

WILDERNESS TESTING AND GOD'S PROVISION

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Karen Gonzalez

EXODUS CHAPTERS 16-18

Manna and Quail

Water from the Rock

Battle with Amalek

Jethro's Advice

WHERE ARE WE?

Passover sacrifice and the LORD's **protection** of the firstborn has taken place

Moses' family also **protected** following the circumcision of his son in Ch. 4

Hebrew "Pesach" – protect; have compassion for

Israel has been rescued thru the water of the Red Sea (Reed Sea)

Parallel in Moses' own life of being rescued and 'drawn out' of the reeds as an infant

Egyptians are no longer in pursuit

The nation that tried to destroy Israel by drowning baby boys is now 'thrown into the sea' itself and drowned; Pharaoh's warriors are dead on the seashore

The Exodus From Egypt

Nuweiba Beach Crossing -- Sinai at Jabal al-Lawz



IN THE WILDERNESS

God's people have entered the wilderness, leaving behind the only life they have known, to begin their formation as a nation, a free people.

In-between: life in Egypt as slaves and life in the Promised Land

- Uncomfortable / uncertain / unsettling
- Marked by 2 themes: God's

TESTING

PROVISION (sustenance and leadership)

Testing:

By God: Verify or Prove the worth of our faith and loyalty; Provide an opportunity to trust; display obedience [not a provocation of failure.]

By people: Requiring, demanding proof (displays a lack of faith or trust)

Learning to trust God,
serve him instead of Pharaoh

CONTRAST:

Serving Pharaoh

Work as slaves 7 days a week

Quotas of bricks

Exodus 5:13: 'Complete your work, your daily task each day, as when there was straw.'

Serving God

Rhythm of work and rest

Provision from Heaven

Exodus 16:4: I will rain down bread from heaven for you. Go out each day and gather enough for that day.

Literary Design in Exodus and Numbers:

CHIASM : ABCBA order

The wilderness narratives in Exodus 15-18 mirror the wilderness journey recorded in Numbers 10-21 in a chiasm with the Sinai narrative at the center

On **both sides** of the time at Sinai, the author has arranged a series of events:

6 campsites

2 times - no water

1 time - water from rock

1 time - quail and manna

1 time - angel of YHWH

Fight Amalekites

Lament leaving Egypt

Midianite relative helps

Complaints and rebellion

Chiasm in the Wilderness Journeys

Exod. 5-15 YHWH's showdown with Pharaoh, king of Egypt

Exod. 14:19-20 Angel of YHWH protects Israel from Egypt's army

Exod. 15 Song of victory over Pharaoh, king of Egypt

Exod. 15:22-25 Springs of water provided

Exod. 16:1-17:6 Food?; Sabbath; opposing Moses; water from rock

Exod. 17:8-16 Joshua wins battle with Amalekites

Exod. 18:1-6 Moses' family (conflict)

Exod. 18:13-18 Moses' leadership burden

Exod. 18:19-27 Assisted by Midianite kin (Jethro)

Exod. 19:1-2 Arrival at Sinai

Exod. 19 - Num. 10 Sinai Narratives

Num. 10:11-13 Departure from Sinai Exodus

Num. 10:29-32 Assisted by Midianite kin (Hobab)

Num. 11 Moses' leadership burden

Num. 12 Moses' family (conflict)

Num. 13-14 Joshua and Caleb; battle with Amalekites/Canaanites lost

Num. 15:32-21:9 Sabbath; opposing Moses/Aaron; water from rock; food?

Num. 21:16-18a Springs of water provided

Num. 21:18b-35 Song of victory over Sihon, king of Ammon

Num. 22:21-35 Angel of YHWH protects Israel from Moab's curses

Num. 23-24 YHWH's showdown with Balak, king of Moab

THE STAFF OF GOD / THE ROD OF MOSES: A MAJOR PLAYER

- Not merely a physical object, but a divine instrument and significant symbol in the life and ministry of Moses:
- Demonstrate God's power and divine authority
- Represents leadership
- Used in punishment and judgement
- Provision
- Used to perform miraculous signs and wonders
 - Strike the waters of the Nile, turning them to blood
 - Parting of the Red Sea
 - Strike the rock, water comes out
 - Provides victory in the battle of Amelek
- Midrash's account of the staff [rabbinic collection of teachings, creative narratives that interpret biblical text, seeking deeper meaning and insight]:
- Given in the Garden of Eden
- Made of wood from the Tree of Knowledge and inscribed "This one will one day redeem Israel from Egypt."
- Passed thru generations Adam to Jacob
- Given to Joseph and ended up in Pharaoh's palace
- Stolen by advisor (Jethro), brought to Midian and planted in the middle of the garden
- Moses pulls it out, Zipporah given as wife

EXODUS 15:22-27 – THE JOURNEY TO SINAI BEGINS

22 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. 23 When they came to **Marah**, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. 24 And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” 25 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, 26 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**.”

27 Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.

- The crossing of the Red Sea taught Israel that the Lord is their Warrior (15:3)
- Their experience at “**MarAH**” taught them that he is their Teacher and Healer.
 - Show: “**yarAH**” the ‘showing’ or ‘teaching’ from God; same root word of **Torah** – name of 1st 5 books of Hebrew Bible (“To Guide” or ‘To Teach’)
 - Healer ‘**RaphA**’
- God makes the water sweet and instructs them to listen to what he is teaching them.
- God’s wisdom is a Tree of Life (Proverbs 3:18)

SPEAKING OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE - SYMBOLISM

The Garden of Eden there is a tree:

snake – deception

nourishment – brings sin/death

instructions – will they trust God?
(disobeyed)

Result: curse

Exodus 15 – 3 days into the wilderness at Marah there is grumbling because water is undrinkable (bitter.)

There is a tree: “God showed him a log” [showed: instructed: gave knowledge]

Moses with the staff (was once a snake)

Instructions – throw log into the water (obeyed)

nourishment - water becomes fresh, sustains life

Result: God provides life thru the intercessor, MOSES

CHAPTER 16:1-8 BREAD FROM HEAVEN

16 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. ² And the whole congregation of the people of Israel **grumbled** against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, ³ 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.”

⁴ 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. ⁵ On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” ⁶ 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, ⁷ 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?” ⁸ 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.**”

1 month into the journey:

Physical crisis creates another spiritual one

Grumbling: lost memory of the miracle water turned sweet – quickly forgotten

‘the good ole’ days in Egypt’ – ingratitude for present blessing, provision

Feast and famine imagery

Parallel: Luke 5:29/Pharisees complain [same Greek ‘grumble’ word]

For the 3rd time it rains: 1) water-flood; 2) fire—destruction of S&G; 3) bread for provision

Notice: God hears the ingratitude (sin), does not become angry, meets the need (grace); test their obedience (law)

EXODUS 16:9-15

9 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.’” 10 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. 11 And the Lord said to Moses, 12 “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.**”

13 In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning, dew lay around the camp. 14 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. 15 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. 16 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.’” 17 And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. 18 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.

- Grumbling to/disobeying
Moses is to grumble/ disobey God, as Moses is God’s chosen representative
- God graciously continues to reveal his character and does not become angry
- Gives physical gifts:
 - Daily manna for 40 years;
 - Quail (migratory bird)
- “Man hu” – sounds like Hebrew word for ‘what is it?’
- When measured out, each person has exactly their daily ration

EXODUS 16:19-30

19 And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning." 20 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.** 21 Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

22 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, 23 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.'" 24 So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. 25 Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a **Sabbath to the Lord**; today you will not find it in the field. 26 Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none." 27 On the seventh day **some of the people went out to gather**, but they found none. 28 And the Lord said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? 29 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." 30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

The Sinai wilderness is called a 'howling waste' in Deut. 32:10

Deut 8:2-3 And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he **might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.**

And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that **man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.**

EXODUS 16:31-36

31 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. 32 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.’”

33 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.” 34 As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before **the testimony** to be kept. 35 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. 36 (An omer is the tenth part of an ephah.)

- Omer – (roughly) half gallon

- Referring to the stone tablets recording God’s ‘words’ commandments (which they don’t have yet)

WHAT'S TO EAT?

Why are the Israelites 'starving' if they have flocks and herds of animals with them?

- Egyptian ways: cattle/animals worshiped there
- Livestock as future income (shepherding/herdsmen)

They lacked faith, not food.

Quail – migratory bird = Natural process already in existence, used by God to provide – Spring migration northward, migrate at night

Manna - white, flaky, like coriander seed, wafers tasting like honey (16:31).

COULD IT BE? A byproduct of aphids extracting plant sap?

Honeydew drops on leaves:

Parallels:

Matthew 14 and 15; Mark 6 and 8; John 6

God using a multiplication of bread =

feeding of the 5K and the 4K. He takes a few fish and small loaves of bread and Multiplies it. (this time with leftovers.)



JOHN 6:25-40

25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” 26 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 **Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.** For on him God the Father has set his seal.” 28 Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” 29 Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” 30 So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” 32 Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, **it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.**” 34 They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

JOHN 6:41-51

41 So the Jews **grumbled** about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” 42 They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” 43 Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— 46 not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 **Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.** And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

- God has promised to supply all our needs through His riches in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:19). We are not to worry about food because God knows what we need before we ask. Instead, we are to seek God and His kingdom, putting Him first and trusting in His faithfulness to provide what we need (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:22–31).

EXODUS 17: NO WATER (ANOTHER TEST)

17 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. 2 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?**” 3 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?” 4 So Moses cried to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” 5 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. 6 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. 7 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?**”

- People are mad and demanding, threatening
- Bitter, angry people who are out of fellowship with the Lord do irrational things that make situation worse
- Testing: forcing God’s hand, challenging him, making belief contingent upon a divine demonstration – turn faith to sight
- Rock: type of Christ (1 Cor 10:4); Died once: Rom 6:10
- Deut 6:16: You shall not put the Lord your God to the test as you did in Massah.

MATTHEW 4:1-11

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting **forty days and forty nights**, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” 4 But he answered, “It is written,

“Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple 6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

“He will command his angels concerning you,’
and

“On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

7 Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘**You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.**’”

- Jesus won't make God prove anything. Faith does not make demands.
- Models for us how to respond in times of temptation and testing

EXODUS 17:1-7 – WATERING THE POPULATION (NUMBER CRUNCHING)

The STAFF (the one Moses hit the Nile with that turned the water of Egypt into blood and left the Egyptians with nothing to drink – this same staff previously used in judgement, God now uses in a **reversal** of that episode, in **mercy**, to provide water.

‘Is the Lord with us or not?’ Moses strikes the rock as instructed, and God lets the water flow from it be the answer. A miraculous provision via a natural impossibility.

600,000 men on foot, plus women and children :

2.4 million people plus livestock. This cannot be a trickle or a stream of water, but a massive gush of water, a river of life pouring out to meet the need.

TALKING NUMBERS

- 2.4 million crossing the sea standing 1000 people across would stretch a mile wide and have taken 20 hours to pass a single point
- Egyptian population at the time of the Exodus is estimated at 3-4 million (hard to explain domination)
- 2.4 million people assumes each family had 60 children if there were only 22,000 firstborns (Numbers 3:39)
- 2.4 million people would cover a camp of 400 mi² (just for reference: City of Chicago in 2024 had 2.7 million people in 234 mi²)

EXODUS: LARGE ISRAEL OR SMALL ISRAEL?

Problem: Scripture and tradition suggest a “large” Israel

Numbers 1:21–43 gives an account from each tribe, using Hebrew words, not symbols, to represent quantities. Adding these up, one arrives at the figure given in Numbers 1:46 (600,000 men).

Problem: Scripture and history suggest a “small” Israel

Deuteronomy has multiple references to Israel’s being “smaller” than the societies of Canaan (Deuteronomy 9:1–2). Each of the seven individual Canaanite realms was “more numerous and mightier than” Israel (Deuteronomy 7:1). Only Moab expresses fear over Israel’s size (Numbers 22:3).

Israel’s success is to be credited to God’s intervention, not their military might (Deuteronomy 7:7). In fact, God reassures Israel not to be afraid (Numbers 13:28) of these other, “greater” nations (Deuteronomy 7:17).

God specifically noted that the conquest of Canaan would take time (Exodus 23:30).

Possible explanations

1. Literalism: 2.6% birth rate; cowardice, inexperience on the part of Israel after centuries of slavery
2. Hyperbole, exaggeration
3. author applying current population to the past

EXODUS

| | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|--------------------------------|---|-----------|
| about six PHRASE | H8337 | כֶּשֶׁשׁ כֶּשֶׁשׁ šēš |  | HR/Acfsa |
| hundred | H3967 | מֵאוֹת מֵאָה mē'á |  | HAcbpa |
| thousand | H505 | אַלְפֵי אַלְף 'elep |  | HAcbsa |
| men | H1397 | הַגְּבָרִים גֶּבֶר geber |  | HTd/Ncmpa |
| on foot, PHRASE | H7273 | רַגְלֵי רַגְלֵי raḡlî |  | HAamsa |

4- Misinterpretation of the Hebrew word 'thousand' (elep)

- Literal 1,000
- Military unit (men under one leader) 6-20 men
- Clan, tribe
- family, division

Alternate population suggestion: **22,200** (average family had 8-9 children).

EXODUS 17:8-16

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

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

- Amelekites: descendants of Esau; brutal, nomadic people, known to be plunderers, "no fear of God."
- Strategy recorded in Deut 25:17-19
 - Suddenly, from behind
 - Attack the weary and feeble
 - Those at the rear of the march
- First introduction of Joshua: from tribe of Ephraim (most powerful tribe) man of military skill who later becomes Moses' aide and successor
- 3-part strategy
 - Skill of Joshua and army (trust and fight, follow Moses' leadership)
 - Intercession of Moses, Aaron and Hur (trust and intercede) – hold staff up
 - Power of God in heaven does the rest, and defends his children
- Banner: same letters as the word 'Test'

EXODUS 18:1-12

18 Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after **he had sent her home**, 3 along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land"), 4 and the name of the other, Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"). 5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was encamped at the mountain of God. 6 And when he sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her," 7 Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. And they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. 8 Then Moses told his father-in-law **all that the Lord had done** to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, and **how the Lord had delivered them**. 9 And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians.

10 Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11 **Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods**, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people." 12 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

- Moses speaks with Jethro in ch. 4, again in 18 as bookends to the deliverance story
 - In both accounts Jethro offers a blessing of peace
 - Both accounts feature the elders of Israel and Aaron
 - In both accounts Zipporah and the sons are traveling, though they are absent inbetween
 - Away from Moses but we don't know when or why they left
- Moses' retelling: gives glory to God
- Jethro 1st among other nations to glorify Yahweh

EXODUS 18:13-20

13 The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. 14 When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?" 15 And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God; 16 when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the **statutes** of God and **his laws**."

17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, "**What you are doing is not good**. 18 You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. 19 **Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you!** You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, 20 and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. 21 Moreover, look for able men from all the people, **men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe**, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. 22 And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves.

- Jethro blessing Moses with wisdom
- Qualifications for leadership are about spiritual maturity rather than charisma or ability.
- To lead God's people well, one must be a good follower of God himself
 - Reflected in instructions for Israel's King (Deut 17)
 - Choosing elders and deacons (1 Tim 3)

EXODUS 18:21-27

So it will be **easier** for you, and they will bear the burden with you. 23 **If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace.**”

24 So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. 25 Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. 26 And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. 27 Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went away to his own country.

- ‘Easier for you’ literally means ‘to take cargo from a ship’ [The NIV says, ‘will make your load lighter.’]
- Leadership strategy is undergirded with the authority of God-Jethro tells Moses to pray about it: ‘If you do this and God so commands’ (v 15, NIV)
- There is a representative for every 10 people to help separate the easy conflicts from the more difficult ones. The harder ones can make their way up the chain.
- Moses is God’s chosen leader, but he no longer has to do the work alone

WRAP UP: THEMES

TESTING

The theme of testing appears several times in these chapters. When God provides both sweet water and manna, He says he is testing Israel to see if they will obey his word. Rather than responding faithfully, Israel immediately quarrels with Moses and puts God to the test.

Psalms 95 interprets this testing as stemming from Israel's hard heart, and the writer of Hebrews uses this Psalm to exhort his readers not to have an 'evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.'

PROVIDENCE

In this section God provides his people with sweet water, bread from heaven, and water from the rock. His providence is also evident in Israel's supernatural defeat of Amalek.

Past provision of deliverance is recalled and future provision of leadership is arranged through an encounter with Jethro.

Significantly, the first three examples of God's providence come in response to Israel's sinful grumbling. This highlights the gracious nature of God's providence: he does not provide for his people because they are faithful, but because HE is faithful.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHTS

- ❖ The Lord directed Israel into difficult and trying situations in order to prove His power and build their faith and character. If we aren't growing in faith, in the knowledge of God, and in godly character, we're wasting our opportunities.
- ❖ We need the battles of life to help balance the blessings of life; otherwise, we'll become too confident and comfortable and stop trusting the Lord.
- ❖ When circumstances are difficult, don't ask the Lord, "HOW can I get out of this," but "WHAT can I get out of this?" Let God accomplish His purposes and give Him the glory.
- ❖ Godliness isn't the automatic result of reading books and attending church meetings, it also involves bearing burdens, fighting battles, and feeling pain.
- ❖ Praise and thankfulness are a good antidote to a complaining spirit.
- ❖ God's Word is the heavenly food that nourishes our spiritual life, and we must feed on it daily or we will suffer from spiritual malnutrition.
- ❖ Our Savior ever lives in heaven to make intercession for us as we fight the battles of life, and His strength never fails.