

## Midweek Meditation for April 27, 2022

### Exodus 17:8-15

As you may recall from our last Meditation, the Israelite nation was again wandering in the desert. They had their daily provision of manna and quail, but they had no water to sustain them. And, of course, they were true to their pattern of behavior up until now. They came to Moses and started grumbling about the fact that they had not found a supply of water. Rather than praising God for all the ways that he has sustained his nation of chosen people, and then asking for God's help, trusting that he would deliver them just as he had done so many times in their journey, they came and grumbled to Moses because they had no water to drink. Rather than praising God for what they had, they chose to complain about what they did not have.

If you stop and think about it, this is a pattern that is familiar to all of us. Often that is how we roll through life too. Once again, Moses appealed to God's mercy for the people and God delivered water from the rock near Sinai. The problem was the question that they asked. They asked, "Where is God? They asked, "Why had God abandoned us?" Instead of questioning God's care for them, they should have spent their time acknowledging that God was with them, as he had always been with them, and simply asked for God's help in their time of need.

Again, this should sound familiar to us. Our journey often follows the same pattern. God's question was, "Why do you think Moses is your deliverer? I am your deliverer. I love you. I have chosen you. I have delivered you from bondage. Stop doubting and believe."

Would the miracle of water from a rock in the desert be enough to convince them? We shall see. Today's passage tells us about an encounter that the Israelite nation had with another group of people, the Amalekites. They were at a place called Rephidim which is a place right at the base of Mt. Sinai. The Israelites wanted to pass through land that was occupied by the Amalekites. Actually, the Amalekites were a Nomadic people. They wandered this region in search of places where there was enough food and water for their people and livestock. The Amalekites were descended from Jacob's brother, Esau, and apparently, they held a grudge. Remember Jacob was given Isaac's birthright

rather than Esau. Just as Esau was an ungodly man, the nation of the Amalekites was an ungodly nation.

For the Israelites, this is the first of a number of violent encounters that they would have with the Amalekites. This battle is described in Deuteronomy. The Amalekites fought in a dishonorable way. They went around Joshua's army and attacked the children and those who were weary from their journey. They probably attacked a lot of children and woman and elderly people who were all weary from their travels. And they fought not to gain the land that they were fighting on, but to inflict suffering, perhaps even revenge, upon the nation Israel.

In this instance, Moses called to Joshua and commanded him to gather an army to face off against the Amalekites. Moses again advocated for the Israelite nation, by sitting atop a nearby hill and holding up his staff. When the staff was held up in the air, the battle favored the Israelites. When Moses grew weary and his hand went down, then the battle favored the Amalekites. So, Aaron and Hur took turns assisting Moses to keep his staff elevated. They put a rock under his arm to assist him in holding up his staff onto the Lord, and in the end the Israelites prevailed.

Hur was the husband of Moses' sister, Miriam, who was called a prophetess. Hur is one of a group of leaders who took a meaningful part in leading the people through the wilderness, beginning with this instance where he helped Aaron and Moses hold Moses staff in the air, empowering God's help to defeat the Amalekites.

This instance along with Moses taking the elders of the nation Israel forward when Moses raised his staff in the air to draw water from the rock, helps the people see that more people need to trust in God rather than Moses. The message is that one human cannot save a nation. Moses needed Aaron and Hur to help hold him up and support him.

We need to work together as God's servants in much the same way even today. A nation, even God's chosen nation, can only be saved when they trust in God to deliver them. These passages that we have shared, and will share in the weeks to come, give a valuable picture for us to pay attention to. God needed this nation of people to trust that God would provide for them. If they were to survive their journey through the wilderness, they would absolutely need to trust in God's provision for their journey.

So they are put in positions where they are being taught those lessons they need to learn. They learned that God would provide food by Manna from heaven, and they received the food not by grumbling against God to Moses, but by trusting that God would provide.

They learned that God provided them the provision of rest. They were commanded to take manna enough to prepare for the sabbath, a day of rest provided by God. Then water, not by grumbling to Moses, but rather by God's hand and God's authority. And now they learn the provision of God's protection. Not by their own efforts, but by God's provision.

Remember, only when the staff was raised to acknowledge God's help, did victory come to Joshua and his army. They were "in school" to learn all of these ways that they had to trust in God. Now, I am afraid that in these early tests, they did not score very well, but they were being prepared for all of the parts of their journey that would come in the years ahead. They were not placed on easy street by the hand of God. They were put on the road that would prepare them to allow God to be their God, and allow their nation to be God's chosen people.

We, too often need to learn these lessons of God's provision. God provides us food. God also provides the bread of life, giving us a vision of our eternal destiny. God provides us water; water to sustain us, but also water to cleanse us, to wash us white as snow, so that we might be ready to stand before the throne of God. God provides us a time to rest so that we might be empowered to worship him and praise his provision and authority in our lives and in our world. And in this lesson, we see the provision of protection that comes from the hand of God.

Hur and Aaron and Moses knew that victory over their enemies would only come by trusting in God's Authority. Think about these lessons of provision in your life and in your journey. I think you will see that God provides us with opportunities to learn how to trust in him. God provides us with opportunities to see his provision. And God provides us with opportunities to prepare us so that we will be more prepared to receive his provision as we journey into our future, following the path he has instore for us. My prayer is that you will be mindful of God's provision in your life. Let us Pray