

## WILDERNESS TRAINING (5)

Exodus 15:22-18:27

Key Verse: 16:12

"I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'"

From the study of Exodus we have learned most that our God is the God of hope. God put his hope in his people even though they had no hope because of their slave mentality and because they had no hope for themselves. Moreover, they had no hope because they were people of unbelief. But God delivered them out of slavery, out of the land of Egypt, in the hope of raising them as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to proclaim the knowledge of God to the whole world in the future.

In the previous passage we learned that by faith the Israelites crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but when the Egyptians tried to do so they drowned. The Israelites experienced the power of God when they obeyed God's command and crossed the Red Sea by faith. They were overjoyed when they experienced the power of God. So in 15:1-21 Moses and Miriam sang songs of praises. Moses mainly praises God that he is Almighty God and that with his almighty power he threw the mighty Egyptian army into the Red Sea. Moses praises God that he enabled the weak Israelites to cross the Red Sea as on dry land. Moses praises God that he is majestic in holiness, awesome in glory (11). Moses praises God that all the nations will tremble when they hear that his people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land (14-16). Miriam praises God with the women, playing tambourines. Today we learn how God who loves his people trains them in the wilderness.

### I. Daily bread training (15:22-16:36)

First, the LORD who heals (15:22-27). The Israelites went up from the Red Sea into the Desert of Shur. They were in a high mood after crossing the Red Sea and seeing the Egyptian army drowned. But for three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. They were getting thirsty. In Marah they found water, but they could not drink its water because it was bitter. So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" Their grumbling shows that they needed training to be established as God's covenant people and a kingdom of priests.

What did Moses do? He did not try to solve this problem by digging many wells in the mountains; he cried out to God. Then God showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water and the water became sweet

(25). They drank water to their fill. Our God is God who heals. The last part of verse 26 says, "For I am the LORD, who heals you." One young woman came to this land as a missionary. But she was so selfish that she refused to give a ride to her pastor, saying, "I have to study for the RN examination." But God healed her and she became a most sacrificial woman. She is the one who invites guests from outside, not one time, but every time. Those who are bitter are undisciplined people. They must come to God to be healed.

Look at verse 27. "Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water." The Israelites left Marah and came to Elim. There they found twelve springs and seventy palm trees and they camped there near the water. Here, the number 12 possibly refers to the 12 tribes of Israel, 70, to the 70 elders of Israel and the water, to the water flowing through the garden of Eden. This verse is a picture of God's blessing which is always abundant, and his ultimate hope for them, that they might live in paradise. This is God's ultimate hope for his people.

But when God saw his people, they were unruly and useless. So God implied that he would give them training. Look at verse 26. "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you." What kind of training is God going to give? We will see. How long is God going to give them training? We will see.

Second, daily bread from heaven (16:1-15). The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai. What did they do there? The whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron because they were hungry. They said, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death" (3). Some say that hunger is the most sorrowful element in human life. Some others say, "Without eating bread earned by many tears and much unbearable humiliation, one does not know what it is to be a human being." So we understand their despair when they had no food. But their real problem was not a no food problem; it was an unbelief problem. They had already experienced God's mighty hand of deliverance in crossing the Red Sea. But they forgot God and only looked at Moses and Aaron and themselves, and they utterly despaired. They grumbled. In reality they were grumbling not against Moses but against God (8b). God decided to feed them until they wanted no more. God said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions" (4). To God's chosen

people, following God's instructions is more important than just solving the grocery problem.

Moses understood the spiritual meaning of God's instruction concerning daily bread training. So Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling'" (9). While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud. In other words, while Aaron was speaking to the people, God personally appeared to his people. God's appearance to his people is glorious. The glorious God did not have to appear to this swarm of people with a slave mentality. But the glorious God appeared anyway to this inglorious people so as to help them. God said to Moses, "At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God" (12). God promised that he would provide them with meat and bread, and that through this provision they would know that God was with them.

What happened? That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor (13,14). When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" Moses said to them, "It is the bread of the LORD..." (15). So God provided meat and bread just as he promised.

Third, training with daily bread (16-21). Moses said, "Take an omer for each person you have in your tent" (16). (An omer is about half a gallon.) However some of the people gathered much, and some gathered little. Yet when they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one had gathered as much as he needed (17-18). Those who had gathered one month's portion and those who had gathered a daily portion had the same amount. Each one had gathered one omer when they measured.

Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it until morning." However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning. But it was full of maggots and began to smell. They only made Moses angry because of their misconduct (19-20). Verse 21 says, "Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away." Here we learn God was training his people who had a slave mentality not to grumble because of food, but to depend on God for the provision of food; and not to gather two days' or one month's portion, but only a daily portion of bread. God was teaching them to depend on God on a daily basis. God was teaching them to depend on God for their future security problem. God was teaching them to have faith in God. But his people were imbued with a slave mentality.

Daily bread training was not easy. Verse 35 says, "The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan." This verse means they received daily bread training for 40 years. If anyone masters one kind of training, he can master everything easily. Mastering one kind of training is the most difficult. Mastering all kinds of training is indeed easy after mastering one. Our God is wise. God trained his chosen people with daily bread training for 40 years so that they might be trained in everything. God had a great hope for them. God wanted them to be the most glorious people. As God's hope was great, so the training was also great and thorough indeed.

Here we learn that we have to train ourselves in many ways. But first and last of all, we must train ourselves to study the Daily Bread (a daily Bible study guide). Those who study the Daily Bread can see the things of the world from God's point of view every day. When we study the Daily Bread we can have the peace of God which passes all human understanding. When we study the Daily Bread we are captured by the word of God, not by sinful desires. When we study the Daily Bread we can be a blessing to our family members as well as to all people around us because the word of God empowers us to overcome the world.

Fourth, keep the Sabbath holy (16:22-30). The training to keep the Sabbath holy is a part of daily bread training. Verse 22 says, "On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much--two omers for each person..." The leaders of the community checked each family to see if they kept the instructions of daily bread for the Sabbath. What were they to do? On the day before, they were to prepare two days' daily bread, one portion for the Sabbath. They baked it and saved it until morning. But it did not stink or get maggots in it. On the Sabbath day, daily bread didn't come down from heaven. In this way, God taught his people to work hard during six days and on the Sabbath day take rest in God. But some of the people did not prepare daily bread for the Sabbath. They woke up around brunch time and went out to pick up some manna, but found none. So they practiced fasting involuntarily. These lazy people were severely rebuked by Moses for they did not keep the Sabbath holy.

Fifth, teach the meaning of manna to their children (31-36). Look at verse 32. Moses said, This is what the Lord has commanded: Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the desert when I brought you out of Egypt. According to the LORD's command Moses and Aaron took a jar and put an omer of manna in it, then placed it before the LORD to be kept for the generations to come (33). Daily bread training is very important for our spiritual lives. It is also very important for our children to know the meaning of daily bread training in the desert. God fed them in the wilderness with manna for 40 years to teach them

God's faithfulness. It was to teach them how to depend on God on a daily basis.

We should not let our children see that we are too anxious trying to get one hundred years' portion of daily bread. We should not be too anxious and get a heart attack or become like selfish tax collectors. We must teach our children that we are faithful to depend on God on a daily basis and trust him for our future security. If we keep this instruction, God will bless us, as well as our children. If anyone does not keep this instruction, God cannot bless him at all. Daily Bread training also helps us to overcome all kinds of sinful desires, and to grow as holy children of God until we can please God through our daily lives.

## II. The Israelites defeat the Amalekites (17:1-16)

First, water from the rock (17:1-7). Look at 17:1. The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The last time, when the water was bitter at Marah, they grumbled. This time, when they had no water, they quarreled with Moses. In fact, they were ready to kill Moses by stoning him (4).

What did Moses do? Did he try to find a hiding place or get ready to run for his life? No. Moses prayed loudly to God, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me" (4). The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel (5-6). In these verses we learn that God recognized Moses' faith, but at this time, God wanted to teach the elders of Israel to have faith in God. So God commanded Moses to take some of the elders and show them how God let the water come out of the rock at Horeb.

Our God is the great God. He did not want to teach 600,000 Israelites all at once to have faith in God. God had done his best to teach Moses to have faith in God. Now he is doing his best to help the elders of Israel to have faith in God. In the last part of verse 7 the Israelites say, "Is the LORD among us or not?" God had showed them the power of God through many events. God delivered them from their slavery. But they were full of unbelief and said, "Is the LORD among us or not?" Praise God that he bore with these unbelieving people with unclean lips! Praise God for his great love for his near-sighted people! Praise God for his unyielding hope for his people Israel!

Second, the LORD is my Banner (17:8-16). In the course of marching to

the promised land, the Israelites were weary and tired. At this time of hardship, the Amalekites, who were descendants of Esau (Ge 36:12), came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. It was the first battle for the Israelites for these were the first enemies the Israelites had to confront. What was Moses' strategy? He said to General Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands" (9). His strategy seems to be somewhat strange. Why did he not go to the battlefield to command, instead of going up to the top of the mountain with his staff? When we carefully observe this part, we learn that Moses' strategy was first to pray to God. Next, his soldiers under General Joshua's command should go out to fight.

What happened when Moses prayed on the top of the mountain and Joshua fought the Amalekites, as Moses had ordered? As long as Moses lifted his staff with his hands, the Israelites were winning. But when Moses lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. So Aaron, Moses' older brother, held up Moses' one hand and Hur, Moses' older brother-in-law, and Miriam's husband, held up Moses' other hand. Finally, the Israelites overcame the Amalekites. Moses was the youngest among three. But in God, they became one and prayed to God from the beginning of the battle to the end. And the result was victory. Moses said that his staff was the staff of God (9). It was nothing but a piece of wood. But when God used Moses, God gave him a staff. With his staff, he delivered his people out of Egypt. With his staff, he divided the water of the Red Sea. With his staff, he defeated the Amalekites. We are nothing but clumps of dust or pieces of wood. But when God is with us, we can be used by God greatly. (The Jewish tradition associates Hur with Miriam, as either her husband or her son.)

After defeating the Amalekites, Moses built an altar and called it, "The LORD is my Banner" (15). It meant, "The LORD is my victory."

### III. Moses obeyed Jethro's counseling (18:1-27)

First, Moses' testimony (1-8). Moses' father-in-law was Jethro, the priest of Midian. Jethro brought Moses' wife and his two sons. It is common sense that they would talk about how they had survived. But Moses did not talk about his family members. He told Jethro everything God had done for him and for his people Israel and how God brought Israel out of Egypt. Moses praised God at his family gathering. Moses had two sons. The first one's name was Gershom, meaning, "I have become an alien in a foreign land." The second son's name was Eliezer, meaning, My father's God was my helper. If we combine the two names, we find a deep spiritual meaning: "In the foreign land, God was my helper." Moses was helpless when he became a political exile. But God was his helper.

Second, Jethro was converted (9-12). Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the LORD had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. He said, "Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly" (10,11). Jethro had believed in the Midianite god and was a priest of Midian. But after hearing Moses' testimony, he accepted Moses' God as his God. After accepting God he brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God to express his thanksgiving for his conversion.

Third, Jethro's counseling (13-27). At that time, Moses was regarded as the leader. So, many people came to him to file their complaints. Every day, Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, who stood around him from morning till evening. But Moses didn't reach many verdicts, despite thronging crowds. Jethro watched what Moses was doing and said, "Why do you alone sit as judge while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?" (14). Moses answered, "I inform them of God's decrees and laws." Jethro replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. Select capable men from all the people--men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain--and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times. But have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter." Since Moses was the top leader, he could have been as stubborn as Pharaoh the Terrible. But Moses humbly accepted Jethro's advice and practiced it immediately. Moses was a man with a learning mind.

In this passage we learn God's hope. God's hope is indeed great. He wants to raise his slave people as a kingdom of priests. God is not discouraged by their slave mentality or unbelief. God gave them daily bread training, not one or two months, and not several years. God gave them daily bread training for 40 years, until they were changed. Actually, the first generation all died in the wilderness in the midst of training. Still God was not discouraged. God was full of hope for his people to be raised as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. May God grant us undying hope for the young people of the United States as well as for the young people of Russia. May God bless you to know God's deep hope for his people and for you through wilderness training.