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Day 27 - January 27

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## **Establishment of a Nation (1525 - 1400 BCE)**

### ***Journey to Sinai***

**Readings: *Exodus 15:22-18:27***

#### ***Reflections:***

- Here is a passage that is focused very clearly on our natural tendency away from faith. Over and over again the immediate response of the Israelites is to assume the worst and not trust God. Miracle after miracle, provision after provision, and yet they still do not fundamentally believe that God loves them and will take care of them. This whole passage reveals God's grace and patience for his children and how he always wants to take care of them.
- The whole account begins with a great promise, "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 the 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 God who heals you." It is simple: If you listen to his voice and do as he asks, then he will protect you and heal you.
- It is interesting how the needs of the Israelites not being met immediately led to hopeless thoughts. "If only we had died..." God provides bread but still tests them. He wants them to learn faith and so he teaches them about Sabbath rest and faith even in this first provision. He does not give them a huge storehouse to take care of them but only their daily need and enough on Fridays so they don't have to work on Saturday. This also applies to hearing God speak. He will give us what we need to know today assuming that tomorrow we will still be talking with him and he will tell us what we need to know tomorrow. In this way, God often does not reveal the future, but prefers to see our relationship as an ongoing dialogue where we walk into the future together in constant conversation and active trust.
- We see that when Aaron was speaking this all out, the glory of the Lord appeared in a cloud. God was working so hard to show himself to them yet they still did not believe.
- God provides the bread and meat and says, "Then you will know that I am the Lord your God." He wants us to know him as our God, provider and protector. At first the Israelites do not recognize God's provision in the manna. Sometimes his provision comes in surprising ways.

- Anyone who tried to stockpile God's provision had it go bad. It needed to be a daily relationship of active trust, not trying to gather up a whole bunch so you don't need God tomorrow.
- They are now introduced to the Sabbath rest. Again, stopping from work and focusing solely on God is a part of faith and active trust. It is interesting how some Israelites would not listen to God and had to test to see whether not they could find food on the seventh day. They (and we) are like little kids. Our parent says, "Do not touch" and what is the first thing we do? We go and touch.
- The bread, this manna, tasted really good. It was sweet. Again, this is a sign of God's grace. Some of the manna is gathered as a memorial. Again, God is helping them make concrete his provision so that they will remember his provision. He is helping them establish truth in their thinking. "God will provide for our needs."
- The people complain again. Is this a big surprise? They even want to kill Moses their leader. (A reminder that it is not always great to be a leader!) Why? Because they don't have water. God and Moses are gracious. This story sets the stage for when Moses will be tested in the future. Here Moses is told to strike the rock in an obvious demonstration of God's power working through him and his staff. Moses is exalted in the eyes of the elders of Israel. Later on Moses will be tested on this point and unfortunately fail.
- Joshua appears in the text as he will later be known as the great commander and leader of the people. We should note that Jesus' name is actually Joshua. So here we are introduced to another Christ figure in the story of Israel.
- Moses does not fight, but prays and worships. Aaron and Hur help Moses remain in a posture of worship and prayer so that the Israelites can win. This physical demonstration gives us insight into the spiritual realities that we must understand. Our spiritual battle is won through prayer and supporting one another in prayer and worship (Ephesians 6:10-20).
- Moses then journals the event so that it is remembered, builds an altar of worship and called it "The Lord is my Banner." This is an inspiring image.
- Moses' father in law is an important figure in the story even though he only appears a few times. He is a priest and this indicates he has an important relationship with God and in some way is a precursor to the role of priests in Israel.
- The appointing of judges was simply God establishing a small group of leaders to care for the people. Each group of ten had a leader, and then each leader of ten had a leader (groups of fifty or one hundred) and then each leader of fifty or one hundred had a leader. This is very similar to how many church families are structured today to care for those within their community.
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