

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

EXODUS 15-17

One of the features that make college football such a popular sport is *the fight song*. Every school has a tune the band plays that stirs the emotions, and leads them to victory. *Let me see if you can recognize any of these fight songs...*

The first one will be music to your ears... **“Glory, Glory to Ole Georgia”**.

The next two are like fingernails scraping a chalkboard... I can barely stand to play them... Tennessee’s **“Rocky Top”**, and Georgia Tech’s **“Ramblin’ Wreck”**.

This is football’s most famous fight song... **“The Notre Dame Victory March “**

Here’s a song I’m playing just so Mark Lawson doesn’t grumble later... It’s the **“Boomer Sooner”** – played by the University of Oklahoma marching band.

And in honor of the national champs – here’s Southern Cal’s **“Fight On”**

Yet, all these songs pale in comparison to the fight song *Moses composes* in Exodus 15. God’s parting of the Red Sea, and His mighty victory over pharaoh and the Egyptians inspired Moses to compose a fight song for Israel to sing...

This is the first song, or psalm, in the Bible.

Apparently, Moses was not only *a great deliverer*, but *a great composer*.

Tonight we’ll study the lyrics to Moses’ song - but sadly he’s no longer with us to play the tune. Moses is dead. I guess you could say he’s now decomposing...

Verse 1, "Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and spoke, saying: I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!" In other words, God never just eeks out a victory – or wins at the buzzer. All His victories are by the slaughter rule. He always skunks His opponent. God leads the league in blowouts.

As Moses puts it, "He has triumphed gloriously!"

"The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The LORD is a man of war; the LORD (Jehovah) is His name." Notice God is no pacifist. God is not squeamish in the heat of battle. He certainly doesn't faint at the sight of blood.

Some wars are just. They're needed to put down evil - and have to be fought.

"Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; they sank to the bottom like a stone. Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces."

Since 90% of the population is right-handed – the right hand is usually the strongest. The idea Moses is communicating is that God took a strong, right-handed approach against His enemy. He acted boldly, bluntly, and forcibly.

Understand, the Bible teaches that God is spirit. It's doubtful

He has human-like features such as hands and feet - eyes and ears. Yet throughout Scripture, God ascribes to Himself human traits. How else can finite, fleshly humans begin to relate to an infinite, spiritual God unless He used terms we could understand.

When God speaks of Himself in human terms, we call it an *anthropomorphism*.

Verse 7, “And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth Your wrath; it consumed them like stubble.

And with the blast of Your nostrils the waters were gathered together; the floods stood upright like a heap; the depths congealed in the heart of the sea.”

“The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.’

You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.” A wind from God parted the sea for the Hebrews. The same wind blew again and drowned the Egyptians. A strong east wind did God’s bidding.

Verse 11, “Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

You stretched out Your right hand; the earth swallowed them.

You in Your mercy have led forth the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation.” God never just brings us out... His goal is to

bring us into something better – into fellowship with Him.

Verse 14, "The people will hear and be afraid; sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling will take hold of them; all the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away." God's victory over Egypt will strike fear in the hearts of other nations.

"Fear and dread will fall on them; by the greatness of Your arm they will be as still as a stone, till Your people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over Whom You have purchased." Though the ancient world had no internet or television, it still didn't take long for news to get around. Caravans and travelers would bring word of what was going on in far off lands.

The nations that might've been tempted to oppose Israel would know better after news came of how the God of Israel vanquished the mighty Egyptians.

"You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance (in other words, the land of Canaan), in the place, O LORD, which You have made for Your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O LORD, which Your hands have established."

Verse 18 is emphatic, "The LORD shall reign forever and ever." And he offers proof of his ability to do so... "For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them. But the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea."

After Moses wrote this song, his sister Miriam, picked up her tambourine, and choreographed a dance. She organized the women to sing her brother's song...

Recall Miriam was Moses' older sister who came to Pharaoh's daughter after she found Moses in the bulrushes - and arranged for her mom to nurse Moses.

Here she leads the Hebrews in celebration... **“Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"**

And if God has triumphed in your life be sure to sing a song to His glory!

Verse 22, **“So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.”** Remember finding water in the desert for 2-3 million people was no small task. After 3 days in the desert without water people begin to die.

This was a desperate situation. On the heels of victory they're challenged again.

“Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah they were bitter...” *Marah* means bitter. Apparently the stream was polluted – maybe it contained a heavy mineral content. What a disappointment! They finally find some water, and it's like the Yellow River... **“Therefore the name of it was called Marah.”**

“And the people complained against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?”

Chapter 15 is a strange chapter. It starts out with a celebration of God’s mighty power, but ends with the people whining about no water. *God just parted an ocean. Don’t you think He can provide a little drinking water? Why start grumbling?*

It’s been said, “Some people like to *rise and shine*. The Hebrews liked to *rise and whine*.” We’re just 3 days out of Egypt and they’re murmuring against God.

Sadly, this will be an all-to-common occurrence over the next 40 years!

Verse 25, “So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.” A tree brought healing and purity... And there’s another tree that does the same... *the cross*.

The waters of this life are poisoned. Even good things in life no longer bring joy without Jesus. But Jesus makes bitter water sweet. The cross heals even the bitter experiences of life by reminding us that *Jesus loves us, He feels what we feel, He even uses our suffering to accomplish His plans, and work miracles in our lives*.

“There He made a statute and an ordinance for them. And there He tested them, and said, “If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on

the Egyptians.”

With the tree that was tossed into the polluted waters there's speculation that healing was God's intent... Amoebas and dysentery were a common problem among Egyptian peasants, and probably plagued the Hebrew slaves.

Sap from the tree that God introduced into the mineral water may've pulled the minerals in the pool to the bottom, leaving good water on the surface. The water though still had enough minerals to act as a laxative and flush out the digestive tract of the Hebrews. The whole episode was God's way of bringing healing.

Remember 15:26 when we discuss God's laws concerning diet and hygiene. “I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians.”

The regulations God gave Israel protected them from communicable disease and food contamination. I've got a book by a medical doctor, SI McMillen, entitled, “*None of These Diseases*”. It explains how the Mosaic Laws were all health smart.

It's interesting, Israel adopted standards and safeguards Gentile nations didn't figure out for thousands of years. McMillen writes, “the biblical method for control of infectious skin diseases is unequaled in the history of ancient man... historians credit the Bible for the dawning of a new era in the effective control of disease...”

In verse 26 God follows the *healing* of the waters with the *revealing* of a new name, “For I am the LORD who heals you.” In Hebrew it's *Jehovah-Rapha*.

“Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.” God flushes out their system - then brings them to a place where they can replenish themselves. The oasis of Elim could support a large contingency of people with ample food and water.

Chapter 16, “And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the 15th day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt.”

This marks one month after their exodus from Egypt.

“Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." What an ungrateful and unbelieving group. They've been free a month and they're already unhappy.

Be glad Israel wasn't a democracy. They would've voted to return to Egypt.

This is why God governs His people through godly leaders, not majority rule.

And notice the three traits here of a complaining people...

First, **they rewrite history**. They said that while in Egypt they “sat by the pots of meat... ate bread to the full”. Wait a

minute... *When did slaves ever go to bed full?* It was never as good as they claimed. Complainers exaggerate the past.

Second, **they think negatively about the future.** God said He would bring them into a place of blessing. They're talking about starving in the desert.

And third, **they question the motivation of their leader.** Moses had risked his neck to stand up for them before Pharaoh. He behaved in an impeccable manner. Yet now they ignore his track record, and claim it's his intention to kill them.

Verse 4, **"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you."** In response to their *grumbling...* a gracious God promises them bread.

Six days a week for the next 40 years God will supernaturally provide them with wonder bread. Each morning He'll rain bread from heaven on His people. They'll exit their tents to find wafers on the ground. God will cater a meal every day.

"And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not." The test came at gathering time.

God said **"gather a certain quota"** – *a single day's portion*. If their faith wavered, and the people doubted God's faithfulness - and kept back extra loaves just in case God didn't come through - their stash would rot, and they'd fail the test.

They had to trust God to collect only what they needed for that day.

Verse 5, **"And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall**

prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." On Day Six the Hebrews collected enough for two days. God will forbid work on the seventh day - the Sabbath – so on the sixth day the people gathered a double portion.

“Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, "At evening you shall know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt. God also promises to send them coveys of quail. In the morning they'll eat bread – at night meat.

“And in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD; for He hears your complaints against the LORD. But what are we, that you complain against us?"

Also Moses said, "This shall be seen when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the LORD hears your complaints which you make against Him. And what are we?"

Your complaints are not against us but against the LORD." The Hebrews directed their complaints at Moses, but they were actually complaining against God, and His will. Moses just happened to be a convenient scapegoat.

Guys, God is sovereign over all situations, so when we complain about the resources He provides - or the direction He leads - or the situation He allows - or the authority He sets over us - we're really complaining about the Lord Himself...

It's been said, "When we swear we take the name of the Lord in vain, but when we grumble we take the purposes of God in vain." It's a lot easier to complain than it is to believe. Murmuring and grumbling are nothing but masks for unbelief.

“Then Moses spoke to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, 'Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your complaints.'

Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.” Remember God provided Moses a navigation system. He was to follow a cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire at night.

“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I am the LORD your God.' So it was that quails came up at evening and covered the camp...”

There are quail that migrate from southern Europe to Arabia – and cross the Sinai Peninsula. They’re small birds that fly close to the ground and roost at night. They’d be easy prey for the Hebrews. Quail was actually an Egyptian delicacy – so the Hebrews would be eating better in the desert than most of the citizens in Egypt.

“And in the morning the dew lay all around the camp. And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, as fine as frost on the ground. So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was.” The Hebrews called the substance “*manna*” which means “*what is it?*” – but God always referred to it as “**bread from**

heaven". Psalm 78:25 even calls the substance "angel's food".

Whatever it was I'm sure if you had run chemical tests on it you would've found that it contained 100% of the USDA daily nutritional requirements. It was a perfect food for desert life - and God was always right on time. He never missed a meal.

And Moses said to them, "This is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat. This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: 'Let every man gather it according to each one's need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent.'" Each individual got an omer a day of the manna. An "omer" was the equivalent of about 7 pints.

"And the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less." Depending on the number of mouths in the family. "So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need."

Verse 19, "And Moses said, "Let no one leave any of it till morning." Take only the amount needed for that particular day. Don't try to horde it *just in case*...

"Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses." After they'd gathered for one day, there was still food on the ground – so they tried to get as much as they could.

And this was not how God wanted His people to live. He wanted them to trust Him day by day – not just on occasion. If God had allowed the people to horde the manna they

would've forgotten about Him. It's our human tendency to trust in a *surplus* rather than *God*. *This is why a hefty bank account can hinder our faith.*

And this is why Jesus told us to pray, "Give us this day, our daily bread." Jesus wants us to learn to live our lives with a daily awareness of our need for Him.

To teach the Hebrews to walk by faith God spoiled their excess. Verse 20, "But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them." *And what did they do with the stinky manna?* They probably took it out and tossed it over the fence – *which made it an over-the-fence omer.*

Verse 21, "So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted. And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'" So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it.

Verse 25, "Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, there will be none."

"Now it happened that some of the people went out on the

seventh day to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days.

Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day."

"And the house of Israel called its name Manna. And it was like white coriander seed, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey." The manna had the texture of a seed, and the sweetness of honey. It was a *Hebrew Nut'n Honey*.

Coriander seeds are the size of pearls, and give off a sweet aroma. Today they are ingredient in gin, curry powder, and sweets. They're also used to flavor bread.

There is a Jewish legend that describes how manna tasted, "One only had to desire a certain dish, and no sooner had he thought of it, than manna had the flavor of the dish desired. The same food had a different taste to everyone who partook of it, according to his age; to the children, it tasted like milk - the strong youths like bread - to the old men like honey - to the sick like barley steeped in oil and honey." The Jews also claimed the manna tasted bitter to the Gentiles.

Verse 32, "Then Moses said, "This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: 'Fill an omer with it, to be kept for your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'" They were to keep a sample of manna for posterity

sake.

“And Moses said to Aaron, “Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.” As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.” Later, Moses places this jar of manna in the Ark of the Covenant with Aaron’s rod, and the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. It’s a shame we don’t have the manna sample today.

Verse 35, “And the children of Israel ate manna 40 years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

Now an omer is one-tenth of an ephah.” So the Hebrews ate a omer of manna each day for 40 years... That’s 7 pints a day for 3 million people over 365 days a year for 40 years. The total yearly requirement of manna was 2½ million tons.

Think of it this way... *Let’s say we were to take on the food service for just one day... We agree to feed 3 million Hebrews a cheeseburger, Fry, and a coke.*

Here’s what we would need... 3 million beef patties a quarter pound a piece - or 750,000 pounds of beef. If we were shipping it by rail it would take a train of 200 freight cars – and to pull the cars the train would require 10 locomotives.

We’d also need another 7 cars to pull the 750,000 pounds of potatoes for the fries, and 75 cars to carry the 750,000 gallons of coca-cola. To ice down the cokes we would need 375,000 pounds of ice, which would require another 4 railroad cars.

Here’s the rest of the grocery list.... buns - 250,000 dozen,

mustard - 11,000 gallons, dill pickles - 12,000 gallons, tomatoes - 50,000 gallons, cheese - 200,000 pounds, onions - 175,000 pounds, and lettuce - 150,000 head. Now we're talking a train of well over 300 freight cars long. Such a train would extend three miles.

Imagine preparing and cooking this volume of food....

If you could cook 1000 patties per minute – *which would take a lot of grills* – you'd work 48 hours to cook 3 million burgers. That's not figuring the time it would take to peel and cook the fries, slice the onions and tomatoes, and pour the cokes.

Yet God provided the children of Israel a meal every single day for 40 long years. Not even Lisa Shelton and the cooks in the Brook could pull that off.

Exodus 17 begins, “Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink.”

Notice, God leads the Hebrews to a place where there is no water. This is not what we would expect from God. Surely, He always leads us to bountiful places? He would never lead His people to a dry well... yet that's exactly what God does.

Guys, too many of us have a preschool faith - where bad things happen to bad people, and good things happen to good people. Every time you make a decision that produces uncomfortable consequences it doesn't mean you've missed God's will. Sometimes, God leads us into difficult places to test us, and to refine us.

AW Pink writes, “We need to realize that in every circumstance and situation where faith is tested, the Lord Himself brought us there. If this be apprehended, it will not be so difficult for us to trust Him to sustain us while we remain there.”

Verse 2, “Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, “Give us water, that we may drink. And Moses said to them, “Why do you contend with me?

Why do you tempt the LORD?” And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, “Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

Unbelievably the people are griping again. And understand, there’s now manna every morning - quail every night – yet because there’s no bottled water they revolt.

Verse 4, “So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!” A lynching mob had formed.

“And the LORD said to Moses, “Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.”

And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.” Here’s another miracle. Moses hits the rock with his shepherd’s staff, and the stone becomes a sprinkler. Water gushes out, and quenches the thirst of people who’d been bloodthirsty.

In 1 Corinthians 10:4 Paul reveals that there's a spiritual application to this passage. He writes of the Hebrews, "all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ."

In other words, when Moses struck the rock he not only supplied water to thirsty people, he also painted a picture of how God slakes our spiritual thirst.

In the Bible, the rock is an idiom for the Messiah. On the cross God struck the rock. Fifty days after the crucifixion the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost - bringing spiritual refreshment to our souls. Jesus cried out in John 7:37, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." Spiritual life gushes from our Rock, Jesus.

Verse 7, "So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah" which means *tempted* and *contention*, "because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

Verse 8, "Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim." Notice, a month after Israel is saved from bondage, he's thrust into a war. Which also applies to us... Become a friend of God, and you end up a target for Satan.

There is a spiritual battle raging. Life is not a *playground* but a *battleground*.

When the nomadic Amalekites heard that a new watering hole had opened up at Rephidim they came to grab it for themselves. Israel fought against the Amalek, and the manner

in which he prevails teaches us how to win our spiritual skirmishes.

Incidentally, in this battle, Josephus points out the Hebrews used the weapons of the drowned Egyptians. Apparently, God worked a miracle, and made the swords and armor float to the bank where they were plucked from the sea.

God had foreseen the nation's need for weapons, and provided in advance.

Verse 9, "And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed."

It was a seesaw battle. As long as Moses held the rod of God high in the air the people were encouraged and prevailed - the moment Moses let his hand slip, and the rod disappeared from view, the Amalekites got the *upperhand*.

"But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword."

The arms of Moses had to be supported for Israel to win...

And this is a key for us in the spiritual battles we face...

Uplifted hands are a sign of faith. We're reaching out to heaven for help – trusting in God for victory.

But often our faith gets tired as our arms get weary. And it's then that we need the support of our friends. Charles Spurgeon once said, "Friendship is one of the sweetest joys of life. Many might have failed beneath the bitterness of their trial had they not found a friend." We need friends to help strengthen our faith.

This is why *the Lone Ranger for Jesus – the isolated Christian* - is destined to fall. When his faith gets weary there's no one in his life to help hold up his arms.

Hey, we all need each other. Sometimes we're Moses in need of a lift. At other times we're Aaron, or Hur - *or even a Him*. We're the person who provides the lift. But for you and I to win the victory we need to help hold up each other's arms.

Verse 14, "Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner..." Or Jehovah-Nissi.

"For he said, "Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." Every army has a flag, and the banner under which Israel will fight is the Lord Jehovah. The Father will be their flag.