ISRAEL AT THE WELL OF MARAH: EX. 15:22-27

OR

A DIVINE DELIVERANCE FROM A DREADFUL DILEMMA



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My message this morning relates to an interesting experience of the nation of Israel.

To back up a little bit, when I visit my relatives and friends in Eastern Germany (of course they are now totally free)—many times conversations revolve around events in the past; some good, some not so good. One of my great uncles is a real raconteur, or expert story-teller. He talks about the time—and I remember him mentioning it repeatedly—when as a German soldier he was fighting under General Rommel. He and his fellow soldiers were captured by the Americans in the North African desert. They were put, as POWs, in a compound surrounded by a fence, under the hot, burning desert sun. As he relates it, the Americans were low on water and thus the German POWs had to do without that precious liquid for almost a week. When they almost died of dehydration, their German ingenuity enabled one to obtain some water after all.

As Eugen, my great uncle, tells it, under cover of darkness the POWs dug a trench through the sand underneath the fence surrounding their compound. Then, with some crude vessels, they crawled underneath the American tanks, trucks and military vehicles. They let out some of that brown and nauseating radiator water, let it settle in those vessels, and pulled the vessels back under the fence. Then they quaffed that unpalatable liquid and thus kept alive. Fortunately, a few days later the Americans got an ample supply of water and they shared it with the German soldiers, making it possible for Eugen to tell about it.

It must be awful to be in a hot, burning desert, without shade, with the sun beating down, and not to have any of that liquid. You would give a fortune, wouldn't you, for a nice large glass of ice-cold water? Well, that is what happened to a small band of German soldiers. However, we have a passage before us in Exodus 15 where almost an entire nation died of dehydration.

Turn in your Bibles with me to Exodus 15, to the account of **Israel at the well of Marah. There we see a Divine Deliverance from a Dreadful Dilemma.**

To me, this is a very interesting story and I thought I would dwell on it some because experientially all of us sooner or later will come to a place like Marah in our lives. Some of us have been there once or several times. Some of the young people perhaps haven't been to a Marah—a situation from which humanly speaking there is no escape. Then God steps in to help.

Let me read the passage with you, then I will comment on it briefly. Exodus 15:22-17.

As you can see in my message outline, there are five "hitching posts," as I call them, because sometimes our minds are like runaway horses and need to be tied down.

Notice first of all:

1A. THE DESIGNATED PLACE: 22a

Where were they?

1b. Israel's derivation:

They had come from Egypt. They had built two cities for the Pharaoh of Egypt. They were under bondage for 400 years, and now Moses had come in and said, "You follow me and I will take you to the Promised Land." The 400 years God had predicted to Abraham in Genesis 15:13 were up. "After 400 years I will bring you back," He told Abraham, "from captivity." God promised Abraham that after four generations or 400 years He would bring His people back from captivity (Gen. 15:16).

So the people of Israel had left Egypt, and just before this incident at Marah, a few days earlier, they had been pursued by the Egyptian forces because Pharaoh had a change of mind, even after these ten plagues that beset the Egyptians but spared the Israelites. Then God commanded Moses to put out his rod, and the Red Sea divided before them. Once Israel was safely on the eastern side, the waters returned and the Egyptian army drowned. Of course, you would not expect that incident to be recorded in Egyptian annals or inscriptions. The fellows recorded that which enhanced their self-esteem. But we know that for the next seven years Egypt was not able to carry on a war. Something dreadful happened. Normally every year they made forays into neighboring countries to seize property and to make slaves.

So God had delivered the Israelites through the Red Sea. On the eastern shore of the Red Sea they encamped by a cluster of wells even to this day called "Ayin Musa," "the Wells of Moses." Then they continued on their way to the Promised Land.

2b. Israel's destination:

When Moses came to Pharaoh, he said, "We want to go into the wilderness and worship God." And at one place he mentioned three days, Ex. 8:27. Obviously they were going to do that, but ultimately their destination was the Land of Canaan. Go to Ex. 13:5. Their ultimate plan was to go to Canaan. Their immediate plan was to go from the house of bondage to worship and honor their God. I assume they really did that. It wasn't just Moses saying to Pharaoh, "Hey, let us go for three days and we'll be right back." He said, "We'll go for three days to worship God" and then God would see afterward.

Most interestingly, in verse 22 we are told where they crossed the Red Sea. You probably don't know it, or maybe you do, but an individual by the name of Ron Wyatt and others sensationalized certain archeological discoveries. They have written books purporting that Mt. Sinai, where Moses eventually received the Law, was really in northwestern Arabia. On the back side of our outline, I have a little map of the Exodus and you can see in the lower right-hand corner that I hand-scribbled in a mountain in northwestern Arabia, across the eastern branch of the Red Sea from Mt. Sinai, called Jabal El Lawz. It is in vogue now to view that mountain as the real Mt. Sinai.

I really would not care about the location of the mountain if the Bible allowed for a variety of places. But there are several things that militate against this novel view. Without getting into details now, I do so in a series on the Bible and archeology. Lots of people have repositioned Mt. Sinai now. Just recently the head of a seminary talked

with me about it. I also conversed with a couple of seminary professors who are thinking about changing their view and giving this novel interpretation undue weight. I teach a class of laymen and tell my students, when I have a chance to teach on the subject, the following. When people come with a novel interpretation for the location of Mt. Sinai, ask them a couple of questions. First, ask them how many times Israel crossed the Red Sea? How many times did the waters divide? And if they hesitate, ask them, "Well, how many times did the Egyptian armies drown?" They drowned just once, correct? And then follow up with the second question: Where were they when they crossed the Red Sea? The individual normally does not know. I have yet to find someone who could answer that. And yet, the Bible gives us the answer. They were in the wilderness of Shur (Ex. 15:22). Sure they were, right? Now we just need to figure out where that wilderness was. As you look at any map of the area, the Wilderness of Shur is the northernmost horizontal strip of the Sinai, from the Mediterranean down to the northern tip of the Red Sea which you see on that little map. On the left, that is the wilderness of Shur. Down in the Sinai is the Wilderness of Sin, another horizontal strip, and in the tip of the peninsula is the Wilderness of Sinai. On the eastern side is the Wilderness of Paran. So Israel would have crossed north of the Gulf of Suez, a body of water today called the Bitter Lakes. I do think, without going into detailed arguments, that the traditional location of Sinai is probably correct.

Besides that, wherever they crossed, they went three days till they came to this next place. And while it is impossible to identify positively many of the desert stops, there is a well at exactly the place where the Israelites found putrid water, called today by the Arabs "Ayin Howara," "The Well of Bitterness." We read in our passage that the Israelites came from the wilderness of Egypt, across the Red Sea, or the Sea of Reeds. Then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur, traveling for three days in the wilderness and found no water.

3b. Israel's detour:

I mention in our outline that there is a purpose for this desert itinerary. In 1 Cor. 10, the Apostle Paul gives us a short condensation of the 40 years of wilderness wanderings. And he says, "All these things happened unto them (notice verse 6) for our examples" and then again in verse 11, "these things happened for our ensamples." Actually the Greek word is the same in both cases, *tupos* or types. Types are Old Testament pictures of New Testament truth. So what Israel did in Egypt, the Passover, crossing the Red Sea, Marah, Elim, Dophka, Rephidim, Mt. Sinai, Kadesh Barnea and so on. . .all these are pictures. Those events happened. They were historical incidents which each occurred at specific geographical places. But they are pictures of some truth in the Christian life. And the wonderful news is that these things happened for our benefit. And the fact of the matter is, there is no temptation or testing but such as is common to man. With every testing that the Israelites had and we have, there is a way of escape, that we might be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13).

We've looked at the Designated Place. Now consider:

2A. THE DREADFUL PREDICAMENT: 22b-25a

1b. Their dilemma: 22b-23

It was actually a three-fold dilemma.

1c. The unnerving depletion of water:
How many days did they wander? They were going into the desert. Why didn't they take enough water along? I'm sure they did. How much water did they need? Well, how many individuals were there? There were 600,000 men according to Exodus 12:37. If you add in the women and children and senior citizens, the number would be between 2 to 3 million. And then what else? Ex. 12:38 speaks of a mixed multitude as well as flocks and herds and much cattle. Somebody has estimated if there were between 2 and 3 million people, they needed for each day 30 tank cars filled with food and 300 tank cars filled with water. I did not figure that out, someone else did. They probably filled every water skin that they had to take on their journey, but this was in the month of April when the weather is already hot in that part of the desert. So problem number one is that they ran out of water.

2c. The unsuccessful search for water:
The second problem is when they looked for water, such as a fountain, a cistern, a spring, an oasis or something, they did not find any trace of that precious liquid.

3c. The unpalatable pool of water:
The third problem was that when they finally found a spring, they could not drink of it. Therefore it was called Marah or bitterness. It must have been very, very bad. If the German soldiers mentioned earlier could quaff that brown and odious radiator water in order to stay alive, certainly these people, almost at the point of death by dehydration, would have drunk it if the water of Marah had been halfway potable.

2b. Their deportment: 24-25a
What do they do?

1c. The reaction of the people: 24

1d. Their evil murmuring:
They murmured a lot, didn't they? In verse 11 of chapter 14, they saw the Egyptian armies behind them as they were leaving Egypt and they said in a biting, sarcastic way, "Aren't there enough graves in Egypt?" That's all you have in Egypt, one cemetery after another; not just for individuals, but they had serapiums where they buried mummified bulls buried and mummified crocodiles and mummified cats, and mummified this and that, because they worshiped them as gods. So all of Egypt was one big graveyard. They said "Weren't there enough graves in Egypt?" They forgot how God gloriously delivered them from Egypt. He is trying to deal with them in a way so they can learn something that they cannot learn any other way.

I suspect, if you and I had been there, we might have joined in. Where had Moses been these last 40 years? In the desert to the south of there. What was he doing? Remember? He was shepherding his father-in-law's flocks. For forty years he wandered through the desert with Jethro's flocks. In a desert where there is very little precipitation, every good shepherd knows where there is a cistern where rainwater is collected during the few rainy days or where there is an oasis, or where there is a little well, or a spring of water. Didn't Moses know that Marah was there and they could not drink of it? Of course he knew. So how dare he bring them there? Well, you already know the answer, don't you? Did Moses have any choice in the itinerary they were taking? He didn't, did he?

Turn with me to chapter 13:21. Who led them? Moses? No, God. They were led by a pillar of cloud by day, the manifest presence of God, and by a pillar of fire by night. Thus, when they rebelled against Moses or when they murmured against Moses, did they not really rebel against God?

When that pillar stopped, Moses had to stop and so did everyone else. When the pillar moved, they had to move. It doesn't seem right, though, to bring three million people practically to the place of death, does it?

I mentioned that well of Marah is still there today, and so are the pools of Elim to the south. I do not know the size of Marah back then. Today it is about eight feet in diameter and two feet deep. This is the place to which God brought them. Would a kind and loving heavenly Father do that to His people? Yes, He did! But He has a special reason, and that is what we want to emphasize as we go through this passage.

2d. The evident malevolence:
God had just demonstrated the impotence of all the gods of Egypt through ten miracles. A few days before, He drowned the army that had enslaved them for 400 years. The Israelites should have looked to God in faith, waiting for His deliverance.

It was obvious that God had brought them to this place. By murmuring against Moses, they actually murmured against God.

3d. The enormous mistake:
They kept murmuring. Look at Ex. 16:2, 8. There are ten cases of murmurings that are listed (Num. 14:22). Sometimes we fault the Israelites for being too complacent. On the other hand, during their wanderings of 40 years, we have 10 murmurings recorded. That amounts to one murmuring every four years. I do think we murmur a little more frequently than that. Perhaps they did, too, but before we

are too harsh, we might consider that if we had been there we might have joined in.

2c. The response of Moses: 25a
Moses did not say, as he did in the next chapter, "Your murmurings are not against me but against God" (16:8). He said, in effect, there is only one way to get out of this dilemma. He did not know why the Lord had brought them here, but he was obedient and so were those who followed him. 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. In effect, he said, "Lord, help!"

1d. The absence of personal defense:
Moses did not defend himself but cried to the Lord Who alone could help.

2d. The acknowledgement of providential deliverance:
Moses is certain that God had a purpose in bringing Israel to this place of death. In faith he turned to the One Who promised to guide His people and bring them back to Canaan.

3A. THE DIVINE PROVISION: 25b-c

1b. The solution of the problem:

1c. The heavenly solution:
Somebody has said, "For God so loved the world that he didn't send a committee." God generally uses one man at the right place, at the right time. Moses was that man; he called to the Lord and the Lord showed him a tree and he cast it into the waters and the waters were made sweet (25).

2c. The human suggestions:
If one reads commentaries on the subject, one finds that many commentators want to explain the miracle away as something natural. For instance, Josephus, the Jewish historian, has a wonderful history of Israel parallel to the Bible and in many cases very similar to the biblical account. In his account, when Israel comes to the well of Marah, Moses gathered some of the strong men in Israel around the well. They had buckets and they emptied out the putrid water on the dry land and the fresh water flowed in. I do not read anything like that in the biblical account.

The Jewish Tarkums of Jerusalem and Jonathan, a Jewish commentary, reports that Moses used the ardiphney tree, a holy tree, and inscribed on it the holy name of God, Yahweh, the so-called tetragrammaton. And with the holy tree, with the holy name inscribed on it, plunged into the water, the water could not help but be healed. I don't read anything in the text about that, either.

Last night in preparation for this message, I read in a commentary that I had not looked in for a long time. It was by the superb Jewish *commentator, Umberto*

Cassuto, what he had to say on the passage. Unfortunately, he explained away the miraculous elements. He said that the Arabs of the desert know what Moses knew, how to neutralize the salt content in the water. He suggested Moses used the gurkhud bush, a little shrub, that has red berries which ripen in June. When one puts these berries into the water and lets them sit for a while, the chemical reaction neutralizes the salt content in the water. After an hour or two, the waters becomes palatable. I do not read anything about a shrub.

2b. The sweetening of the pool:
The word in the Hebrew for tree is *etz*. "The Lord showed him a tree," not a bush. Besides that, this was in what month? April. And those berries don't ripen until June, so it wouldn't have helped at all. What happened? God showed him. . .it could have been any tree. I am just wondering why the name of the tree isn't mentioned, since in the last verse of that passage, there is mentioned what tree is growing at the next stop of the journey, namely, a palm tree. The reason, I think, for a general reference to a tree, is because the tree is symbolic. It was an actual branch of a tree Moses put in and through a miracle the waters were healed.

3b. The symbolism of the pericope:
The tree prefigures the tree of Calvary, fourteen centuries later. Symbolically, the Israelites had just been saved back in Egypt. What did they do at the Passover? They took the blood of the Passover lamb and applied it to their doorposts and the divine Avenger passed over. As the song expresses, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

As Israel followed Moses and the shekinah glory, the pillar of the cloud, in effect they were saying, "We are leaving behind the old life, Egypt, and the slavery of Pharaoh, (who symbolized Satan) and we are following the Lord." By this, at least symbolically, they dedicated their lives. Once a person is saved, he should follow the Lord. I trust all of you here today are saved. You are if there has been a time in your life when you have confessed your sins and personally trusted in Christ to save you. As you said, "Lord Jesus, forgive my sins," He does so instantaneously and for all eternity. He makes you His child because at that moment you are born into His family. Once you are saved and you dedicate your life and follow the Lord, as the Israelites did in following the shekinah glory, then life becomes just a bed of roses and you just slide over into glory. Oh, no! That's when problems begin, as they did in our narrative.

4A. THE DESIGNED PURPOSE: 25b-26b

1b. The purpose from the immediate context: 25b

1c. The testing:
In this case, Israel's problems began, not because of their sin, nor their lack of preparation nor their stupidity. But the problem began because a kind and loving heavenly Father brought them to this place. He brought them there, not because He enjoyed seeing them suffer, but because they needed to learn a lesson they could not learn any other way. They were tested as to their faith in God even when humanly speaking there seemed to be no escape from their

dilemma. And this is why you have the divine provision, with its heavenly solution and the human suggestions, followed by the designed purpose.

2c. The teaching:
Notice he made for them a statute and an ordinance. He taught them something, and He proved them or tested them. In James 1:13 we read that God doesn't tempt us to sin, but He tests us to see whether we are trusting Him in all of life's situations.

2b. The purpose from the inspired commentary: 1 Cor. 10:6, 11, 13

Exodus 15 verse 26 is one of the longest verses in the entire Old Testament. To summarize the important truth of the verse, "If you will do anything I tell you to do, then do not worry." God made for them what is called a healing covenant. That is just for the Jewish people. If you were a Jew under the Old Testament dispensation and lived a godly life, you could expect robust health and a long life (Proverbs 3:1, 2). Obedient Jews were promised a long life, health and peace. But in a spiritual sense, God is saying, no matter what difficult situations you encounter in your life, I can handle them. I can remedy any dilemma. Somebody said, "God is much more interested in our 'I will' than our I.Q." And that is true, is it not? If we know what God's Word says and we go ahead and do it, then we can expect God to handle any situation that comes along.

Some of you may be going through a Marah right now. There seems to be no silver lining on your cloud. There is no light at the end of the tunnel. You are literally at the end of your rope. Normally when that happens in our life, we blame ourselves for it. It is true that our sin can really get our lives in a mess. But most of the time, I dare say, it is a kind heavenly Father Who led us. He brings us to a place, a place where there seems to be no escape, humanly speaking. He wants to test us to see whether even in life's darkest hour we will trust Him. As Job said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him" (Job 23:15). Job's response to his indescribable situation was not to curse the name of the Lord but to respond with "blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:23). If I may, I would like to be personal for a moment. Early in my life I had a Marah. I didn't know that is what it was, but there was a time that I encountered a problem that seemed to have no solution.

I received an invitation from my relatives in New England. They invited one of us three children, my brother, my sister or myself, to come to America, after we lost our parents as a result of World War II. And when the invitation came, I was the one chosen because I was the only one left. At the time the invitation came, my siblings had already been adopted by fine Christian couples. I lived with my grandfather. We applied for an exit permit for me, knowing that it would be next to impossible to get out of East Germany. There were distant relatives in western Germany who would have me stay with them until I was issued a visa to North America. We didn't know how long that would take. We assumed I would leave for the United States in two or three weeks; and so these distant relatives were willing to have me come.

We tried every which way for me to get out of East Germany. Berlin was still open in those days, in the 1950's; the Berlin wall was not put up until 1961. But we were unable

to even leave our part of East Germany which was like a prison within a prison. In our county the Russians had placed their radar installations, rocket bases, and all sorts of military installations. Thus, one needed a special permit just to go to the next county. Some people had left with mountain guides who took them into the Czech Republic which is just 15 miles to the south of us, because the borders were not as tight then as they were later on. Many of these people who left with these unscrupulous guides were never heard of again. Evidently these guides assumed these people carried all sorts of valuables with them, whatever that might have been. They killed them, robbed, them and then buried them in the mountains. So my relatives were not going to take any chance with me. I sat down, as a twelve-year-old at the time, and wrote a letter to the East German government, asking them one more time for a permit to leave. We prayed all the more fervently for a positive reply.

Within three weeks a manila envelope arrived in the mail. It actually took my relatives three days to realize what I had received. Nobody had ever seen an exit permit and none of my other relatives ever got one, either. Once my relatives realized this was the genuine document, they quickly helped pack my suitcases because we were afraid that the Communists had made a mistake. I had selected some of my books to take along. My relatives told me to leave them behind because they assumed that when I came to the American side, the Americans might confiscate the books. Why would they take away children's books? I left with very few earthly possessions. Anyway, my grandfather and I traveled to the border. He went with me to the train station just before the Iron Curtain. Before anybody knew what had happened, I arrived across in freedom.

O.K., that was great! That was my deliverance from Egypt. But then the fun began, because somebody in East Germany informed the authorities that my ultimate plans were to travel to North America. I did not have to tell them about my ultimate destination on the application forms to leave. The authorities said to my relatives, that if I did not return by April 1 (I left in February), they would suffer for it. My uncle back home was my legal guardian. When the authorities say they are going to come after you on April 1, they do not wait until noon. There will be that dreaded knock on the door at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning.

My uncle, a very godly man, wrote me a letter. He said, "What are we going to do? If you come back, you will end up in jail. If you don't come back, we will end up in jail." I call that a Marah, a catch-22. There seemed to be no escape from that situation. But listen, I had godly parents and very early in life they inculcated in all three of us children a firm reliance on God no matter what the circumstances. God loves you. He cares for you. He knows, and He is able. If God were pleased, the situation could be somehow resolved.

But I was extremely homesick and heartsick. I knew I would never see my brother and sister and my grandparents again. I was ready to get on the train in Bavaria and head back to Saxony, East Germany. But just in time, a second letter from my uncle reached me. He said, "Manfred, before you make your final decision, wait awhile. If God can perform one miracle to get you out, perhaps He will perform a second miracle. Let's let that deadline pass." We were all sitting on pins and needles wondering what would

happen on April 1. Do you know what? Nothing happened! The authorities completely dropped the matter, as if I never lived there!

I eventually went back to Germany. I studied in West Germany at the University of Erlangen. During that time I made four trips to East Germany, taking Christian books and other materials with me. When I registered with the police, they never asked, "Why didn't you come back when we told you to come back?" In those days, visitors had to register within 24 hours after arrival. Then 24 hours before leaving one had to check out. From a distance, I saw my dossier, about half an inch thick, as they processed my arrival and departure permits. Not once did they mention my leaving. It was obvious to me that back in 1952 God was testing me. He was showing me that if He could handle that situation in my life, He could handle anything else that would come along. And I trusted in Him and believed that, and He delivered me in a wonderful way from my Marah.

So the Israelites were specifically led to Marah to learn something they could learn no other way. This is the reason why you and I are brought to our Marah. If you are going through a Marah right now, don't give up. God knows, He cares, and He has nothing but loving concern for you in bringing you there. And, as verse 26 clearly states, God wants to teach us truths which apparently we can learn no other way.

Notice the delightful promise, then.

5A. THE DELIGHTFUL PROMISE: 26b-27

1b. The definitive announcement of the promise: 26b

1c. The conditions of the promise:
Obey Him completely.

2c. The content of the promise:
You will be healed. The promise for physical healing was for the nation of Israel, but there is a spiritual healing for us. And as I said before, as we obey, the Lord blesses us and remedies our situation.

2b. The dispensational aspects of the promise:
As mentioned earlier, the Lord is making a healing covenant with Israel. God's earthly people could expect long, healthy lives, if they were obedient. Believers today do not have that promise. Nonetheless, obedience always results in blessings. The believer has been blessed with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3).

3b. The direct application of the promise: 27
I am glad that verse 27 is there. Normally we forget about that final verse of our passage. Israel journeyed to Elim. How far was Elim from Marah? Six miles or two hours, at the rate at which they were traveling. Why did not Moses say when they were at Marah, "Hey, hang in there for a while longer! See those treetops in the distance? They are a cluster of palm trees and at the oasis are 12 wells of water." He could not say that,

could he? And why not? Because the pillar had stopped. And when the pillar of the cloud or the pillar of fire stopped, they had to stop. Moses had no choice in this.

1c. The encampment at Elim:
I am certain that as soon as the spring of Marah was healed, the Israelites and their flocks received an ample supply of water to refresh themselves. Then they went on their way. Just two hours to the south was the oasis of Elim.

The rest of the account tells us that they stayed there for three weeks. When we have a Marah in our life, Elim is just around the corner, a time of rest and refreshment. Why the palm trees? Why are the trees mentioned by name? The other tree earlier in our passage is not mentioned by name, most likely because it symbolizes the tree of Calvary. The cross is not simply for our salvation from sin. Israel experienced symbolic salvation back at the Passover in Egypt. But the tree at Marah graphically shows that no situation in our life is beyond the Savior's ability to heal.

So whatever you are going through right now—and some of you are probably going through a Marah—wait for God's deliverance. Keep trusting the Lord, and as soon as He has taught you your lesson, He will take you to your Elim.

2c. The environment of Elim:

1d. The nature of the trees:
Palm trees speak of victory, of rest and refreshment. Why were there 70 palm trees rather than 65 or 89? I do not know. Perhaps the palm trees were symbolic. We know that, before long, Moses selected 70 elders to help him rule over Israel. Thus there would be one palm tree to cast shade on each of the tents of the prospective 70 leaders in Israel.

2d. The nature of the wells:
Why were there 12 wells of water? It seems that God gave each of the tribes of Israel a separate well. They could encamp around the well and thus Elim became a place of abundant refreshment and rejoicing and rest.

3c. The delightful conclusion to the dreadful situation at Marah:

"They came to Elim, where there were 12 wells of water and 70 palm trees. They encamped there by the waters for three weeks. The oasis is still there, as is the well of Marah, which reverted to its saltiness.

So what is God trying to tell us when we are at our Marah? I do not know. In each case, He has a different lesson for us. The basic lesson, though, would be the same: trust Me. Trust Me alone and I will lead you to greener pastures. I will lead you from that place to a place of rest, refreshment and rejoicing. The Arabs of the desert have a proverb: All

sunshine makes a desert. As both sunshine and rain are necessary for the growth of the flower, so joy and sorrow are necessary for the growth of the soul. I think the poet has said it very well:

From vintages of sorrow
Our purest joys distilled,
And the cup outstretched for Elim,
Is oft at Marah filled.
God leads to joy through weeping,
To quietness through strife;
Through yielding unto conquest;
Through death to endless life.

Concluding prayer:

Our Father, We thank thee for this incident in the history of Israel, that first major stop during the Exodus showing us what we need to do in our lives as we are brought to difficult situations. And if there is anyone right now going through the bitter waters of Marah, may Thy grace be sufficient to sustain that individual and wouldst Thou soon bring that person to the Elim in his life when he can rejoice and rest and be refreshed. We pray that if there is someone here this morning who's never yet trusted in Christ as personal Savior, may that individual do so even now and find forgiveness of sins, eternal life and the hope of heaven.
In Christ's name,
Amen

Transcription of sermon preached at Midway Baptist Church, Unionville, MO in the Spring of 2015.