

Exodus Chapter 15 Continued

Exodus 15:19 "For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry [land] in the midst of the sea."

Meaning not that particular and single horse on which Pharaoh was carried, but all the horses of his that drew his chariots, and all on which his cavalry was mounted. These all went into the Red sea, following the Israelites thither. These words are either the concluding part of the song of Moses, recapitulating and reducing into a compendium the subject matter of it; or are a reason why Moses and the children of Israel sung it. Or else they are to be connected more strictly with the preceding verse, and give a reason why the Lord reigns over his people for ever. Because he has destroyed their enemies, and delivered them out of their hands.

"And the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them": After he had divided the waters for the Israelites to pass through them, he caused them to close again, and to fall upon the Egyptians and cover and drown them.

"But the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea": Which was a very wonderful thing, and was a just and sufficient reason for singing the above song to the Lord (see Exodus 14:29).

Moses sang before the Lord, we see again, that they go into detail about Pharaoh's men being drowned in the sea.

Exodus 15:20 "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances."

"Miriam" was the sister of Moses and Aaron. She watched the baby Moses in the basket among the bulrushes and recommended her mother as a nurse for the child (2:7-10). Later she was active in the Exodus experience and led the women in songs of praise to celebrate the crossing of the Red Sea (verses 20-21). She was called a "prophetess" and occupied a position of great respect among the Israelites. She later rebelled against Moses because of his marriage to an Ethiopian woman and was struck with leprosy (Num. 12). She was miraculously healed of the leprosy because of Moses' intercession on her behalf. She eventually died at Kadesh and was buried there (Num. 20:1).

Perhaps she is referred to as "sister of Aaron" because of his priestly role and her role her in leading Israel's worship. She was the first "prophetess" in Scripture but not the only one. Others include Deborah (Judges 4:4), Anna (Luke 2:36) and Philip's daughters (Acts 21:9).

This Miriam was not only the sister of Aaron, but was the sister of Moses as well. The word "prophetess" here, means inspired woman. Moses, Aaron and Miriam were all the children of Amram and Jochebed and had all been raised to know the true God. Their faith, as their parents' faith, was in the living God.

This group of people had been in the presence of the Spirit of God. This Spirit had opened the sea with the wind and caused them to walk on dry land in the middle of the sea to safety. This should be a time of special praise and thanksgiving to God for His deliverance.

Exodus 15:21 "And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

Miriam and her maidens at the close of each portion of the "Song" (i.e., at the end of Exodus 15:5; 15:10; 15:12; 15:18), sang the refrain which is here given. A refrain very slightly altered from the opening verse of the "Song" itself, marking, no doubt, the time with their timbrels, and moving gracefully through a stately and solemn dance.

"Sing ye to the Lord": Which is by way of exhortation to the women to sing with her, as Moses begins the song thus: "I will sing unto the Lord".

"For he hath triumphed gloriously": The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea (see Exodus 15:1). The manner of their singing, according to the Jews, was, Moses first said, "I will sing", and they said it after him.

This verse shows us that the purpose of this joy was the great redemption from the Egyptian bondage.

Verses 22-27: This records the first of five crises. This one concerned thirst. The second centered on hunger (in chapter 16), followed by thirst again (in 17:1-7). A fourth concerned war (in 17:8-16), and the fifth dealt with overwork (in 18:1-27).

Exodus 15:22 "So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water."

The history of the journey from the Red Sea to Sinai begins in fact with this verse, which would more conveniently have been the commencement of another chapter.

"From the Red sea": The station where Moses and his people halted to celebrate their deliverance is generally admitted to be the Ayoun Musa (i. e. the fountains of Moses). It is the only green spot near the passage over the Red Sea. There are several wells there, which in the time of Moses were probably enclosed and kept with great care by the Egyptians, for the use of the frequent convoys to and from their ancient settlements at Sarbutel Khadem and the Wady Mughara.

"The wilderness of Shur": This name belongs to the whole district between the northeastern frontier of Egypt and Palestine. The word is undoubtedly Egyptian, and is derived probably from the word Khar, which designated all the country between Egypt and Syria proper.

"Three days": The distance between Ayoun Musa and Huwara, the first spot where any water is found on the route, is 33 geographical miles. The whole district is a tract of sand, or rough gravel.

And when, after three days of distress on this account, they found water, could not drink of it because it was bitter. But this was for the trial of their faith and patience. And after the wonderful things God had done for them, they were perfectly inexcusable in murmuring against Moses, which was, in effect, murmuring against God. How marvelous was the patience of God with this people!

"Shur" means wall fortification. We see by this, that Egypt had built a wall to keep their enemies out. Moses led them approximately three days' journey to this spot, to cross the desert into the Promised Land.

Exodus 15:23 "And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they [were] bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah."

People can change from praise to complaint so easily. Israel's elation lasted just "three days," until they encountered "bitter", brackish water at Marah.

We will notice that these Israelites had already been redeemed (saved), and had had a period of real rejoicing. Now their walk to the Promised Land began and here, we see tribulation come to test exactly how much faith they had. Does this sound familiar? This is exactly what happens to the Christians. When we are saved, there is a period of real rejoicing and then our walk begins. Tribulation comes to make us strong, to build our faith and to bring patience.

Romans 5:3-4: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;" "And patience, experience; and experience, hope:"

You see, it is easy to forget what God has done for us. We tend to forget the past miracles. It seems, unless God is doing miracles every single day in our lives, we begin to doubt. A miracle can only occur when there is an impossible situation confronting us. God tries to teach us to look to Him when something impossible (in the flesh), confronts us. He is the miracle God.

Exodus 15:24 "And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?"

"Murmured against Moses": Israelite memory of victory displayed remarkable brevity. The personalized declarations of their ode to the Lord sung 3 days earlier vanished into thin air. Their belief of Moses faded out of the picture (14:31). Their question about drinking water roughly brushed aside all recent affirmations of God's being worthy of praise because He had done wonders and was clearly taking them to their land.

What did God's people here do? They had already forgotten what God could do.

God does not like murmuring (complaining). Instead of complaining and blaming Moses, they should have been praying. This was exactly what Moses did.

Exodus 15:25 "And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, [which] when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,"

“Waters were made sweet”: Since there is no known tree which would naturally make unpalatable water drinkable, this must have been a miracle by which God demonstrated His willingness and ability to look after His people in a hostile environment. Marah is usually associated with modern day Ain Hawarah, where the waters still remain brackish and unpleasant.

“Proved them”: “To subject to difficulty in order to prove the quality of someone or something” is one way to explain the meaning of the Hebrew word used. Later, at Rephidim (17:1-7), at Sinai (20:20), and at Taberah (Num. 11:1-3; 13:26-33), God did just that to Israel. This is something which no one can do to God Himself (Deut. 6:16). He needs no testing in character or deed, but man certainly does need proving.

Moses cried out to God, and the Lord revealed Himself as Yahweh Rophe (“the Lord who heals”). The healer of the water promised to protect the people if they would obey Him.

Scientists tell us that there is a particular lily plant, they have discovered, that will clean up nuclear waste water. Every plant and tree on the face of the earth has a purpose. God made it for a purpose. Many of them are a source of medicines. I do not believe, however, that this is what we are to receive from this particular incident. I believe we can better find the answer to this miracle in 2 Kings.

2 Kings 2:19-22. "And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city [is] pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water [is] naught, and the ground barren." "And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought [it] to him." "And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren [land]." "So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake."

You see, God healed this water for Elisha with salt, which certainly in the natural does not sweeten water. What God was teaching them was that they must look to Him in every problem. Stop wringing their hands and pray and God would do a miracle.

Exodus 15:26 "And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I [am] the LORD that healeth thee."

“The Lord ... healeth thee”: Since this is what He is, Jehovah-Rapha, obedience to divine instruction and guidance will obviously bring healing, not the consequence of plagues like those visited upon Egypt. This promise is limited in context to Israel, most likely for the duration of the Exodus only.

The problem with most people is that we do not diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord. We have a terrible habit of doing what is right in our own sight, not what is right in God's sight. The most important statement that is made in the verse above is, "I am the LORD that healeth thee". We must walk in the ways of the Lord, if we want the blessings of the Lord. God allows us to have trials, to prove our faith. We will see in these wanderings of these people, God was trying to bring them to a faithful life. He wanted them to learn to not be selfish and to look beyond the moment to all of eternity.

All the ordinances God gave to mankind were to help man, not to cause him problems. We will see in their wanderings that God was trying to get them to a point of faith and trust that would be acceptable unto Him. They failed test after test. They complained at every problem, instead of believing. God honors faith, not murmuring. We will see them wander in the wilderness for forty years on a trip that should have taken a few days, because of their lack of faith.

Exodus 15:27 "And they came to Elim, where [were] twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters."

“Elim”: The next stopping place, most probably in modern day Wadi Garandel, had an abundant water supply – God would and did lead them rightly!

We must remember that the Lord was present with this group in the fire and smoke that led them by night and day. He knew where all the fresh water was and He certainly knew that this spot had enough water to take care of this large company of (estimated) 2-1/2 million people. Twelve is a representative number, and there may have been even more wells and springs here. They mentioned twelve to make us know that it was sufficient to take care of this group. The palm trees were perhaps, mentioned to let us know that there was vegetation here to feed their cattle. In fact, the word "Elim" means trees.

Exodus Chapter 15 Continued Questions

1. At the first of this lesson, Moses went into great detail about what?
2. After this song of Moses' was finished, what happened?
3. Who led the women?
4. Whose sister was she (name 2)?
5. What two things we should notice about this dance?
6. What was Miriam, besides being sister to Moses and Aaron?
7. What musical instrument did Miriam use?
8. Who was Miriam's mother and dad?

9. Their faith was in whom?
10. What was another instance in the Bible of dancing as a form of worship?
11. What caused them to dance?
12. Why did Miriam tell the women to sing?
13. Where did Moses lead the Israelites, when they left the Red Sea?
14. What does "Shur" mean?
15. What does this meaning tell us about this place?
16. What does "Marah" mean?
17. When a person is saved, what is the first stage he goes through?
18. What is the next step?
19. If they fail this second step, what happens?
20. Where do we find the Scripture that says we should glory in tribulation?
21. What do we have a tendency to forget?
22. What did the people do, when the water was bitter?
23. What did Moses do?
24. What is another word for murmuring?
25. What did God tell Moses to do?
26. What happening do we find in 2 Kings 2:19-22?
27. What is the same lesson God is giving us here in Exodus and in 2 Kings?
28. What is another possible message we might receive from the tree in the water?
29. What promise did God make these people, if they would do what He asked them to do?
30. God said He is the Lord that _____.
31. What is the problem with most people, that can't be healed?
32. What were the ordinances of God for?
33. What does God honor?

34. Where did they go from Marah?
35. How many wells were there?
36. What did the palm trees being there tell us?
37. What does the word "Elim" mean?