

# The Bread and Water of Life



## SABBATH—AUGUST 9

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Exodus 15:22–27; Exodus 16:1–36; Exodus 17:1–7; Exodus 18:1–27; 1 Corinthians 10:11.



**But the people must learn self-control and obedience. They needed to learn to trust the Lord.**

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘How long will all you people refuse to obey my commands and teachings? Look, the Lord has made the Sabbath a day of rest for all of you. So on the sixth day he will give you enough food for two days. But on the Sabbath each of you must stay where you are. Do not leave your house.’ So the people rested on the Sabbath” (Exodus 16:28–30, ICB).

**AFTER THE ISRAELITES LEFT EGYPT**, they went on a journey to the Promised Land. The Israelites didn't know about the dangers and problems that lay ahead of them. They needed to learn many new lessons. Yes, the Lord would lead them and care for them. Yes, the Lord wanted to help them grow. But the people must learn self-control and obedience. They needed to learn to trust the Lord.

The people must follow Moses if they want to win. So, the people need to work together as a community. They must help each other. So much of their spiritual growth depended on how they solved their problems and how they obeyed Moses.

The Chinese people have a famous saying: “The journey of 1,000 miles starts with the first step.” This saying was true about the Israelites. They needed to trust the Lord with every footstep they took. Sad to say, as we will see, the Israelites didn't learn their lessons so easily.

**BITTER WATERS (Exodus 15:22–27)**

In Bible stories, different people have different parts, good or bad. So, we need to pay careful attention to places, scenes, plans, time, and enemies. But the most important part in any story is the ending and the lessons learned. The same is true with Bible stories.

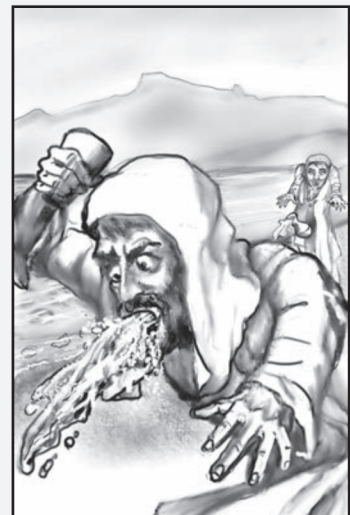
The stories about Israel's desert journey show us that God solves His people's problems. God also brings His people peace. But God's work is made difficult because His people have so little faith. The people complain and disobey God. So, they have many unnecessary troubles, trials, and disasters. They cause many of their own problems because they refuse to stop sinning and trust in God.

**After the Israelites cross the Red Sea, what miracle does God do for them first? What happens right before God does this miracle? Read Exodus 15:22–27 for the answers.**

The first test of Israel's faith is about their need for water. This need is no surprise. The desert is hot and dry. After three days of traveling, the people finally find water. But they can't drink the water because it is "marah." The word "marah" in the Hebrew language means "bitter." Because the water tastes bitter, Israel has trouble believing that God cares for them. But God shows love and forgiveness for His people and does a miracle. The first miracle for the Israelites is done with a piece of wood. Of course, the Lord, and not the wood, makes the water sweet so that the people can drink it. The people needed to learn two important lessons: (1) They needed to be patient and wait for the Lord's help. (2) They needed to learn that God cooperates with people to get things done.

But the Israelites forgot the many mighty miracles that God did for them. These miracles were the same mighty acts that the Israelites praised God for a short while ago when they sang, " 'Lord, who among the gods is like [the same as] you? Who is like you? You are majestic [royal] and holy. Your glory fills me with wonder. You do amazing things' " (Exodus 15:11, NIV).

Even after the Israelites complain, God promises that He will not give them any of the diseases that made the Egyptians sick (Exodus 15:26). God will protect His people. The people can enjoy this promise only if they obey God.



**Because the water tastes bitter, Israel has trouble believing that God cares for them.**

**BIRDS AND MANNA (Exodus 16:1–36)**

Sad to say, the people often forgot that God helped them in the past. God always gave them answers to their problems. But the people let their problems cause them to forget what God did for them and His promise of a wonderful future. God's people today often suffer from the same problem.

**What caused the Israelites to complain? What happened next? Read Exodus 16:1–36 for the answers.**

Sin in the Bible is often connected with food. In the Garden of Eden, the Fall happened because Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:16, 17; Genesis 3:1–6). When Jesus was in the desert, Satan tried to get Him to sin with food (Matthew 4:3). Esau lost his special blessings as the oldest son because of his hunger for food (Genesis 25:29–34). So often Israel's sins were connected to food and drink! No wonder Moses told the Israelites: “ ‘Man doesn't live only on bread. He also lives on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord’ ” (Deuteronomy 8:3, NIV).

God gave the Israelites manna during their 40-year journey in the desert. Manna, of course, is bread from heaven. God used the manna to teach His people that He made the skies and the earth. God also is the Giver of every good thing. God used the manna to teach His people to keep the seventh-day Sabbath.

Each week, four miracles happened: (1) For six days, God gave His people the manna they needed for the day. (2) On Fridays, God gave His people two times as much manna. (3) The manna didn't spoil from Friday to Sabbath. (4) No manna fell on Sabbath. God did these four miracles each week so the people would remember the Sabbath day and celebrate God's love on that day. God said, “ ‘I have given you the Sabbath day’ ” (Exodus 16:29, NIV).

**People like to eat. God made us to enjoy food and eating. The many different types of food that grow from trees and in the dirt show us that God wants us to eat. God also wants us to like what we eat. At the same time, we must be careful. How can we use this wonderful gift of enjoying food to hurt ourselves?**



**God gave the Israelites manna during their 40-year journey in the desert.**



**WATER FROM THE ROCK (Exodus 17:1–7)**

When you are in the desert, you need plenty of water. God took care of Israel's water problem. The people complained, didn't trust God, and tested Him. Because the people didn't believe, they wanted to go back to Egypt!

**Read the story in Exodus 17:1–7. What lesson should the people have learned from what happened?**

Moses named the place "Massah." "Massah" means "a testing." Moses also gave the place another name: "Meribah," which suggests "quarreling." The Israelites didn't trust in the Lord. But the Lord gave the Israelites water anyway. These two names should have helped the Israelites not to test God and not to argue with Him (Hebrews 3:7, 8, 15). The people had lots of proof of God's help and power. But they doubted that God was with them.

"Moses hit the stone. But the Son of God caused the life-giving water to flow from the stone. The Son of God stood beside Moses. A cloud hid the Son of God. Moses and the leaders of Israel saw the Lord's glory. The people who stood far away also saw it, too. If the Lord removed the cloud that covered His glory, His shining brightness would have killed everyone."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 298, adapted.

Water is a symbol for life. Without water, there is no life. Every cell in our body needs water. Our bodies are 60% water. A part of our bones are also made of water. So, when God gave the Israelites water in the desert, He showed them that He cared for their needs. For sure, the people could trust Him. But again, they needed to obey Him.

Many hundreds of years later, Paul tells his readers that the experience of the Israelites in the desert was very special. Jesus Himself led His people. He also gave them water (Psalm 78:15, 16). Jesus took care of their other needs, too. He took care of their bodies and spirits. Paul announced: "That Rock [stone] was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4, WE). Jesus was the Giver of life on earth and everlasting life in heaven. Just as a stone is firm and strong, God firmly led His people. We can count on Jesus because He always keeps His promises.

**What are some things that you need to trust God with?  
How can you learn to wait for Him to act in His time?**



**"Moses hit the stone.  
But the Son of God caused  
the life-giving water to flow  
from the stone."**



**JETHRO (Exodus 18:1–27)**

Jethro visited Moses. Jethro, who is also named Reuel (Exodus 2:18), was Moses' father-in-law. Jethro brought with him Moses' wife, Zipporah, and their two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. When Moses heard that his family was coming to see him, he went out to welcome them.

**Read Exodus 18:1–27. What important things in the history of Israel happened in these verses?**



**Moses accepted Jethro's  
wise advice  
(Exodus 18:24).**

Jethro came because he heard about the amazing things God did for Israel. "Moses told Jethro everything the Lord had done for the Israelites. He told what the Lord did to Pharaoh [king of Egypt] and the people of Egypt. He told about all the problems they had along the way. And he told his father-in-law how the Lord saved the Israelites every time there was trouble" (Exodus 18:8, ERV).

Jethro praised God for everything He did to help His people: " 'Praise the Lord! He freed [saved] you from the power of Egypt. He saved you from Pharaoh. Now I know the Lord is greater [more powerful] than all the gods. They [the Egyptians and their gods] thought they were in control, but look what God did!' " (Exodus 18:10, 11, ERV).

This story shows us a powerful example of God's work for His people. When God helped Israel escape Egypt, He showed everyone who He was and what He can do for the people who love and obey Him.

At the same time that Jethro learned about the true God, he offered something of worth to God's people: wise and helpful advice about leadership. Moses needed to set up a government for Israel. This government must include fair laws and rules. Moses needed men who were good and honest judges. Jethro wisely told Moses to choose men who (1) obeyed God, (2) were dependable, and (3) honest. Moses also should choose good men to be leaders over different groups of people. The biggest groups would include a thousand people. Some of the smaller groups would have a hundred people. Other groups would have only fifty people, and the smallest group would include only ten people. In this way, Moses' heavy workload would be reduced. Then Moses would have more time to solve Israel's most difficult problems. Moses accepted Jethro's wise advice (Exodus 18:24). Moses chose men to help him lead and judge the people (also read Deuteronomy 1:9–18).

**THE BREAD AND WATER OF LIFE (1 Corinthians 10:11)**

**Why were the Old Testament stories written down? What reason does Paul give? Read 1 Corinthians 10:11 for the answer.**

Paul explains that all the things that happened to the Israelites are examples and warnings for Jesus' followers. These stories will help us avoid the same troubles the Israelites had. So, that is why we must learn from their examples. This advice is important for us "who are living in the last days [end times] of the world [human history]" (1 Corinthians 10:11, WE). God gives His people the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us "a spirit of power and of love and of a good [having no disease or sickness; healthy and strong] mind" (2 Timothy 1:7, NLV). Then God's people can make correct decisions and follow His teaching. Jesus is the Giver of new life (John 14:6). Only Jesus can help us offer ourselves as "a living and holy gift given to God. . . . Do not act like [the same as] the sinful [evil] people of the world [on this earth]. Let God change your life. First of all, let Him give you a new mind [thoughts and feelings]. Then you will know what God wants you to do. And the things you do will be good and pleasing and perfect" (Romans 12:1, 2, NLV).

Later on, Jesus used the Old Testament stories to teach important lessons. Jesus used the word pictures of manna and water to teach spiritual truths about Himself. Jesus is the same Lord who led His people in the desert.

**Read John 4:7–15 and John 6:31–51. What important Bible truths do these verses teach us?**

The Samaritan woman learned that Jesus offers something that she won't get anywhere else. The human heart wishes for peace, joy, and happiness that comes from God. So, only God can give us these things (Psalm 42:1, 2).

Later, Jesus says that God, and not Moses, gave His people the manna or bread from heaven. Then Jesus announced: " 'I am the bread that gives life' " (John 6:35, ERV). Three times Jesus said that He is the Bread that gives life (John 6:35, 41, 48). Jesus gave the Hebrews manna, the bread from heaven. The water from the stone also was Jesus' gift to His thirsty people in the desert. Only Jesus can satisfy our spiritual thirst and hunger.



**Jesus used the word pictures of manna and water to teach spiritual truths about Himself.**



**“The Amalekites made a promise in front of their gods to destroy the Hebrews.”**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “From the Red Sea to Sinai,” pages 291–302, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

Soon after God gave His people water in the desert, Israel met a new danger (read Exodus 17:8–16). The Amalekites attacked them. The Amalekites loved to fight and go to war. “The Amalekites knew about God’s love, mercy, and His power. But the Amalekites didn’t respect God. They fought against His control. The Amalekites made fun of the miracles that Moses did in front of the Egyptians. The Amalekites also made fun of other people for being afraid of the Israelites. The Amalekites made a promise in front of their gods to destroy the Hebrews. The Amalekites promised to not allow one Hebrew to escape alive. The Amalekites bragged that Israel’s God was powerless to stand against them. The Israelites did nothing wrong to the Amalekites. The Israelites didn’t do anything to cause the Amalekites to hate them or want to destroy them. The Amalekites wanted to destroy God’s people because they hated God. They wanted to show they hated God. That’s why the Amalekites wanted to destroy His people. The Amalekites were terrible sinners. Their awful sins came to God’s attention and needed to be punished. In His mercy, God continued to invite the Amalekites to confess their sins and to stop sinning. But when the Amalekite men attacked the tired and helpless Israelites, they went too far in God’s eyes. Their action caused God to destroy them as a people.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 300, adapted.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Think some more about how Jethro learned about the true God from what God did for His people (Read Exodus 18:8–10.) Do we learn about God in the same way today? If yes, ask yourself and your class: What does my church show other people about God?
- ❷ Some people believe that the Old Testament God is mean and nasty, and Jesus is loving. How does 1 Corinthians 10:4 show us why this belief is wrong?
- ❸ Read again Ellen G. White’s quote above about the Amalekites. They had the chance to learn about God. Compare them with Jethro. What lessons can we learn about why God judged the Amalekites and other people groups that the Israelites met?



## **"DO YOU LIKE TO READ BOOKS?"**

**D**mitry Bagal was a Russian Bible worker. He lived in Germany. After his operation, the doctors sent him to rest and heal in Lower Bavaria.

While Dmitry was there, he walked over to a group of people at a Greek restaurant. The people told Dmitry that the restaurant was closed. Dmitry asked them a question, "Do you like to read books?"

One man answered. The man was Italian. He said he enjoyed watching movies more than reading books. The man read only one book in his life, the Bible. Dmitry gave the man *The Great Controversy*. Dmitry explained that this book gave an interesting explanation for history. The book also talked about the worldwide war between good and evil. The man read the back cover. Then he said, "I really want this book!" He gave Dmitry some money for the book.

Another day, Dmitry saw a stranger on a bench. The man said that he didn't like to read. But his wife did. Dmitry gave the man a copy of *The Great Controversy* for his wife. The man read the back cover and said that he wanted to read the book, too!

Dmitry continued his walk. He passed a car with a bumper sticker that said, "God does miracles in Germany." Dmitry wanted to meet the car's owner. So, he rang the doorbell of the house in front of the car. On the door, Dmitry saw a sign that said: "Honey from our own beehives." When a woman opened the door, Dmitry asked her about the honey. Dmitry and the woman talked about honey for a few minutes. Then they talked about faith. The woman said that Jesus healed her of a disease. The healing was a miracle. Dmitry bought a jar of honey. Then he gave the woman the choice of a book as a gift: *The Desire of Ages* or *The Great Controversy*. The woman chose *The Desire of Ages*. Then she thanked Dmitry and gave him a second jar of honey as a gift. Dmitry thanked her with the other book, *The Great Controversy*. Both Dmitry and the lady were very happy with their meeting.

During his month of rest and healing, Dmitry gave away almost 50 copies of *The Great Controversy*. He decided to change the type of work he does for God in Germany.

"Because I enjoy sharing books so much, I'm going to be a Bible book worker in Germany."

*This Inside Story shows Church Growth Task #2 for the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" Plan. Task #2 is: "We will help the Adventist church grow strong in new ways. We will share Jesus with people who don't know Him." Read more at IWillGo.org.*

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**Dmitry thanked her with the other book, *The Great Controversy*.**



**Dmitry Bagal**