

Israelites (any more than it is to us now).

23. *What does the manna mean to Christians?*

The manna means to Christians everything it meant to the Jews. See the brief outlines after the questions on Ch. 16.

The manna is certainly a type of Jesus, the living bread who came down from heaven. (John 6:41, 48-51).

The Lord Jesus promises to give His people who overcome "the hidden manna" (Rev. 2:17). This seems to be a symbol of the blessings of our heavenly home.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

17 And all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, by their journeys, according to the commandment of Je-ho-vah, and encamped in Reph-i-dim: and there was no water for the people to drink. (2) Wherefore the people strove with Mo-ses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Mo-ses said unto them, Why strive ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt Je-ho-vah? (3) And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Mo-ses, and said, Wherefore hast thou brought us up out of E-gypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? (4) And Mo-ses cried unto Je-ho-vah, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they are almost ready to stone me. (5) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Pass on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Is-ra-el; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thy hand, and go. (6) Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Ho-reb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Mo-ses did so in the sight of the elders of Is-ra-el. (7) And he called the name of the place Mas-sah, and Mer-i-bah, because of the striving of the children of Is-ra-el, and because they tempted Je-ho-vah, saying, Is Je-ho-vah among

us, or not?

(8) Then came Am-a-lek, and fought with Is-ra-el in Reph-i-dim. (9) And Mo-ses said unto Josh-u-a, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Am-a-lek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand. (10) So Josh-u-a did as Mo-ses had said to him, and fought with Am-a-lek: and Mo-ses, Aar-on, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. (11) And it came to pass, when Mo-ses held up his hand, that Is-ra-el prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Am-a-lek prevailed. (12) But Mo-ses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aar-on and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. (13) And Josh-u-a discomfited Am-a-lek and his people with the edge of the sword. (14) and Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Josh-u-a: that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Am-a-lek from under heaven. (15) And Mo-ses built an altar, and called the name of it Je-ho-vah-nis-si; (16) and he said, Je-ho-vah hath sworn: Je-ho-vah will have war with Am-a-lek from generation to generation.

EXPLORING EXODUS : CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. Propose a topic or theme for chapter 17.
2. Where did Israel go from the Wilderness of Sin? (17:1; Compare Num. 33:12-13)
3. Who directed Israel to Rephidim? (17:1)
4. What disaster faced them in Rephidim? (17:1)
5. Who "tempted" the Lord? How did they tempt the Lord? (17:2, 7)
6. How did the Israelites feel toward Moses? (17:3, 4)
7. What did Moses do when the Israelites strove with him? (17:4)

TWO TESTS: WATER AND WAR 17:1-16

8. Who went with Moses as he went to smite the rock? (17:5, 6)
9. Where did God stand when Moses struck the rock? (17:6)
10. What place is Horeb? (17:6; 3:1)
11. How abundant was the flow of water from the rock? (Ps. 78:15-16)
12. What two names did Moses give to the place where the waters came forth? What do these names mean? (17:7)
13. Who fought against Israel? (17:8; Deut. 25:17-18)
14. Who led Israel's armed forces? (17:9, 13)
15. How did Moses help in the battle? (17:9)
16. What was Joshua's original name? (Num. 13:16; Ex. 17:9)
See if you can find the meanings of Joshua's names.
17. Who held up Moses' hands? (17:10, 12)
18. What did Moses sit on? (17:12)
19. How long did the battle last? (17:12)
20. What was to be written in a book? (17:14)
21. When was the prophecy against Amalek fulfilled? (17:14; I Sam. 15:8-9; I Chron. 4:43)
22. What was the name of the altar that Moses built? (17:15)
23. What did the LORD swear that he would have? (17:16)

EXODUS SEVENTEEN: TWO TESTS: WATER AND WAR

I. Water; (17:1-7)

1. The danger; 17:1.
2. The disagreeable debate; 17:2-3.
3. The deliverance; 17:4-6.
4. The memorial names; 17:1.

II. War; (17:8-15)

1. The danger; 17:8.
2. The deliverance; 17:9-13.
3. The memorial name; 17:15-16.

WATER FROM THE LORD
(John 4:10, 14; 7:37-39)

1. Given to the undeserving; Ex. 17:1-3.
2. Given miraculously; 17:4-6.
3. Given abundantly; Ps. 78:15-16.

TEMPTING THE LORD Vs. FAITH

1. Tempting the LORD: "Is God among us or not?" (Ex. 17:7)
Faith: "God exists!" (Heb. 11:6)
2. Tempting the LORD: "It is vain to serve God." (Mal. 3:14-15)
Faith: "God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."
(Heb. 11:6)
3. Tempting the LORD: "Give us food that we crave!" (Ps. 78:18)
Faith: "Feed me with food that is needful for me." (Prov. 30:8)
4. Tempting the LORD: "Leap from the pinnacle!" (Matt. 4:5-6)
Faith: "You shall not tempt the LORD." (Deut. 6:16)

TWO PLACES TO AVOID! (Ex. 17:7)

1. Massah - The place of Tempting (testing).
2. Meribah - The place of Strife (quarrelling).

AMALEK: THE PROTOTYPE OF GOD'S ENEMIES

1. Cruel (Attacked the weary stragglers); Deut. 25:17-19.
2. Determined (Fought all day); Ex. 17:12.
3. Powerful (Only God's power can defeat); 17:11.
4. Doomed; 17:13-14.

JEHOVAH-NISSI: JEHOVAH IS MY BANNER! (17:15-16)

1. He gives me triumph.
2. He forgets not evil.
3. He lives through every generation.

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

1. *What is the subject matter of Exodus 17?*

The chapter contains two distinct sections: (1) Concerning the giving of water from the rock of Israel; 17:1-7. (2) Concerning Israel's battle with Amalek; 17:8-16.

2. *Where did Israel go from the Wilderness of Sin? (17:1)*

The whole congregation journeyed by stages ("By their journeys") and encamped in Rephidim. By *stages* we mean the most significant stopovers and encampments, which became starting points for travel to their next major encampment.

Numbers 33:12-13 names two of these stages, Dophka and Alush. These lay between the wilderness of Sin and Rephidim.

3. *Where was Rephidim? (17:1)*

No one knows for certain. Ex. 17:6 indicates that it was very near to Horeb (Mt. Sinai). Also 18:5 relates that Moses was camped at the "Mt. of God" when his father-in-law Jethro came to him. This occurred at Rephidim (19:2).

We feel that Keil and Delitzsch¹ are correct in suggesting that Rephidim lay near the point about ten miles north of Mt. Sinai where the great Wady es Sheikh opens into the Plain of Er Rahah, which lies at the north end of Mt. Sinai.

Others have located Rephidim at a small wady (valley) called Wady Rephayid.² This lies some fifteen miles NW of Sinai. It is an inconsequential wady. We see little to commend the identification except a partial resemblance between the names Rephidim and Rephayid.

¹*Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 75.

²John Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Baker, 1971), p. 184.

SPECIAL STUDY: ISRAEL'S PASSAGE ROUTE TO SINAI

From Israel's encampment by the seaside (which we have suggested was near modern Abu Zenima) there are two main routes by which Israel could have passed up to Mt. Sinai, a northern route and a southern route. Each of these two routes could have been entered by two different valleys (wadies). Both would be about the same length, about one hundred and ten miles. We feel the southern route is much the more probable. But no one can be completely certain.

The Northern Route

The northern route would primarily pass through the sandy plain of Debbet er Ramleh (the "Plain of Sand"). This lies south of the mountain range called Jebel et-Tih ("Mt. of the Wandering") and north of the granite mountains of southern Sinai. If this route is the true one, then the Wilderness of Sin is probably the Debbet er-Ramleh.

This northern route could have been entered from Israel's seaside encampment, by "backing up" northward via the Wady Taiyibeh. After six or seven miles this wady turns abruptly eastward, where it is called the Wady Hamr (or Humur), and goes into the sandy plains.

This northern route could also have been entered if Israel had travelled SE along the seacoast about ten miles into the barren plain of El Murkha (which we feel is the true Wilderness of Sin). They could go east across this plain, and enter a narrow wady and follow it northeastward twenty miles (or thereabouts), where it enters the sandy plains near Debbet er Ramleh.

The northern route would have taken Israel to within ten miles of the ruins now called Serabit-el-Khadim. Numerous scholars suggest that this is the site of Dophka (Num. 33:12). We can see no cause for this identification. Serabit is off from the main trails. It was an Egyptian mining location (turquoise and copper). An Egyptian temple to the goddess Hathor was there. Egyptian troops were stationed there both before and after the

time of Moses. They would not have really gone "from the Wilderness of Sin" (Debbet el Ramleh) in going to Serabit, for the sandy plains extend far on east of Serabit. Therefore, it does not appear to us as even a remote possibility of being the site of Dophka.

The northern route would primarily move southeastward. Eventually it would enter the valley of the *Wady 'Esh*. Some identify this with *Alush* on the basis of the remote resemblance between the names.

Finally the route would join the Wadi esh-Sheikh about fifteen miles north of Mt. Sinai. The Sheikh valley goes directly south into the plain of Er-Rahah at the north foot of Mt. Sinai.

The Southern Route

The southern passage route is the route via the Wady Feiran and its north branch, the Wady esh-Sheikh. The Wady Feiran is the largest Wady in southern Sinai, and extends a little over eighty miles from its mouth to the region of Jebel Musa (the Mount of Moses, or Mt. Sinai).

To enter the Wady Feiran passage, we feel that Israel came southeastward from its seaside encampment into the great barren plain of El-Murkha (which contains the modern town of Abu Rudeis and its oil fields). This plain is about six by fifteen miles. We feel it is the true site of the Wilderness of Sin, where Israel first received the manna. Israel could depart from this plain at its south end, and after going no more than ten miles, with ridges of hills on their left (east), they would come to the mouth of the Wady Feiran, where they would turn eastward.

The Wady Feiran is one to two miles broad much of its way up to Sinai, but frequently narrows between mountains to the width of half or a third of a mile.³

Another route by which Israel might have entered the Feiran valley would have been to have left the Wilderness of Sin from its east side, near its south end, via the Valley (Wady) Sidri.

³Bartlett, *Op. cit.*, p. 238.

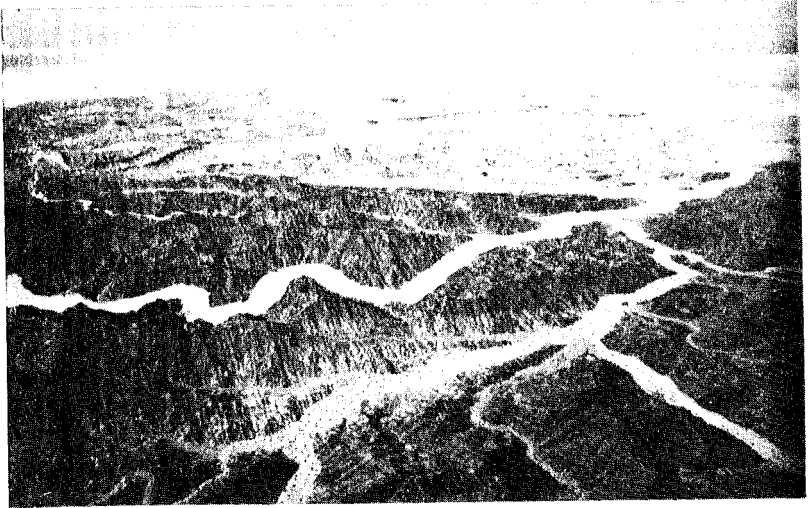
After going eastward about ten miles between hills, they would veer north to bypass a mountain. After going around northeast of this mountain, they would enter the Valley (Wady) *Mukkatab* (the "Written valley," so-called on account of the numerous Sinaitic inscriptions in it). This broad rather flat valley gradually rose as they journeyed SE about fifteen miles, where, after crossing a watershed, it would descend to the Wady Feiran. This entry into Feiran may have been Israel's actual passage route.

The Feiran zig-zags a great deal, but has an overall easterly direction. About forty miles up the Wady Feiran is the magnificent Oasis of Feiran ("The Pearl of the Desert"). Here pure sweet water flows in the valley. There are many lovely palm groves and other trees. High cliffs (800-900 feet) rise on every side.

Just to the south of this oasis about five miles stands the great Mt. Serbal (6,790 feet). From its peak one has a view spanning almost the entire length of the Gulf of Suez.

Just on the north side of the Oasis of Feiran is Mt. Tahuneh. A spot on this mountain has been called the Place of Moses' prayer (Ex. 17:11). The Oasis of Feiran has been identified as Rephidim, the place where the Amalekites attacked Israel. These proposed identifications are known to have been made at least as far back as A.D. 600. Nonetheless, we cannot accept the identifications, because Rephidim, where Moses prayed, seems to have been very much closer to Sinai than the Feiran Oasis. See Ex. 17:6; 18:5. It is possible that this Oasis was the site of *Alush*. *Dophka* would then have been some small oasis downstream (westward).

Israel most probably detoured left (north) off the Feiran into its northern branch, the Wady esh-Sheikh. This is the route usually followed by caravans even today. The Sheikh circles around the rugged hills lying northwest of Mt. Sinai, and then turns directly south toward Mt. Sinai, and enters into the plain Er-Rahah, lying at the north foot of Mt. Sinai. Er Rahah was almost certainly Israel's place of encampment before Mt. Sinai.



Exit of Wadi Feiran into the coastal plain. (Feiran is the light-colored dry brook channel coming in from the left.) The Red Sea Gulf of Suez is in background. View westward. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Oasis in Wadi Feiran. The Israelites probably went through this wadi on their way up to Mt. Sinai. View west. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Oasis in Wadi Feiran. This might be the site of Dophka or of Alush (Numbers 33:12-13). (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Summit of Mt. (Jebel) Serbal, looking SW towards the coastal plain south of modern Abu Rudeis. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)

4. *What did the Israelites chide with Moses about? (17:2-3)*⁴

They had no water, and they demanded that Moses give them water. It was an angry confrontation. They did not just murmur; they *strove* with Moses. The verb translated "strove" (or "did chide" or "found fault") is the Hebrew *rib* (or *riv*), meaning to quarrel, strive, or contend. This word is the key to the passage, because it explains why the place was called *Meribah*, meaning strife, or argument. (Note the *rib* in *Meribah*.)

In demanding water, the Israelites used the plural pronoun: "You (plural, referring to both Moses and Aaron), give us water!"

Note that in 17:3 the Israelites accused Moses of trying to kill them. Compare 16:3. They asked, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill me (singular) and my children?" The singular pronoun *me* seems to be used following the plural *us* to give special emphasis to the suffering of the children. For if the text had read *us*, the children would also have been implied.⁵

The reference to the Israelites' cattle indicates that they had many animals. See 12:38.

The previous deliverances of the Israelites from Egypt, and at the Sea, and at Marah should have produced in them a habit of trusting God in every emergency, and of trusting Moses. Surely Moses' leadership was by then thoroughly vindicated. Sadly, they were still ruled by an evil heart of unbelief (Heb. 3:12). They were never fully delivered from

⁴Some critics assert that the first part of 17:1 is by one author (P), and then 17:1b-7 is by yet another author (J); but even this J section has been mixed with the writings of a third (E) author. Thus 17:1b-2 is assigned to J, and 17:3-6 to E. Cassuto (*Op cit.*, p. 201) well says concerning these unproven allegations, that in conformity with Biblical usage, which expresses things in coordinate rather than subordinate clauses (since Hebrew lacks many subordinating conjunctions), the opening part of Vs. 3 is to be understood as a subordinate clause, to wit, "Since the people thirsted for water, they complained against Moses. . . ." Verse two contains the general information about the accusations against Moses. Verse three gives a detailed account of the general statement. There is no necessity for assuming the existence of multiple sources.

⁵Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

this lack of faith in that whole generation. Forty years later at Kadesh-Barnea, they murmured for water once again, even after water was provided for them this time. See Num. 20:2-3.

God's people must expect to face problems, discomforts, dangers, and tribulation. They must be spiritually prepared to trust God when such experiences arrive.

5. *Did Moses trust God when they were without water? (17:2, 4)*

Definitely he did. He reproved the people saying, "Why do ye tempt the LORD?" ("Why do you put the LORD to the test?") In this situation Moses went and cried (prayed) to the Lord: "What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me!" The Israelites on several occasions were ready to stone leaders with whom they were displeased. See Num. 14:10; I Sam. 30:6.

Prayer was very characteristic of Moses. See Ex. 15:25; 32:31-32.

6. *How did Israel TEMPT God? (17:2, 7; Deut. 6:16; Psalm 78:18, 41)*

They tempted (or tested) the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" To question God's reality, his presence, power, and concern for us is to *tempt* him.

Psalm 78:18 says that they tempted God by asking food for their desire (Heb. *nephesh!*) Seemingly they did not really need all they were demanding. They were asking for food to spend it on their pleasures (James 4:3).

God wanted to prove (test, tempt) Israel. Instead Israel proved the LORD. This was God's right, but not Israel's right. "Ye shall not tempt Jehovah your God, as ye tempted him in Massah." (Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:7). Testing God shows a lack of faith.

7. *Who was with Moses when he went to provide water? (17:5-6)*

He took with him some men from the elders of Israel (not all of the elders). Regarding the elders, see 24:1,11; 4:29; 18:12.

The elders were to be the eyewitnesses of this miracle, that they might bear testimony to the unbelieving people.

Certainly there was not enough room around the rock for 600,000 men to crowd around Moses and see him do this. The fact that water did not flow from the rock until MOSES struck it was surely a powerful evidence that Moses was a divinely appointed leader.

Moses was to take with him the rod with which he had smitten the Nile river (7:20).

8. *What happened when Moses struck the rock? (17:6)*

The answer to this is vividly stated in Psalm 78:15-16: "He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink abundantly, as out of the depths (the sea). He brought forth STREAMS also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers."

The text says the waters went out FROM the rock. This suggests that the waters flowed TO the people, probably several miles.

I Cor. 10:4: "They did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ." It was not Moses who produced the stream of water. Rather, the water was provided by Christ, who is the spiritual rock. Christ "followed them" so as to be with them always to provide their needs. In the same way he is always available to us to provide our spiritual and material needs.

9. *Where was God when Moses struck the rock? (17:6)*

He stood before Moses upon the rock in Horeb (Mt. Sinai). We suppose that the statement "I shall stand" meant "My pillar of cloud shall stand." Here again God condescended to man's level by manifesting Himself in one spot, though He fills heaven and earth.

10. *By what names did Moses call the place where water was provided? (17:7)*

He called it *Massah* (meaning tempting, or proving) and *Meribah* (meaning strife, chiding, or quarrelling).

The word *Massah* is derived from the verb (*nasah*) meaning to prove or test. This verb is used in 17:3 and 16:4. We must not read into the word *tempt* here the idea of moral

temptation, but only the idea of testing.

Ps. 95:8: "Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness. Compare Num. 20:13.

Ps. 81:7: "I proved thee at the waters of Meribah."

Num. 14:22: "... because all those men that have seen my glory, and my signs, which I wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have *tempted* me these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice."

The name *Meribah* was also given to a second place where God miraculously provided water from a rock (See Numbers 20:1, 13). But the events occurred in different places and forty years apart in time. It may seem a little surprising that two places should get the same nickname. But it is by no means impossible.⁶

The two stories of God's providing water for Israel (in Ex. 16 and Num. 20) occur near the start of the wilderness wanderings and near its close. This suggests the continuity of God's care and of Israel's unbelief.

11. *Was the water-from-rock event a miracle?*

This seems like an obvious question to which the answer would be YES. We accept it as a miracle. Christ, the spiritual rock, brought water from a rock of flint (Deut. 8:15).

However, some semi-natural explanations for it have been suggested. Cassuto tells of an English army officer over a Sudanese camel corps in southern Sinai, who, when seeking to discover the source of water dripping between pebbles in a gravel heap by a cliff, struck the outer face of the cliff a hard knock, fracturing it, and an abundance of water began to flow. The scripture does not suggest that Moses fractured the rock, releasing a barely-shut-in vein of water.

A very extreme view is that of Noth, who felt that the water came from the rock in such a way that those who went there could only think that at one time the rock had been made to

⁶Martin Noth (*op. cit.*, p. 140) thinks that the two events were actually only one event but that we have two versions of the one story. The scripture, however, clearly distinguishes the two events.

produce water in a miraculous way. This is an example of the astounding lengths to which people will go to avoid accepting the scripture accounts of miracles.

Josephus (*Ant.* II, i, 7) says that Moses informed the people that a river should run for their sakes out of the rock. Also, when it happened, "they were astonished at this wonderful effect; and, as it were, quenched their thirst by the very sight of it." (That is a BIG yarn!)

12. *What hostile tribe fought with Israel at Rephidim? (17:8)*

Amalek (the Amalekites) fought Israel. Amalek was a grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:12); the Amalekites were his descendants. These people are mentioned at least twenty-five times in the Old Testament. Amalek feared not God (Deut. 25:17-18). As Israel passed through the wadies (valleys) on the way to Mt. Sinai, they got strung out into a column perhaps ten miles long. Amalek smote the stragglers at the rear of the column when they were weary and faint (Deut. 25:19). These Amalekites were nomads. We read of their presence in northern Sinai, near Kadesh (Gen. 14:7). They dwelt in the Negev, the semi-desert area of southern Palestine from Beersheba south (Num. 13:29).

The exact cause of Amalek's hostility is not stated. Perhaps it harks back to the ancient feud between Jacob and Esau over the birthright and blessing (Gen. 27:41). More probably it was precipitated by the fear of the Amalekites that the Israelites would occupy all the good pasture spots and springs in Sinai. There the grass dries up in the lower districts by the beginning of summer, and the nomads seek pasture at the cooler heights, the very area where the Israelites were now entering. Therefore, they fell upon Israel, to destroy them if possible. We suppose that this occurred in the Sheikh valley (Wady) north of Mt. Sinai.

God had provided Israel with food and water. Now He must save them from attack by an enemy. This was absolutely necessary, if God was to be triumphant for His people.

13. *Whom did Moses send to lead Israel in battle? (17:9-10)*

He sent Joshua, who is mentioned here for the first time in

the scripture. Moses did not need to explain to the original readers of Exodus who Joshua was. By the time the book had been written, Joshua had become well-known to them.

Joshua had been a tribal chieftan of the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:8). His name had originally been *Hoshea* (meaning salvation). To the name *Hoshea* Moses added God's name *Yah* (or *Jah*), making his name Joshua (Heb. *Yehoshua*'), meaning "Jehovah is salvation."

We are impressed with Joshua's faith, courage, and immediate obedience. For forty years he was Moses' principal minister. See Ex. 24:13; 32:17. He became the leader of Israel after Moses died, and led in the conquest of Canaan. His name in Greek is *Jesus*, and the King James Bible refers to him as *Jesus* in Acts 7:45 and Heb. 4:8.

14. *Where did Moses go during the battle? (17:9-10)*

He went to the top of the hill with the rod of God in his hand.

Note that the rod is again called the "rod of God," as it was back in Ex. 4:20. We suppose that Moses had received instructions from God about going up onto the hill while Joshua was fighting Amalek.

We suppose that the hill was the height now called Fureia (or Feria), on the very north side of the plain Er-Rahah. The traditional location is just north of the great Oasis in Wady Feiran, on Mt. Tahuneh. S. C. Bartlett, who climbed these hills, thought that a hill called Jebel Shiah, just to the west of Mt. Tahuneh, was more likely the place, since it commanded a much wider range of view than Mt. Tahuneh. Bartlett felt that the Amalekites were contesting the Israelites for possession of the great Oasis of Feiran, which was certainly a prize worth fighting for.

These proposed locations of the hill of Moses' prayer do not seem to us to harmonize with the clear statements that the site of the battle at Rephidim was very close to Mt. Sinai (Horeb).

15. *Who accompanied Moses to the hill top? Why? (17:10-12)*

Aaron (Moses' brother) and Hur accompanied Moses, to

help him keep his arms uplifted.

Hur is mentioned again in Ex. 24:14: "Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them." A man named Hur is named in Ex. 31:2 as the grandfather of Bezalel, a builder of the tabernacle. So also in I Chron. 2:3-5, 18-20. However, we cannot be certain that the Hur of Ex. 31 is the same man as Hur in Ex. 17:10. Josephus (*Ant.* III, ii, 4) says that Hur was the husband of Miriam. We do not know whether this tradition is true or false.

16. *What was the significance of Moses lifting up his hands? (17:11)*

It meant victory if he did and defeat if he did not!

We feel that the lifting up of his hands was an act of prayer. The expression "lifting up the hands" frequently refers to prayer. (See Ps. 28:2; I Tim. 2:8; Ps. 63:4). The lowering of the hands was a sign of ceasing to pray.

The weariness that soon comes when we try to hold our arms up-lifted for long periods is familiar to all. Moses' hands soon became "heavy." When his hands came down, Amalek began to win the battle. So Aaron and Hur seated Moses upon a stone, and helped him hold his hands uplifted till the sun went down that day.

Because the text does not specifically mention Moses as praying, some interpreters feel that the lifting of his hands and the rod had other significance. Some say it was a signal to do battle (as in Joshua 8:18). Others propose that some mysterious force was thought to radiate from the rod of Moses. (This view is sheer blasphemy.) Yet others have thought that the lifting up the hand and rod was the sign of some oath (Gen. 14:22), putting Amalek under a ban or curse of complete destruction. None of these views seem very satisfactory.

At the very least, we can say that Moses' lifting up his hands pointed toward God as their only strength for victory. It is difficult for us to think that Moses was not praying, considering how often he prayed on other occasions.

Ponder the mixture of human effort and divine power needed for victory. Israel had to fight, but they won only by the power of God. The dividing line between natural effort and supernatural help is often difficult to pinpoint in our experience. The child of God must perceive that both are real and both are necessary for victory.

17. *How severe was the battle with Amalek? (17:11-13)*

It lasted all day. This indicates both the strength and determination of their assailants. It started as a hyena-like attack on the Israelite stragglers, but it developed into a massive battle. Israel had full opportunity to use the weapons they took as they went up armed out of Egypt (13:18). There are times when God's people must fight. See Luke 22:36.

Joshua "discomfited" Amalek. This unusual verb seems to mean "prostrated," or "mowed down," or "disabled." There were many casualties inflicted in close combat "with the edge of the sword." (This expression often indicates a great slaughter of the enemy. See Josh. 6:21; 8:24; Num. 21:24.)

18. *What was to be written in a book? (17:14)*

Moses was told by God to write in a book that He would utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. They would be exterminated from the earth.

The prophecy of Amalek's future annihilation was also given in later prophecies. See Num. 24:20. Deut. 25:17-19.

It was centuries before this prophecy was fulfilled. In the time of king Saul (1050-1010 B.C., about 400 years after Moses' time), God sent Saul to wipe out the Amalekites (I Sam. 15:2-3). Saul did not fully do this. In the time of king Hezekiah (728-696 B.C.) the remnant of the Amalekites (in one area anyway) were smitten. We read no more about them after that. (I Chron. 4:41-43)

Ponder the fact that God's promises and threats will certainly be fulfilled, even if it takes centuries, and even if we do not live to see it done. God does not look at time as we do (II Pet. 3:8).

Does the Bible say that Moses wrote the words in A book

or in THE book? Was this the start of a new book, or was it added to the book Moses already was writing? As the Hebrew text now reads, it says "in *the* book." However, this reading depends on the vowel marking, and the vowels were not added to the Hebrew Bible until A.D. 500-900. Obviously, the later Jewish rabbis who added the vowels to the text thought that it meant "in *the* book," although the consonants can be read either way. (Ancient Hebrew was written with consonants only.) The Greek Bible is similarly indefinite as to whether it says *A* book or *THE* book.

19. *What does the command to write indicate about the writing of the book of Exodus? (17:14)*

It indicates that Moses was proficient in writing, but it really tells little about the composition of Exodus. Num. 33:2 says that Moses wrote all the places where Israel encamped, by the command of the Lord. Probably Moses had therefore been doing a little writing as they journeyed, although he surely had very little time to do this during their marches.

Other references to writing in Exodus include 24:4 ("And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD"), and 34:27 ("The Lord said to Moses, Write down these words").

The Egyptians were thorough recorders of all types of family and business records. Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He surely knew several languages.

We suspect that the document Moses wrote about the Amalekites was a separate roll at first, and was later incorporated into the entire book of Exodus. This was done most likely during the forty years of wandering around Kadesh-Barnea, after Israel left Mt. Sinai.

20. *What did Moses build, and what did he call it? (17:15)*

He built an altar after the victory over Amalek, and called the name of it *Jehovah-nissi*, which means The LORD is my banner.

The meaning seems to be that the name of Jehovah is the true banner under which victory is certain.

There are numerous cases in the scripture where memorial names were given to altars or special spots. Jacob built an

altar and called the place "God of the house of God" (*El-Bethel*). See Gen. 35:7; 31:46-47; 22:14; 16:14; 29:18-19.

21. *What did Moses prophesy about Amalek? (17:16)*

Very literally translated, 17:16 says,

"For (because) a hand upon (or against) the throne of Jah;
War for Jehovah with Amalek from generation, generation."

To us this seems to say simply that because the hand (or power) of Amalek was lifted against the throne of Yah, or Jehovah, Jehovah would have war with Amalek through every generation. The expression, "God's *throne*" implies His kingdom, which included His people Israel.

The verse is confessedly difficult, and anyone acquainted with it knows that there are several interpretations of it.

The first difficulty is this: Whose *hand* is referred to in the phrase "A *hand* upon the throne"?

(1) Is it *God's* hand upon the throne? Some understand it this way, and take the verse to mean, "Jah hath sworn (with his hand upon his throne), Jehovah will have war. . . ." As we take an oath with our hand upon a Bible, so Jehovah makes an oath with his hand upon his throne. To us this seems a poor interpretation. Jehovah can swear by nothing greater than Himself (Heb. 6:13). Why should it strengthen His oath to lay his hand upon his throne? Furthermore, we have no other examples of God's taking an oath in this manner.

(2) Is it the hand of *Israel* (or Moses)? This view would give the meaning that Israel lifted up its hand toward the throne of God in heaven, in cooperation with God's war against Amalek. This view is more acceptable. It does leave unanswered the question as to why there should be a shift between *Israel's* declaration in the first line of the prophecy, and *God's* declaration in the second line.

(3) Is it the hand of *Amalek*? We prefer this view. It makes clear why Jehovah decreed war against Amalek from generation to generation. (To adopt this view we must assume that the preposition *al* means *against*. This is a common meaning for it, as in Ezek. 5:8, although it usually means on, or upon, or above, etc.)

(4) Could the *hand* refer to the altar just built by Moses? The Hebrew word for hand (*yad*) also means *monument*. According to this view, the altar was a monument (or hand) to Jehovah's throne, or rule, which had been challenged by Amalek.

Another difficulty is in the word translated *throne* (Heb., *kes*). This is an unusual spelling for *throne*, which is usually *kise'*. Cassuto thinks that *kes* means a plan or reckoning, and thinks that it refers to the Lord's plan to blot out Amalek's memory. This interpretation makes the first part of the quotation difficult to understand.

Other interpreters propose altering the spelling of throne (*kes*) to the word for banner (*nes*), and thus making it refer back to the *banner* of the LORD mentioned in vs. 15. R.S.V. accepts this conjectural change, and translates the passage "A hand upon the banner of the LORD." We feel that the verse makes good sense without making changes in the Hebrew text that have no support in the ancient manuscripts.

Even the translators of the Greek O.T. seem to have had difficulty with Exodus 17:16. The Greek reads, "For with a *secret* hand the LORD wages war upon Amalek from generation to generation." There was surely nothing secret about the way the LORD fought with Amalek!

The general idea that the Lord was going to fight Amalek always is clear from the verse. The exact wording for a translation remains a problem.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

18 Now Je-thro, the priest of Mid-i-an, Mo-ses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Mo-ses, and for Is-ra-el his people, how that Je-ho-vah had brought Is-ra-el out of E-gypt.
(2) And Je-thro, Mo-ses' father-in-law, took Zip-po-rah, Mo-ses'