

Exodus 15:22-27 | Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. <sup>23</sup> When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. <sup>24</sup> And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” <sup>25</sup> And he cried to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the Lord made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, <sup>26</sup> saying, “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.”

<sup>27</sup> Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.

## Exodus 15:22-27 | The Lord, your healer

A baby being born is an unthinkable miracle. But once they're born we start tracking. We're thinking about milestones, growth and development. And what we're hoping to cultivate for our children is health so that they might grow into maturity. Health is a means of maturity.

The people of God on the other side of the Red Sea are a newborn nation. They have a new identity, they are the people of God, They've been rescued through the water and the blood, but they are immature. They don't know how to participate in the identity that they have been given. It is not God's desire that we are merely born, but that once we are born we begin to grow up! While we marvel at the wonderful salvation we have received from the Lord we must likewise look forward into the new life he has called us into. The writer of Hebrews says;

Hebrews 12:7-8 | It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup> If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

The Israelites are God's firstborn son. They have been born again into a nation by his grace towards them at the Passover and the Red Sea. If they were illegitimate children and not sons they would not receive the discipline of the Lord, they would be born but fatherless. Our God does not leave us fatherless, he adopts us as his sons therefore he disciplines us. Right after the celebration of their new birth they begin to experience the discipline of the Lord. The discipline of the Lord is not punishment, it is building up in maturity, it is cultivating the health of the nation. Therefore we ought to receive the discipline of the Lord as evidence of his love.

This week we look at our resistance to discipline, the law as our tutor, and the purpose of our discipline.

# 1. Grumbling: 22-24

Exodus 15:22-23 | Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. <sup>23</sup> When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah.

Moses leads the Israelites away from the shores of the Red Sea, east, into the wilderness of Shur. And immediately in Shur they have a problem. No water. No water is obviously bad. Three days and everyone is thirsty. When they come to the water of Marah, a glimmer of hope arrives but it is quickly vanquished because the water they can see they can't drink. It is bitter water. They are three days journey from where the water is, and once again they are pressed up against water which could only give them death.

Notice the shape of the Lord's discipline. He is placing them in a position in which they have to trust in him to provide for their needs. But it is a situation he has prepared them for. They at least ought to consider him God of the water. Remember the heaps of water on either side of us? Remember being pressed up against the water before with certain death approaching. Surely the Lord will rescue us as we are pressed up against this bitter water. God can certainly do it, do they trust that he sees their struggle and cares?

We don't know the precise location of Marah but we know it is in the wilderness of Shur. When Abraham and Sarah were unable to conceive they broke faith with God and used Sarah's servant, Hagar, as a surrogate so that they might have a child. Hagar gives birth to Ishmael by Abraham. She then grows in pride over her mistress, Sarah, and looks with contempt upon her and is sent away by Sarah into the wilderness. She is wandering with her child away from the family of promise, heading back to her homeland, Egypt. Who could see the slave woman rejected in her sin and who could deliver her in the wilderness?

Genesis 16:7 | The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur.

The Angel of the Lord meets her in the wilderness of Shur. Remember the Angel of the Lord, YHWH in physical form, the second person of the Trinity. He finds the lost woman wandering away from the family of promise. He comforts her with a promise for her offspring and restores her to the promised family.

Genesis 16:13-14 | So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me." <sup>14</sup> Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

The Lord is a God of seeing and he looks after you. This is the lesson learned by Hagar in the wilderness of Shur and it is the lesson to be learned by the nation of Israel.

Exodus 15:24 | And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?”

It is no mere request for water. “Lord please provide water for us” is a more than appropriate response in this situation. But instead they grumble against Moses, the servant of the Lord and their deliverer. They hold the situation up to his face as evidence of his incompetence. This is the first we’ve seen this in the wilderness wandering but it will be the theme of this generation. We’ll see this grumbling in Exodus 15, 16, 17 and Numbers 14, 16, 17 and Joshua 9. This same word will come up. In every incidence it is a rebellion against the leaders God has placed over Israel and therefore God himself. In the midst of their grumbling the Lord disciplines them like sons.

## 2. 1st law: 25-26

Exodus 15:25 | And he cried to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the Lord made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them,

Moses cried out to the Lord and in a strange turn of events the Lord showed Moses a tree, and Moses threw the tree into the water and the water was made sweet. The word for showed is really the word for taught. The Lord taught Moses the tree. And it is by the Lord teaching Moses the tree that Moses by means of a miracle transforms the bitter water which leads to death, into sweet water which leads to life. The word for teach is related to the word for law, Torah. The Lord at this moment of their initial rebellion is disciplining his people so that they might mature to be able to receive the law.

Exodus 15:26 | saying, “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.”

Here is his promise on the other side of making the bitter water sweet. If they will listen to the voice of God, and do what is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, God will put none of the diseases on them that he put on the Egyptians, because he is YHWH your healer.

They are on the way to Sinai where they will receive the law of God in the Mosaic covenant but on the way they are being prepared to receive the Law of God. What they are being shown is that the law of God leads to life. It is in the law of God that they will find the health that they need in order to grow and mature into the people he has rescued them to be. The Life of the nation is in their obedience to the law of God. Otherwise they will not grow into a healthy mature people, they will not be healed. God is disciplining his people so that they might hear him and trust his law and recognize that obedience to God is the path of life.

Here is the lesson. The Israelites left to their own devices are the bitter water. They are the rebellious spirit that leads to death. They are just as unhealthy as the Egyptians just as dead in their trespasses and sins when they don't hold to the law of God. They're only hope of life is the life that is shown to them in the law of God. But look at what does the cleansing. It is the tree.

As early as Justin Martyr the tree in this story has been interpreted as a picture of the cross. But when we hear tree in this region of the Bible our minds might first go to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The site of the first transgression of God's law which plunged the world into death. But aren't the cross and the TKOGE both mechanisms of the curse? On the tree Jesus bears the curse and gives us the water of life. By the work of the tree we can have life in God. And what is the path of life? It is obedience to the word of God.

We are saved to obedience, because we recognize that obedience is the path of life because the one who gives us his law is the Lord our healer. He is the one who gives us the way of health so that we might live and mature. By his renewal of us we are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness. The best way to find life in Christ is to obey. You see the law of God is not arbitrary. It is life and death. We are adopted and restored to the family of God like Hagar because he sees us in our wandering, he heals us by his offering, and he restores us by his word. We were bitter towards him, he has made us sweet water. So are you under the discipline of the Lord and suffering in sin?

Hebrews 12:12-13 | Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, <sup>13</sup> and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

You see the path of obedience is the path of healing. It is the path of health. Mental, physical emotional spiritual. Our health is in the Lord our healer as we obey him.

### 3. Elim

Exodus 15:27 | Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.

We know the Lord was disciplining his people by withholding water because he is certainly able to lead them to places of abundant water. They move on from Marah and come to Elim. And what is at Elim but a picture of his intentions for his people. Twelve Springs watering 70 Palms. The 12 are the tribes of Israel. 70 is the number of the nations in the table of nations in Genesis 10. God's people from the beginning are meant to be the sweet water which brings life to the nations. How can we bring life to the nations if we don't teach them to obey God our healer.

