15-19, especially 16:20. How does he respond to disobedience here? See Ex. 16:20-21.
3. How does God test them yet again? See Ex. 16:22-25. Notice how it is what "the LORD has commanded." Note the specific instructions given in Ex. 16:26. But what do the people do with these instructions? See Ex. 16:27. What does God do? See Ex. 16:28-30. How is this different from how God treated the Egyptians?

The Water Man Strikes Again:

Read Ex. 17:1-7:

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.<sup>2</sup> 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?"<sup>3</sup> 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?"<sup>4</sup> So

Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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?"

1. Notice how similar the Israelites are to Pharaoh. When God came to multiply his people, remember what Pharaoh said? See Ex. 1:9-10, 16. Of course, you recall how God still multiplied his people despite Pharaoh's plans to foil God. But now again, consider, how are the Israelites like Pharaoh? God has stated a promise again, not to multiply, but now to test his people (see Ex. 16:4), but now what do the people do to God? See Ex. 17:7.
2. Remember how Pharaoh died, and God's plan succeeded? What then ought God to do to the Israelites, who now pretend to be God and test *him*? Yet, what does God do? 17:5-6. Notice how God saves his people through Moses. What does Moses use? Isn't this an interesting pattern?
3. Also recall other instances of striking: See Exodus 2:12, 7:17, 8:17, 9:15, 17:5-6. What theme is there behind the striking?

Another Wooden Deliverance:

Read Ex. 17:8-16

<sup>8</sup> Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. <sup>9</sup> 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." <sup>10</sup> So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. <sup>11</sup> Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.

<sup>14</sup> 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." <sup>15</sup> And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD Is My Banner, <sup>16</sup> saying, "A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

1. Note the way God saves his people especially in Ex. 17:9. Isn't this a bizarre scene? See Ex. 17:10-12. What is God again using to save?
2. What does God think of the Amelekites? See Ex. 17:14. Why would he think this? See Ex. 17:8. Also consider Deuteronomy 25:17-19 for help. Isn't it incredible that God didn't here tell some other people to write a memorial against and destroy Israel? What does this tell us about our God?

Connections to the New Testament:

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-11

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers,<sup>1</sup> that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

<sup>6</sup> Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>7</sup> Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." <sup>8</sup> We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. <sup>9</sup> We must not put Christ<sup>10</sup> to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, <sup>10</sup> nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. <sup>11</sup> Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

1. St. Paul reads Ex. 17:1-7 in a figurative way and connects it to Christ. Consider 1 Cor. 10:1-4. How does Paul connect Christ to the narrative of Moses at Rephidim? What does Paul urge the Corinthians to do?
2. Also consider: upon what was Christ killed? How is this like God's deliverance in Exodus?

Take Away:

1. This week, I urge you to consider how God delivered the Israelites, while destroying and planning to destroy the Egyptians and Amelekites.
2. I also urge you to remember how you are part of the "spiritual israel." Because of Jesus (consider Ephesians 1:5). Because of Jesus' atoning sacrifice, you are like an Israelite, and God is on your side.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, we praise you for showing patience with the Israelites, yet we fear you for showing your wrath to those who oppose you, such as the Egyptians and Amelekites. Thank you for adopting us as children of faith in Jesus Christ, so that you also show us patience and forgiveness. Please remind us of this great gift we have in Jesus this week. In Jesus' name, amen.