

Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2021 5:19 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Exodus 17

"Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go!" (Joshua 1:7)

It was now 30 days since the children of Israel had made their exodus from Egypt and, after having "set out from Elim," where they had miraculously received an abundance of food and water from the LORD (Exodus 15), they "came to the wilderness of Sin"--and, "grumbled (again) against Moses and Aaron, and even accused them of "bringing them out to the wilderness to die of hunger"--even recalling how, back in Egypt, they "sat by pots of meat, and ate bread to the fill"! ("Shepherd's Notes" notes that, "Even after God had supplied their food and drink, just days before, the people still cried out for the 'good old days' of Egypt! Wow!")

God, in fact, heard their grumbling, which He said was directed at Him, and yet He responded as only a God of mercy and compassion could! He "rained down bread from heaven" (later called "manna") and instructed them to gather "a day's portion each day...with a double portion on the sixth day of the week" (which would hold them over through the seventh day) and serve from that point on as a "Sabbath observance"! It was a "test" for them to live "day-by-day"--to trust their LORD--to see if they would (be careful to!) follow His instructions! But some of them didn't, and the LORD asked Moses, rhetorically: "How long will this people refuse to keep My commandments and instructions?"

Nevertheless, the LORD continued to "provide" for their needs for food and, Exodus 16:35 says, "The sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to the border of the land of Canaan!"

And so, with that as background, we came to last nite's lesson, on Exodus 17! Here is what happened:

All the "congregation...journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim" (their last stop before reaching Mt. Sinai)--and guess what? "There was no water for the people to drink!" And they again "grumbled" at Moses, and "tested" the LORD (while He was actually "testing" them)!

And God again, miraculously, provided water, after first telling Moses to "pass before the people...with some of the elders of Israel...and with the staff in his hand..."--assuring him that He would "stand before him at the rock of Horeb," and that he (Moses) was to strike the rock and that water would come from it, "that the people might drink"! And so, it happened!

Then another crisis (think "test")!

The Amalekites came to fight against them! And Moses directed a young man named Joshua (first mention in the Bible) to choose men to go out and fight against them, while Moses and Aaron, and Miriam's husband "Hur," (her husband?) went to the top of the hill, "with the staff in

his hand," to watch as the battle progressed! And as long as Moses held up his hands, and his staff, Israel prevailed! But when his arms grew "heavy" and he lowered his staff, the Amalekites prevailed! And so, Aaron and Hur "supported his hands until the sun set" and Exodus 17:13 says, "Joshua (and his men) overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword"!

Then the LORD told Moses to write a book about what happened that day! It was to serve as "a memorial" and be "recited to Joshua"! And Moses also built an altar which he named: "The LORD is My Banner," and he noted that "the LORD had sworn that He would war against Amalek from generation to generation"! Wow!

And so, back to Moses' "striking the rock"! As you may remember, he used the same staff that he used (during the plagues) to strike the Nile River (back in Exodus 7), turning it into blood! The same staff he "stretched toward the skies," after which God sent thunder and hail and fire--and, later, locusts! The same staff he stretched over the waters of the Red Sea which led to the waters parting and the children of Israel walking through on dry land, as they escaped from Egypt! (Exodus 9-14)

Constable called the staff "the instrument of God's power"! The "symbol of the presence and power of Yahweh"!

The Nelson Bible notes that the striking of the rock pictures the "coming death of the Savior, and water ("living water") satisfying the spiritual thirst that would come from His death on the cross"! Jesus, the "Rock of Ages"! David wrote in Psalm 18:2--"The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold!" ("Horn" is a symbol of military power in the Bible!) And, last but not least, J. Vernon McGee referred to the words to the old hymn, "Jesus is the Rock in a Weary Land"--so fitting with the scene in our text!

And then the battle with the Amalekites! Interestingly (sadly), Amalek was the grandson of Esau! And the Amalekites became a powerful and war-like group of nomads (according to Josephus, "the most warlike of the nations that lived in that area of the Sinai Peninsula")! Moses would later remind the people about the conflict, in Deuteronomy 25:17-19: "Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God! Therefore, it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget!" Wow!

Spiritually speaking, the Amalekites are a symbol of Satan, and "the flesh," which "wars" against the spirit! And as long as we are in this world, it (he?) does not go away! "From generation to generation!" And it often strikes when we are weary! And comes from our "blindsides"! But also, as an "enemy"--like Amalek--with a "predetermined doom"! (The "good news"!)

All of which leads us back to the battle scene, with Moses holding up his staff, supported by Aaron and Hur! Some commentators see this as a picture of intercessory prayer! Wagner sees it

as "a beautiful picture of energy and prayer"! One part of Israel is fighting, the other is praying--and victory is the result! James 5:16 says, "The effectual prayers of a righteous man availeth much!" (KJV)

But there's more! Moses "writing about it in a book"! And "reciting it to Joshua" (who is being prepared to one day lead the people into the "promised land"--and to whom God spoke in Joshua 1)!

The "altar" and the "banner"! And the translation of the Hebrew word for God--"Yahweh-Nissi"! Moses is declaring the LORD Himself to be the "standard of His people"! (And we're to be the "standard-bearers"! Psalm 20:5-7 says, "We will sing for joy over your victory, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners! Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will trust in the name of the LORD our God!" David, in facing Goliath (in I Samuel 17:45-47) would pronounce: "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel...This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand...that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD's...!"

Constable sums up very well where we are at in our study of Exodus! "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 (last night in Rehidim)! He was teaching them how dependent they were on Him, and that they should turn to Him in any and every need!"

What a great God we have--as pictured in Exodus! Deliverer (Savior)! Provider! Protector!

And all this applies to us!

1 Corinthians 10:11 tells us (referring specifically to the Exodus account we are studying): "Now these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our instruction..."!

And so, men--as God reminded Joshua, "Only be strong and courageous...and be careful to do (all that the Word of God instructs us to do) ...that you may have success in all you do"--this week and in all the days to come!

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