



LESSON 22

God preserves Israel

EXODUS 15:22-17:7



The LORD provides for His people.



“If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer” (Exod 15:26).

Supporting Truths

1. God provides.
2. God deserves trust and obedience.
3. God tests His people.
4. God provides physical and spiritual life.
5. Grumbling is the wrong response to God’s testing, because God provides.

Objectives

1. Describe the three ways God provided food and water for Israel in the wilderness.
2. Explain how God proved that Israel should trust and obey Him.
3. Explain how and why God tested Israel.
4. Compare the manna and the water to God’s provision through Jesus.
5. Compare Israel’s grumbling with the right response to trouble.



Lesson Summary

After His powerful victory over the Egyptians, the LORD led His redeemed people into the wilderness. There He tested them with hunger and thirst. Instead of responding to the test by trusting God, the Israelites responded by testing God with grumbling. Even so, God was gracious. In answer to Moses' prayers, God provided fresh water, manna for bread, and quail for meat. The LORD commanded Israel to trust and obey Him, not just as their strong deliverer, but now also as their great provider and healer.

Spotlight on the Gospel

The same God who provided food and water for the Israelites continues to care for and provide for those who trust Christ for salvation. Just as the Israelites were supposed to respond to God's provision by obedience, so we must respond to God's provision through Jesus Christ by trusting and obeying.

LAST WEEK



God parts the Red Sea
Exodus 14:1–15:21

THIS WEEK



God preserves Israel
Exodus 15:22–17:7

NEXT WEEK



God prepares Israel for
the covenant
Exodus 19:1–25

Lesson Commentary

The LORD provides for His people.

The LORD had delivered the Israelites to be His servants, and He was about to make His covenant with them. To prepare them for this, the LORD showed the Israelites that He was worthy to be their God. They already knew His power in battle, seeing firsthand the plagues and the miracle at the Red Sea. Now, as they traveled through Sinai, they would see His power to heal and provide—despite their grumbling.

The LORD provided drinkable water (15:22–27)

After crossing the Red Sea, the Israelites traveled three days through the Wilderness of Shur (Exod 15:22), located in the

northwest region of the Sinai Peninsula, on the opposite side of the Bitter Lakes from Egypt. The Israelites were about 40 miles beyond their last source of fresh water, traveling first through a stony desert, and then across white, glaring sand dunes. Finally they came to “Marah,” which means “bitter,” because the water there was bitter and undrinkable (15:23). So the Israelites grumbled (15:24). They were not wrong to express their trouble; it is ok to express pain and distress to God (Ps 22:1), as long as it is with an attitude that still trusts God (22:3). But the Israelites were wrong to grumble, since **grumbling** is complaining in rebellion against God.

Just three days before, the LORD had delivered the Israelites at the Red Sea, and the Israelites had sung confidently that their LORD would lead them into the land of Canaan (15:13, 17). But now they were grumbling. This is a good reminder that we need to remember what God has done and let His past works strengthen our faith for the future (Ps 105:5).

God was gracious to provide. He gave what was needed despite Israel’s rebellious attitude. He made the water drinkable (Exod 15:25). But He also explained the meaning of His provision: it was a proof that He is the LORD who heals (15:26). God’s provision was to encourage the Israelites to obey, while God’s power to inflict illnesses, as He had done to the Egyptians, was to make them afraid to disobey. In fact, four different phrases

for obedience are used in just one verse to emphasize the importance of complete obedience (15:26). After emphasizing obedience, the LORD proved His provision by leading Israel to the fresh water oasis at Elim (15:27).

The LORD provided manna and quail for food (16:1–36)

A month after leaving Egypt, the Israelites grumbled again, this time because they were running out of food (16:1–2). They were so ungrateful that they wished they had died in Egypt (16:3). They also blamed Moses, forgetting that it was the LORD, not Moses, who had rescued them. So Moses reminded them that they were really grumbling against the LORD who had brought them out of Egypt (16:6–8). Instead of presenting their requests with thanksgiving for what God had already done (Phil 4:6), the Israelites complained with ungrateful attitudes.

Despite Israel’s bad attitude, God chose to provide in order to prove that He was present with

His people. He caused His glory to appear in the cloud before all of Israel (Exod 16:10), and He promised meat and bread so that Israel would know that He is Yahweh (16:12). This was the point of God’s provision: to prove that He is worthy to be served as God.

The meat was quail, and the bread was manna (16:13). Quail, a bird about ten inches long, was common on the Sinai peninsula since they would migrate between Syria and Arabia in the north and Central Africa in the south. Manna literally means “what is it?” since the Israelites did not know what it was (16:15). No attempt to explain manna in a natural way can account for the way manna came, the way it could be boiled or baked, the way it rotted in one night except before the Sabbath, and the way manna kept coming all year long for forty years in enough quantity to feed over two million people. Manna would become a symbol of God’s miraculous provision (16:32–33; Ps 78:24; 105:40). Ultimately, the way God provided physical life by giving manna illustrates how God provides spiritual life by giving Jesus Christ, who is the living bread (John 6:49–51).

The LORD intended Israel to suffer hunger and thirst in order to **test** them (Exod 16:4–5; 15:25). He brought



THINK ABOUT IT
Complaining and grumbling flows from a discontent and ungrateful heart.

THINK ABOUT IT
God’s commands are based upon His faithful character.



STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God preserves Israel • Exodus 15:22–17:7



trouble in order to humble them and show that in order to live they had to depend on the word of the LORD (Deut 8:3). So the testing included specific instructions from God for how to receive God's provision. When gathering the manna, they were to gather only enough for one day, except on the sixth day, when they were to gather enough for the Sabbath day as well (Exod 16:16, 22–23). Despite God's supernatural provision of food, the Israelites still did not trust His word. Some gathered extra manna and saved it until the next day, but it became rotten with worms (16:20). Also, some went out on the Sabbath day to gather, but found that there was no manna that day (16:27). Moses was rightly angry with them, because even after God's provision, they had not obeyed God's instruction (16:20, 28).

The LORD provided water out of a rock (17:1–7)

Again the LORD tested Israel with thirst (17:1). The people had come to Rephidim, which was likely a wadi (a river that is dry during parts of the year). They had come hoping for water, but it was already dried up. So again the people complained and held Moses responsible (17:2). Again Moses reminded them that they were complaining against God, not against him (17:2). In fact, they were **testing** the LORD. They were not trusting His kindness and provision, and risking bringing His punishment against them. That is why the place is called Massah (which means testing) and Meribah (which means arguing) (17:7). The people were so upset they were on the verge of stoning Moses (17:4). As before, Moses responded by crying out to God (17:4), showing the right way to handle trouble.

Again the LORD provided, despite Israel's grumbling. He told Moses to go ahead of the people, likely heading further up the wadi. There Moses struck a rock as the LORD commanded, and water came out (17:6). But the LORD's purpose was much bigger than providing water. Through His provision, the LORD was confirming Moses' position as leader and proving that He was present among His people. He appeared in front of Moses on the rock (17:6). This was to answer the people, who were wondering, "Is the LORD among us?" (17:7). Yes, the LORD was among them, and He proved it both by appearing before them (16:10; 17:7) and by providing for them.

With these three tests, the LORD was preparing Israel to serve Him and to accept the covenant He was about to give them. First, He tested His people by bringing difficulty into their lives, as He does with all those He loves as children (Heb 12:6). He also tested them by giving them specific instructions to see if they would obey (Exod 16:4). The point of this testing was to cause them to depend on His word and to become steadfast and mature in their faith (Deut 8:3; Jas 1:2–4).

Second, the LORD provided, proving that He is present with His people (Exod 3:12–15; Matt 1:23). Even when hope seems lost (Ezek 37:11–14), or when His people do not deserve His help (Deut 7:7), God provides. He provides just the right amount, and His provision must be accepted on His terms (Matt 6:33). Although He provides for all the needs of life (Ps 145:15–16), His greatest provision is through His Word (Deut 8:3) and through Jesus Christ (John 6:49–51). As God gave the Israelites physical water to keep their bodies alive, so now Jesus Christ provides living water to give life to the soul (John 4:13).

Third, because the LORD is provider, He deserves complete trust and obedience. He had already proved to Israel that He was their strong deliverer, and now He was showing them that He was their gracious healer and provider. Based on His proven character, the LORD would call Israel to be His holy nation (Exod 19:4–6). The same God who provided food and water for the Israelites will take care of His children today. Just as the Israelites were supposed to respond to God's provision by obedience, so we must respond to God's provision through Jesus Christ by trusting and obeying.

THINK ABOUT IT
God's testing is always an opportunity to prove and purify faith.



THINK ABOUT IT
What God requires of His people rightly flows from what He has already revealed about Himself.



Lesson Outline

The LORD provides for His people.



AGES 3-5 LESSON OUTLINE

1. Israel grumbled three times when they were hungry and thirsty (15:22-24; 16:1-3; 17:1-3).
2. The LORD gave Israel fresh water to drink and manna and quail to eat (15:25; 16:13-31; 17:4-6).
3. The LORD told Israel to trust Him and obey, because He is their provider (15:26; 16:12).



AGES 6-11 LESSON OUTLINE

1. The LORD provided drinkable water (15:22-27).
 - The water at Marah was undrinkable, so the people grumbled (15:22-24).
 - The LORD made the water drinkable (15:25).
 - The LORD commanded obedience and promised to take care of His people (15:26).
2. The LORD provided manna and quail for food (16:1-36).
 - The Israelites grumbled against Moses because they had no food (16:1-3).
 - The Israelites were really grumbling against God (16:6-8).
 - The LORD showed His presence and proved that He is Yahweh their God (16:9-12).
 - The LORD provided manna and quail (16:13-18, 31).
 - The Israelites failed the LORD's tests twice (16:4-5; 19-28).
 - The LORD preserved Israel by providing manna for 40 years (16:32-36).
3. The LORD provided water out of a rock (17:1-7).
 - The Israelites complained that there was no water (17:1-3).
 - The LORD showed His presence and brought water out of a rock (17:4-6).
 - The people had tested the LORD (17:7).





Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. Why did the Israelites grumble?**
They were thirsty and hungry.
- 2. How did God provide for them?**
He gave them water to drink and manna and quail to eat.
- 3. What does this show us about God?**
We can trust Him to provide for our needs.
- 4. Is it ok to grumble?**
No. We should be thankful for what God provides, and trust Him.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. Why was the first place called Marah?**
The water was too bitter to drink.
- 2. How did God provide at Marah?**
He told Moses to throw a tree into the water, making the water drinkable.
- 3. What did God want the Israelites to learn from this?**
He wanted them to learn to trust Him and obey Him, because He is always able to provide.
- 4. Why did the people grumble in the Wilderness of Shur?**
They were running out of food.
- 5. What was wrong with their grumbling?**
They were not thankful for what God had done for them, and they did not trust God to provide for their needs.
- 6. How did God provide for them?**
God sent manna in the morning for bread, and quail in the evening for meat.
- 7. Why did the people complain at Rephidim?**
They had no water.
- 8. How did God show them that He was still with them?**
He had Moses strike a rock, then He made water flow out of the rock.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

GRUMBLING PUPPET

Use a puppet to demonstrate how Israel complained while they were in the Wilderness. The puppet can exaggerate the whiny complaints of the Israelites, and you can then let the children imitate. Then explain how they should have responded.

PICK UP THE MANNA

Materials: large clean sheet, plastic bowls, corn flakes.

Directions: Before class, lay a sheet on the floor. Pour corn flakes on the sheet and spread them out. Tell the children that in today's lesson God is going to test the hearts of the Israelites. He wants to see whether they will obey His rules. One of the ways He did this was by giving them special rules for picking up manna. Ask the children whether they can obey the rules for picking up their "manna." Give them each a bowl and ask them to each pick up 10 corn flakes—no more, no less—and put them in their bowls. Tell them not to eat any until you say it is okay. If they obey, they can eat it for a snack just before the Bible lesson. Tell them that they will find out in today's lesson whether Israel obeyed.



ILLUSTRATE

WATER FROM A ROCK

Bring a large rock to class. Ask the children to squeeze it as hard as they can. Ask them if they can squeeze any water out of it. Ask them to try really, really hard. Then ask them why water will not come from the rock. Tell them that there is no water in the rock. To get water from this rock would be a miracle. Tell the children that God provided water from a rock as a sign of His power and His patience.

BITTER TO SWEET

Use this to illustrate how God made the bitter water sweet.

Materials: Clear water bottle, eye dropper, food coloring, bleach, and water.

Directions: Before class fill the water bottle with water. Add enough food coloring to turn the water another color (brown or black would be best). Show this water bottle during the lesson and tell the children that it represents the bitter (undrinkable) water. Next take the top off and, using the eye dropper filled with bleach, add drops of bleach until the water becomes clear (you may need to swish the water around). DO NOT DRINK THE WATER. Explain that God made miraculously made the bitter water sweet.



APPLY

GOD PROVIDES FOR ISRAEL

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheets, oatmeal, blue cardstock, white and yellow paper, crayons, scissors, and glue.

Directions: Before class, print out the "God Provides for Israel" template onto blue cardstock, cut out a yellow circle and a white crescent, and cut out the pictures from the craft sheet. In class, have children color the pictures and glue them to locations pictured below. Finish by gluing on the oatmeal to represent the manna.

God Provides for Israel
See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

BITTER WATER

Materials: Can of tonic water, a can of lemon-lime soda, and clear plastic cups.

Directions: Ask for one or several volunteers to come to the front of the class to do a taste test. Explain that the children may not like what they are about to taste. Show the children that the cups' contents look the same but are very different. Give the volunteers a cup with a small amount of tonic water; ask everyone to drink at the same time. This should elicit a “yuck” response. Then give them a cup with a small amount of lemon-lime soda and instruct them to taste. They should like this better. Explain that in today's lesson, they will learn how God made bitter water sweet and continually cared for the children of Israel.

FOOD PICTURES

Show the children pictures of different foods. Talk about what the children like to eat or drink when they get hungry or thirsty. In today's Bible lesson, God provided His people with food that tasted good. He gave them manna, which was like bread, and quail, which is like chicken. He also gave them water when they could not find any in the desert.



ILLUSTRATE

MIRACULOUS MANNA

No attempt to explain manna in a natural way can account for this bread from heaven; it was truly a miracle. As you read through chapter 16, ask the children to identify the different ways God's provision of manna was miraculous.

1. The way it appeared (16:14)
2. The way it rotted after one night except before the Sabbath (16:19–20)
3. The way it melted when the sun grew hot (16:21)
4. The way it came every day except on the Sabbath (16:27)
5. The way it kept coming all year long for forty years (16:35)
6. The way it was able to feed over two million people (16:35)

THE WILDERNESS

Ask the children to share what comes to their minds when they hear the word “wilderness”. This word can refer to many different types of regions, but when it is used to describe the area the Israelites wandered in for 40 years is describes a landscape that more resembles a rocky desert than lush jungle or wooded forest. Using photos from the internet or reference books, show the children what this region of the world looks like.



APPLY

GOD PROVIDES QUAIL

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, blue cardstock, white paper, crayons, scissors, and glue.

Directions: Instruct children to color and cut out the pictures from craft sheet. Fold a blue piece of cardstock in half lengthwise. Cut a crescent shape from white paper. Glue the pictures and the crescent to the blue cardstock as shown below.

God Provides Quail
See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

REMEMBERING GOD'S GOODNESS

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.

Divide children into groups. Each group will need a set of the “Remembering God’s Goodness” cards, located in the craft book. Copy the cards onto cardstock and cut them apart. See how fast each group can arrange the cards in the correct order. These cards represent the miracles God performed for His people before and during this morning’s Bible lesson. The Israelites kept forgetting how trustworthy God was in taking care of all their needs. The correct order: (1) Moses in basket, (2) Pharaoh’s daughter finds Moses, (3) Burning bush, (4) Moses’ rod turns into a snake, (5) Plague of frogs, (6) Plague of lice, (7) Blood on the door, (8) Passover dinner, (9) Moses parts the Red Sea, and (10) The Egyptian armies flee.

GRUMBLE, GRUMBLE, GRUMBLE

Ask the children what they commonly grumble or complain about, recording their responses on the board. Emphasize that all complaints are ultimately against God (Exod 16:8). Help the children turn their grumbling into thanksgiving by making a list of things they should be thankful for instead. Write each thankful idea beside each complaint.



ILLUSTRATE

WHAT IS IN YOUR HEART?

God uses tough things to reveal what is in our hearts. Show the children various containers, and let them guess what is inside (ketchup, mustard, toothpaste, suntan lotion, etc.). Replace the contents of a well-known product with something else. Explain that if we look only on the outside (at the things we do and say), we may be wrong about what is inside (why we do them). Even though the Israelites were saying they loved God very much (Exod 15:1–21), when things were not going well, they grumbled and complained to God (Exod 15:24; 16:2; 17:3) and showed how ungrateful they really were and how little they trusted Him.

ISRAEL'S REPORT CARD

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.

Make a copy of the chart and place it on an overhead projector or PowerPoint slide to use during the lesson. Hide the answers in the last four columns to reveal answers later.



APPLY

PUTTING YOU TO THE TEST

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.

Use this test located in the craft book to assess the children’s knowledge of the passage after teaching time. Explain that Israel was also put to the test by God. Ask the children in what ways the Israelites could have passed the tests that God placed before them. Answer Key: (1) a, (2) b, (3) b, (4) d, (5) d, (6) d, (7) b, (8) c, (9) b, (10) a