

Bi121 Old Testament

Lesson Bi121- 23 Israel in the Wilderness (Ex 15-17)

No one appreciates a whiner. Whining and complaining come naturally. We hear it in our children. Often their early response to difficulty or questioning is to blame someone else. The blame game started in the Garden of Eden and continues to the present. In this lesson the people of Israel are complaining and blaming Moses for all their woes. In actual fact, it is the Lord they are finding fault with. Moses reminds them that they had failed to fully trust God.

After the people had crossed the Red Sea, Moses led them into the hot desert wilderness toward Mount Sinai. They traveled for three days without finding water, so everyone got very thirsty. When they finally came to a pool of water, it was too bitter to drink. The people grumbled against Moses, asking, “What are we to drink?”

So Moses prayed and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. Moses threw it into the water, and instantly the water became sweet. God said to the Israelites, “If you listen carefully to my voice and pay attention to my commands, I will not bring on you any of the diseases of the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you.”

From there, the Israelites went and camped at a place that had twelve springs and 70 lush green palm trees. They stayed a month, and then headed toward Mount Sinai again. As they traveled, they fell into self-pity and started complaining again against Moses and Aaron: “We should have died in Egypt. Yes, we were slaves, but at least we had plenty of food to eat. You have brought us out into this desert to starve us to death!”

The Lord said to Moses, “I have heard the grumbling of the people. Tell them I am going to rain down bread from heaven for the people. But I will use this test to see if they will follow my instructions. Then they will know that I am the Lord their God.”

As they looked, they saw the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud. Moses addressed the people, “You are not complaining against me and Aaron, but against the Lord. Still, he has heard you. At twilight you will have meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread.”

That evening quail came and covered the camp, so the people had meat to eat. In the morning they saw that the ground was covered with heavy dew. When it evaporated, something like thin flakes of frost was left on the ground. The people looked at it and asked, “What is it?” They tasted it and it was like a wafer sweetened with honey, and could be prepared by baking or boiling.

Moses explained, “It is the bread the Lord has given. He will provide this bread from heaven six days out of every week. For the first five days, you have to gather only enough for one day. On the sixth day, you may gather enough for two days. In this way, you will have food to eat on the Sabbath. It won’t appear on the Sabbath.”

Some of the people disobeyed God's instructions and gathered more than one day's worth. The next morning it smelled and was full of maggots. This did not happen when they gathered more on the sixth day. It was still good to eat on the Sabbath. Some of the people went out to gather bread on the Sabbath, but found there was none. The people called the bread 'manna,' which means, "What is it?" God provided manna for them for the entire 40 years they were in the wilderness.

As the people of Israel continued to move toward Mount Sinai, they camped at a place that had no water. They once again grumbled against Moses rather than calling on God. "Give us water to drink," they demanded. "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

Moses told them, "Why dispute with me, it is really God you are testing!" Then Moses pleaded with the Lord, "What am I to do with these people! They are about to stone me."

The Lord replied, "Walk on ahead of the people with some of the elders of Israel and your staff in your hand. I will stand there with you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock and water will come out of it for the people to drink." Moses did as the Lord commanded and hit the rock. Water gushed out. It was enough for all the people and their livestock. Moses called the place Massah, 'testing,' and Meribah, 'rebellion.'

While at that place, the people of Amalek attacked them. Moses told Joshua to organize the men for battle. Moses then stood on the top of the hill with the staff of God in his hands. As long as Moses held up his hands in worship, appealing to God for help, Joshua was victorious. But when his hands were lowered, the people of Amalek started winning.

Moses' arms became tired, so he sat on a stone with Aaron and Hur on each side. They held his hands up until sunset. Joshua was victorious over the Amalekite army that day. Moses then built an altar and called it "The Lord is my banner," because his hands had been lifted up to the throne of God.

This story is **important** because it shows how quickly people forget the promises and past faithfulness of God. They try to take charge of their own situation. God wants us to trust Him through our hardships and ask for His help instead of blaming leaders or other people.

The main **truth** of this story is that God is faithful to His word. He is a good and loving Father and can be trusted with every detail of our life.

To **review** this lesson, answer these questions.

1. When the people complained about having no meat, what did God do?
 - A. [Pause for 5 seconds]. If you said, "That evening He sent quail to the camp," you are correct.
2. What was the name of the bread from heaven sent by God?
 - A. [Pause for 5 seconds]. If you said, "The bread was called, 'manna,'" you are correct.
3. What did the raising of Moses' hands indicate during the battle with Amalek?

A. [Pause for 5 seconds]. If you said, “His trust was in the Lord,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the circumstances and actions correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly.

Tell the story to a friend who has never heard it. Then ask if they have ever complained to God about circumstances in their life. Offer to pray with your friend, affirming your trust in God to answer your petitions. Come with praise and thanksgiving for God’s goodness, not in a grumbling, whining way.