

Devotion on Hymns of the Church (Hymn 434 - Guide Me, O thou Great Jehovah) – 15
July 2014, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land. And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. (Ex 6:1-3)

This hymn is especially directed to the Church Militant on earth. The problems of war, pestilence and immorality would immediately be settled in the people and nations of the world were guided by that trusted and all-powerful hand of Jehovah. Would any wonder of this name – the Tetragrammaton (YHWH) of The Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ? Now we have a name for Jehovah – Jesus Christ! It was an unmentionable name to the ancient Hebrews simply because no name could express, in physical terms, His grandeur and greatness. “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” (Gal 4:4-5) It is amazing to me that by the Law of sacrifice Jesus saved us by unmerited Grace. God gave the Law through Moses as a teacher – not to teach us how righteous we could be, but of how wretched and wicked is the heart of man without a Savior. Abraham believed God and looked to the coming Redeemer. He was therefore saved by the blood of Christ just as were you and I. But the greater people of Israel went it alone depending upon their own righteousness and perished without a Savior, in the trust of their own righteousness under the Law. This hymn is of an old Welsh variety having been written by William Williams in 1745. John Hughes wrote the popular tune to which this hymn is sung today entitled, Cwm Rhondda, or St Oswald. John Keble, early proponent of the notorious Oxford Movement, attempted to alter the words, but without success. The original lyrics remain substantially unchanged from the original. This hymn was a favorite of the Welsh soldiers in the trenches of Flanders in World War I. It was so gustily sung by these heroic soldiers of faith that the German army, too, took up singing the hymn. Like

all great, classic hymns, every verse of the hymn is supported by Holy Scripture. This enables many who cannot carry a Bible into every foxhole and frontier the words of God by a song in their hearts.

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim though this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more,
feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through;
strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer.
be thou still my Strength and Shield,
be thou still my Strength and Shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
bear me through the swelling current,
land me safe on Canaan's side;
songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

Let us take a look line by line:

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim though this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more,
feed me till I want no more.

The first line refers to the Pillar of Fire by Night and Cloudy Pillar by day that was Protector and Guide to God's people in the Wilderness both before and beyond the Red Sea. The same Invincible Hand that Guides is the same that Protects, and His protection is assured to all who follow His lead. ". . . the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey." (Deut 26:8-9) Until we realize our utter weakness and helplessness without God, we cannot know Him. "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor 2:3-5)

The refrain to the first verse is a powerful testimony to only that Bread on which our spiritual beings feed and cannot thrive without. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (John 6:32-35) This hymn bases all of its claims squarely upon Scripture. That Bread of Heaven satisfies finally and completely:

Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through;
strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer.

Remember that Crystal Fountain of Water in the Wilderness? "And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." (Ex 17:5-6) That Fountain is available to all of faith. "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light. O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart." (Psalms 36:9-10) The only Light that is true is that Light of God. That Crystal Fountain shall also be seen on the Far Banks of Jordan Waters along with that resplendently beautiful Tree of Life which our early parents rejected: "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Rev 22:1-2) When I read the beautiful words of this great hymn, I cannot doubt that it came from the very heart of God. Once again, in clearer focus, is brought the reminder of God's protective shield of the cloud by day and fiery pillar by night. God is most surely our Deliverer, our Strength, and our Shield – a Deliverer that never leaves nor forsakes us – even in that Valley of the Shadow of Death. "I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." (Psalms 18:1-2)

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
bear me through the swelling current,
land me safe on Canaan's side;
songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

There was great physical salvation that occurred on the banks of the Red Sea. The children were saved from the ensuing and mighty army of Pharaoh. The entire nation was baptized in the Red Sea Waters; but the final Confirmation and crossing comes at Jordan Banks. We shall all come to those rugged Banks at the time appointed by God,

our Father. Looking into the turbid waters of the Jordan may be unsettling; however, if we look beyond to the Heavenly Canaan, we shall take heart and cross with no regrets. The closer our hearts to God, the calmer that crossing shall be. Many saints have embraced the crossing in the last moment of their lives. The final refrain will be well to take counsel of. "I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high. (Psalms 7:17) Praise is the least gift you can give the Lord.