

JEHOVAH JIREH**Exodus 15:22 – 17:7**

Intro: It was the summer of 1998 and we were headed for Chicago for my nephew, Matthew's wedding. But we weren't living in Ashland at the time. Ashland is only about 6 hours from Chicago, whereas Bainbridge Pennsylvania, where we lived, was about 10 hours of driving, which, in actuality, was probably going to be about 13 hours considering the obligatory pit stops and fuel stops along the way. We didn't pull out until mid-morning because we were going to leave my truck with one of my friends so that he could work on it while we were away. This meant that we had to go five miles east, that is, in the wrong direction, to drop the truck off. But what is miles when you're looking at 700 miles of driving? So, we drove into Elizabethtown, where my friend had his garage, and we were there in perhaps 10 minutes. We dropped the truck off and I hopped into our car and we finally departed Elizabethtown for my nephew's wedding in the Western Chicago suburbs. A few minutes later, we are actually still driving through Elizabethtown, to be exact, a little voice came from the backseat, it was 5-year-old Emily, asking, "*Is this Chicago?*" She really didn't know. She really wanted to know. And even though it was a truly silly question (though not for a 5-year old, we said, "*No, we have quite a ways to go yet.*" And, boy did we ever!

I can imagine Moses and his brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, marching at the head of 2 million Israelites. It was one week after they had left Egypt, and they had probably gone about 40 miles since the miraculous rescue at the Red Sea, so just imagine how slowly a column of two million people and perhaps that many livestock (but probably more, travels. In my mind's ear, I hear a whiny voice saying, "*Are we there yet?*" And then another one that says "*Can we stop for dinner?*" or "*I'm thirsty!*" And you can count on the fact that it wasn't a beautiful little blond five year old. This was the first week of 40 years and it was going to be a loooooong trip. But it was going to be a great learning experience too.

When you're traveling with children, there's a very good chance of that same kind of thing, "*I'm thirsty or I'm hungry.*" or "*I have to go to the potty.*" The thing was, Moses had thousands of children in his backseat – the Children of Israel. But even with the cacophony, God proved that he was Jehovah Jireh, which means God Our Provider. And he proved it in a number of ways.

There is a pattern by now that's becoming more and more familiar. It goes like this, Israel complains to Moses; Moses complains to the Lord; and the Lord, usually in communication with Moses, brings to the situations both remedy or redemption.

I'm going to read some chunks of our text for today, and I'm going to begin with Exodus 15:22-27 (Read)

GOD PROVIDED HEALING

- The people of Israel had three days with no water and when they found some, it was bitter, which means it was either undrinkable or dangerous – either meant they were getting thirstier.
- The whining turned up and couple notches and Moses felt frustrated. But God told him to pick up a log and throw it into the water. Now, being male, the natural inclination is to throw something in the water, but, A LOG?! But Moses did as he was told and the water became sweet – that is drinkable. God had miraculously purified the water.
- Now, once again, as I've said over the past couple weeks, there are endless attempts by both commentators and detractors alike to provide "logical" explanations for this miracle. But when it comes right down to it, it's a miracle – as I've repeatedly said, God can do what he wants with his creation.
- Once this was done God sent a proclamation that was full of promise. He would not send any of the diseases that the Egyptians suffered from. He's God, the healer Exodus 15:26
- Then God proved it, as they arrived at Elim which had 12 wells and 70 palm trees. Now, here where we have forests all around us, 70 trees doesn't seem like that much. But when you're in the wilderness with virtually, no vegetation, an oasis with abundant water and waving palm trees is paradise.
- And then the Israelites experienced Jehovah Jireh again as. . .

GOD PROVIDED SUSTENANCE

- Look at Exodus 16:4-21 (Read)
- In the preceding verses, as they move from the Oasis of Elim, the Israelites are probably singing. It was a nice rest stop before they entered into the Wilderness of Sin. Now, it wasn't named after the word for

rebellion against God, since it probably comes from the same word from which Sinai is derived – and this was the Sinai Peninsula. But, as one commentator put it, as the story unfolds, we see that this wilderness had a lot to do with actual sin.

- As they're walking along, they start complaining again. They went from singing to complaining in record time even for the accomplished whiners they were. They hadn't even experienced hunger yet but they were wondering where the next meal was going to come from. They weren't thirsty, in fact their water bags were probably full from the seventy wells at the Elim Oasis, but they were worried about where the next well was going to be. They were forgetting that they were dealing with God, the provider. They were ignoring the glaringly obvious fact that in the darkness they had a fiery pillar to lead them along, and in the daylight they had a billowing pillar of smoke guiding them. They had all this, and yet they doubted the Lord. So of course they started complaining right away. And God said *"I'm going to rain bread from heaven for you."*
- I tell people that I haven't smelled good for years. And then I explain to them what many of you already know: that I lost my sense of smell at least a dozen years ago. But back in the day, when my smeller was working properly, and as I would be out for my morning jog, I could smell the bakery at Archway wafting across the neighborhood. I couldn't tell exactly what they were baking, whether they were oatmeal or molasses cookies, or maybe the fruity smell that was probably their lemon cookies or their raspberry filled ones – but the smell was wonderful!
- The Israelites didn't smell fresh baked bread off in the distance or even cookies baking. But God told them that bread would be provided. Bread from heaven. God may provide from resources that we never knew existed and both familiar sources and unexpected places. But it's still bread from heaven.
- When that bread from heaven came, it was a white glaze on the landscape. After the morning dew dried, which would have happened very fast in the desert, there was a sweet white coating over everything. And the Israelites asked, "What is it?" which in Hebrew is "manna". Thus the name it's been called ever since.
- They were to go out and gather the manna up. From the description, it sounds like a sweet wafer. I'm sure it was better than this, since it was heavenly bread, but just think about vanilla wafers. I mean the kind that you make banana pudding with. Think of that out on the landscape. And we already know that the "Six Second Rule" didn't apply here because there were no diseases. God promised that his people wouldn't get salmonella or E. coli. They were to gather 2 quarts per person, which seems like a lot!
- Again, there's a desire by commentators to figure out what kind of natural phenomenon this may have been. And apparently there is some kind of sap that is on a tamarack tree that is sweet and is harvested. But that's a certain time of the year, this was year-round for 40 years that God miraculously provided food in the form of a heavenly bread for his people.
- For protein God provided quail that would arrive every evening. Now, there is a scientific explanation for this: migrating quail cross the Mediterranean and fall, exhausted, onto the ground where they're very easy to pick up. Sailors in the Mediterranean describe quail landing on the decks of their ships, providing a nice quail roast for dinner. Once again, this scientific phenomenon happens only at a certain time of the year, but once again, let me remind you, it's a miracle, because God provided this year-round, not just during the annual quail migrations.
- A little aside here. It's kind of fun, But I hope you can learn from it. Keith Green did a fun song on his second album called SO YOU WANT TO GO BACK TO EGYPT here are some of the lyrics,

*So you wanna go back to Egypt
Where it's warm and secure
Are you sorry you bought the one way ticket
When you thought you were sure?
You wanted to live in the land of promise
But now it's getting so hard
Are you sorry you're out here in the desert
Instead of your own back yard?
Eating leaks and onions by the Nile
Ooh, what breath, but dining-out in style*

*Ooh, my life was on the skids
 Building the pyramids
 Well, there's nothing to do but travel
 And we sure travel a lot
 'Cause it's hard to keep your feet from moving
 When the sand gets so hot
 And in the morning it's manna hotcakes
 We snack on manna all day
 And we sure had a winner last night for dinner
 Flaming manna souffle
 So you wanna to back to Egypt
 Where your friends wait for you
 You can throw a big party and tell the whole gang
 Of what they said was all true
 And this Moses acts like a big shot
 Who does he think he is?
 Well it's true that God works lots of miracles
 But Moses thinks they're all his
 Oh, Moses, put down your pen
 What? Oh no, manna again?
 Oh, manna waffles
 Manna burgers
 Manna bagels?
 Fillet of manna
 Mannacotti?
 Bamanna bread*

- This implies that manna and quail got old after a while. Maybe it did, but I do know that in other cultures, the same food for every meal is a common thing. In the west we are spoiled and we have great variety: we can have beef one day and chicken another day. We can have pizza on Friday and lasagna on Sunday. But in Kenya, if there is any breakfast at all, it's probably a piece of bread. And then lunch is ugali (which is corn meal mush) and beef with some vegetables (kale). Supper is ugali and beef and some vegetables again. That's the way it is in many cultures and I'm thinking that it was probably that way for the Israelites too. Maybe they did have leeks and onions in Egypt, but I think that they probably had bread and some kind of mutton dish – meal after meal. So I don't think they were bored with their food, after all God was providing it.
- Everyone got what they needed, so no one had too much, and no one had too little. They were specifically told not to keep any overnight. If they did, it spoiled and it stank and it got worms in it. This is graphic, but the fact is disobedience brought distasteful results.
- BUT, there was one night when you could keep extra food and it was the night before Sabbath. Which shows that. . .

GOD PROVIDES REST

- Look at Exodus 16:22-30 (Read)
- God wanted his people to have their time off and he gave them Sabbath which was to be kept holy (which means set apart and special) because he wanted them to relax and worship rather than trying to gather manna and quail.
- But of course, somebody had to test God on that too. “Did God really mean what he said?” These may have been the same people who discovered that if you gathered too much manna and kept it overnight it would have worms in it the next day. So on the sixth day of the week, they ate everything they had, as usual. But when they went out on the Sabbath day looking for breakfast there was nothing there just as God had said so they were hungry that day. They didn't do the same thing the next week for sure.

- God means what he says. They needed to trust him that his word is true. We need to learn that too.
- While we're talking about manna . . .

GOD PROVIDES A REMINDER

- God told Moses to place a jar of manna in the Ark of the Covenant as a reminder of his provision and as a reminder of his care.
- If they ever wondered what God was up to as they wandered over the next 40 years all they had to do was look at the reminder. And he provided it for them until they entered the land of Canaan.
- Finally . . .

Conclusion: GOD PROVIDES WATER FROM THE ROCK

- Look at Exodus 17:1-7 (Read)
- Here was a complaining and doubting people but they were God's chosen people, and he provided for them.
- Now, before we think that we would be any better than the Israelites, let me remind us, that this was an incredibly arid environment. The kind of terrain and weather conditions that actually suck the moisture right out of your body. The sweat comes out of you and dries with a salty film on your clothing. And there's always a breeze in the desert, which dries you out even more. They were, no doubt, a little bit desperate because they were thirsty and so they started whining again, and calling from the backseat and crying out: *"Give us water that we can drink!"*
- And Moses, had had it – already after just a few days and he threw up his hands into the air and said *"O people! Why do you argue with me?"* And then he turned to God and said *"Why don't you do something? Why have you brought me out here? They're ready to come for me and Aaron. Our lives are in danger"*.
- The people of Israel, and Moses and Aaron, were all forgetting what God had been doing ever since they left Egypt. He had been providing them with safety and deliverance and food and water, and rest! Would he not do something now? Of course he would! And of course he did!
- He told Moses to take that same walking stick that he used when he lifted it to part the waters by the Red Sea, and he was to tap it against the rock wall, and out of that solid rock came fresh, clean, hydrating water. God would not ignore his people's need in their time of need. Why did they doubt? Bonnie pointed out last week that Jesus, on several occasions, looked at the people he was talking to and said something like, *"How long are you going to not believe me?"*
- He asks us the same question, *"How long are you going to not believe me?"*
- God is the provider – he is Jehovah Jireh. He will always provide what we need. Not too much. Not too little. We say around here that we can't out give God, and that's the truth. We serve a generous God and he will provide. Always! Amen.