

EXODUS 16:1 – 17: 7

IS GOD AMONG US?

I often quote the verses that say ‘there is nothing new under the sun’ and ‘all things are common among men.’

Things tend to run in patterns. History often repeats itself. Empires crumble many times because they err the same way those before them did.

As parents we struggle to ensure that our children don’t make the same mistakes we did. Why do we worry about this? We do it because we know that things run in patterns. We know that history repeats itself.

And now, as we are journeying through Exodus, we can see that a pattern has developed with the children of Israel. They have continually experienced some of the most miraculous events of history. However, they are not long removed

from a miracle before they begin to complain about their immediate circumstance.

What's more is the focus or target of their complaining. It is Moses that is constantly being held accountable for their circumstances, whereas Moses is constantly deflecting and referring the people to God. Sadly they continue to wonder, despite all they have seen, whether or not God is truly among them.

As the Apostle Paul said as he referred to Israel in the wilderness:

1 Cor. 10:11

11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

AW Pink writes, **“We need to realize that in every circumstance and situation where faith is tested, the Lord Himself brought us there. If this be apprehended, it will not be so difficult for us to trust Him to sustain us while we remain there.”**

We can focus on Israel's complaining or we can focus on the cause of the complaining. In medicine, you can treat the symptoms or you can get to the cause of the illness. You can't kill a tree or a weed by plucking off the leaves. You must kill it at the root – at its source. And I believe that is where we need to focus today. If our focus is in the wrong place, then we will not be able to proceed in our journey. As we will see, Israel has already lost its focus just 45 days into their journey.

1 And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. 2 Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

- Wilderness of Sin: no connection with what we think of as sin. It was simply a place name – Zin.
- Selective memory syndrome.
- Do they really think Moses wanted to go into the desert to die?
- Why not eat the livestock? They will need these animals later as they move into the land and also for sacrifices.
- They complained not just “to Moses” but “against Moses.” They are impugning his integrity – or so they think, but it actually goes deeper than this.

4 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. 5 And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.”

6 Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, “At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt. 7

And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord; for He hears your complaints against the Lord. But what are we, that you complain against us?” 8 Also Moses said, “This shall be seen when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the Lord hears your complaints which you make against Him. And what are we? Your complaints are not against us but against the Lord.”

- “They will take up a quota that I may test them.” There was a reason for the way things are being done. It was a test of their obedience.
- “You shall see the glory of the LORD. Who are we that you complain against us?”
- It was God that brought them out of Egypt and on this specific route – not Moses. Wrong focus.
- Meat in the evening and bread to the full in the morning. Evening first – the way they reckoned a day.
- They complained of missing the meat and bread to the full, therefore God answers their complaints exactly.

9 Then Moses spoke to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, 'Come near before the Lord, for He has heard your complaints.' " ***10 Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.***

11 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 12 "I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I am the Lord your God.' "

13 So it was that quails came up at evening and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp. 14 And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, as fine as frost on the ground. 15 So when the children 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, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. 16 This is

the thing which the Lord has commanded: 'Let every man gather it according to each one's need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent.' "

17 Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. 18 So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need. 19 And Moses said, "Let no one leave any of it till morning." 20 Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. 21 So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted.

22 And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. 23 Then he said to them, "This is what the Lord has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will

boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.’ ” 24 So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. 25 Then Moses said, “Eat that 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, the Sabbath, there will be none.”

27 Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. 28 And the Lord said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? 29 See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” 30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

31 And the house of Israel called its name Manna. And it was like white coriander seed, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.

- Verses 9 & 10: God has heard your complaints and now look and see the glory of the LORD.

- Moses and Aaron attempt to refocus the people onto the true source of their sustenance. This is at the heart of the problem. They are focused on man rather than God and His plan for them as a nation. They are in a learning process as are we.
- Quail in the evening.
- Manna in the morning. We have a description of it. Elsewhere in the Bible it is referred to as the “bread of angels.” Each household is to gather what they need for one day, except on the sixth day where they are to gather enough for two days in order to observe the Sabbath.
- First mention of the Sabbath in scripture. Links back to creation with God resting, (ceasing) His work on the seventh day.
- Omer – a very early form of measure. Roughly 7 pints or 2 quarts.
- Some of the people gathered more than their quota and some failed to gather enough for the Sabbath. Either way, they failed the test of obedience. But there is more than a mere failure here. It goes deeper than we may think. More on this later.

32 Then Moses said, “This is the thing which the

Lord has commanded: 'Fill an omer with it, to be kept for your generations, 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 pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations." 34 As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. 35 And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. 36 Now an omer is one-tenth of an ephah.

- Once again God has them do something in commemoration of what He has done. Why? Because they, just as we do, have a tendency to forget what God has done for us.

1 Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people

contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink."

So Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?"

3 And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

4 So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!"

- Moses is at his wit's end. They continue to look to him rather than to God! They are still focusing their anger (concerns) in the wrong place.
- Once again, do they actually believe Moses wanted to go into the desert to die? No, they don't. But when people begin to complain, they exaggerate.

5 And the Lord said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. 6 Behold, I

will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

- God responds by sending Moses and some of the elders ahead to Mt. Horeb, (Sinai) in order that God can perform another miracle so the people will have water.
- But look at verse 7 once again.

7 So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

- Massah – testing, temptation
- Meribah - strife

The last portion of verse seven is the root of the problem - both theirs and many times, ours also.

The have come to yet another place of testing and there is now strife in the camp. Why is this a repetitive problem? Because of what is said at the end of verse seven. They question whether or not God is among them.

And we think, “How can they feel that way?” They have seen miracle after miracle. God is leading them with a pillar of cloud and fire. The Angel of the LORD is going before them!

They have a faith problem! We can sit here and hammer them for their complaining, but that is just the symptom. It does no good to rail and preach against symptoms. They, despite all they have seen and heard still doubt that God is among them! And guess what... we do the same thing. And we do it for the same reason. We doubt whether or not God is among/ with us whenever the next trial comes before us. Let me quote A.W. Pink again.

“We need to realize that in every circumstance and situation where faith is tested, the Lord Himself brought us there. If this be

apprehended, it will not be so difficult for us to trust Him to sustain us while we remain there.”

I believe they are so focused on themselves and their circumstances that they then focus on Moses who is their leader, but he is not their provider.

God knew this would happen and this is why He has led them this way. He gave them a circuitous route in order to draw Pharaoh into a trap. He didn't lead them on the highway - the shortest route because He knew they would retreat to Egypt. And now He is taking them through the wilderness (chaos) in order that they may be prepared to be His people when they reach the Promised Land. They have learned about the Sabbath – a new concept and they will eventually learn about sacrifice once the Law is given. They will see another visual representation of God living among them when the tabernacle is built. But despite all this – despite all He has done and shown them, they still question whether or not He is among them. They fail to see the bigger picture. They fail to see His plan.

When people are liberated from any sort of bondage, especially slavery, they have lessons to learn. As slaves, Israel was accustomed to not only working as slaves but they were also accustomed to having other things provided for them. I believe this is why they continually look to Moses rather than to God.

They are accustomed to living day to day. And there is some truth to this. This is why Jesus taught the disciples to pray for their “daily” provision. But He also taught them that there was a bigger picture in which He (God) was invested. And He was also invested in them, as He is in us.

Israel is seeing only the immediate circumstance. They only want food and water. But there is much more to the story.

Jesus dealt with this same mindset.

John 6: 26 – 40

26 Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate

of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

28 Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”

29 Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

30 Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ”

32 Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give 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 Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”

35 And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger,

and he who 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 the one who comes to Me I will by no means 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 This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. 40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Notice that the Jews of Jesus’ day still regarded Moses as the source. And they were still looking for more signs and daily bread. They weren’t satisfied that God was truly among them. Jesus told them that He was their true sustenance, not physical bread.

The Apostle Paul referred to the water they drank when dealing with issues in the church at Corinth.

1 Cor. 10: 1 - 13

1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, **2** all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, **3** all ate the same spiritual food, **4** and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. **5** But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. **7** And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." **8** Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; **9** nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; **10** nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. **11** Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

In each case, both Jesus and Paul refocused the people as to whom it was that provided their sustenance and just what that sustenance should be. **Jesus, being the Word of God, is to be our focus.**

We have to feed on that and our conversation with Him daily. This is why Israel was to gather manna daily. So that they would learn to trust that God had their welfare in hand. They weren't to store it up in order to be lazy and they weren't to store extra in case God didn't show up the next day. It was/ is an exercise in a daily trusting walk with God.

God has our backs. He knows what we need and He knows what lessons we have to learn. When we understand that, we can take daily trials in stride.

Because of what God did for Israel and what Jesus did on the cross, we can be sure that God is among us.