

# **Heavenly solutions to earthly appetites**

God meets his people's physical needs

## **Water at Marah Exodus 15:22-27**

The Jews had had no fresh revelation of the nature of God throughout their whole stay in Egypt.

In His time he led them out and across the Red Sea. There was a jubilant response, as they experienced freedom and saw God dispose of the Egyptian army. They were free. God had saved them, and a great song of praise and triumph is recorded in Ex.15

Incredible redemption, but after the party and before the Promised Land of milk and honey - there was a desert trail.

*Fred sends you a postcard; he is abroad on holiday. He writes I cannot drink the water. Was this because?  
1 A sign on the tap saying not drinking water.  
2 He tried to and had to visit the local doctor the next day.  
If he writes further on - the doctor gave me some Diralite -  
You know it was the latter.*

The water at Marah was bitter and could not be drunk.  
Contaminated water = sickness/death

How did they know?

A sign! I don't think so.

Some drank the water and the effects were quick and dramatic

Most drank before effects showed. The Hebrew suggests a sudden outbreak of diarrhoea a normal reaction to contaminated water.

The fact that God says that I am Jehovah Rophe the God that heals **you** (not water) seems to suggest to me the latter.

True it did not taste like the water of Egypt, but after 3 days in a desert who cares. Even a MacDonald's coffee would seem nice!

So the people grumbled. How quickly (3 days) they forgot the might and mercy of the God who had so marvellously and completely delivered them. A lack of fresh water, bitter water led to angry disillusionment and bitter complaints! Then they turned on Moses. It was all his fault!

How quickly people begin grumbling even on the other side of redemption.

What have we complained about this week?

How long did the joy of salvation last, how long before you were trudging through the deserts of life? How long did it take the church to let you down, disappoint or disillusion you?

How often we find ourselves camped beside Marah. But Marah is not the end. It is only a campsite on the way to the Promised Land.

Over the horizon only 7 miles away was Elim (verse 27 - But if you stay in Marah you will never find that out!)

It was God who led them to Marah, it was part of His plan, it was a crisis, and it was a test. And they failed. Would we have done any better? If God is testing us, do we recognise it? Do we respond like the Israelites, or with faith that God knows what he is doing?

Moses cried out "What are you doing Lord" (and not for the last time)

God shows a piece of wood (AV Tree) and in obedience Moses throws it in.

Imagine such an old tree by a desert oasis that has gone sour. Maybe it died when the water went sour. It was 200 years old. God saw the need in advance and made provision, up to 200 years beforehand.

To the science of the Jews - Rubbish. But God did not add anything else for them to do, but take another drink.

For 400 years there had been no prophet or priest, only memories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. - Until Moses came with the Word of the Lord and brought freedom.

The only God these Jews had known had brought first slavery then in recent months, death, disease, and plagues. They learnt God is a killer. Was history repeating itself. This time God chose to intervene and show a new aspect of his character.

I am Jehovah Rophe the Lord who heals you. Or Healing I what I am. And with it came a complete all embracing promise of healing. It was comprehensive cover - if they paid the premium of obedience. A great promise since they were to begin with a 40-year trek in the desert.

All were healed at Marah; Jesus healed all who came to him.

From Calvary Jesus still heals all who come to him. Not of sickness, or else all hospital staff could be unemployed but of man's greatest sickness, sin. Bodies last a lifetime, souls forever.

The answer for God's healing today is still an old tree, one nearly 2000 years old. The healing it brings strikes at the root of all disease, sin. The cross is the only permanent cure for sin and the sickness it brings to individuals and the world.

## From Marah to Elim to Desert of Sin on the way to Sinai

They learnt a lesson at Marah. They enjoyed Elim the place of refreshment. Bitterness and sweetness are not far apart. But they had to move on. There are a lot of Marah's and Elim's on the journey to the promised land – and very little has changed.

Just weeks after leaving Egypt their food supplies started to dwindle, so worry led to more grumbling.

### **Exodus 16:1-3**

Oh for the good old days – sound familiar? Selective memory. Used as human animals, the pain of the whip, and the short rations they had to grow for themselves. The people could have learnt to ask God for help. But he was still (!) not real to them. Do we go to God and ask as James suggests we should? *James 4:2*

### God's answer **Exodus 11-30**

Grace – not only bread, manna – literally “what is it” but for a while meat as well. He supplied what they needed and more besides, including what they asked for, pots of meat. It came from heaven. It came from God.

He provided for their needs, and he provided for the Sabbath rest. He was later to introduce more instructions for Sabbath keeping in the 10 commandments, although it had been established at creation.

God also gave instructions to keep some manna in a jar for the generations to come to see the food that God provided for their fathers in the wilderness. (You can see that manna today – if you know where the lost Ark of the Covenant is – and contrary to Indiana Jones its not locked up in the USA)

Did the Israelites deserve the food that God sent down for them? No! They didn't deserve anything except God's punishment for all their unbelief and ungratefulness. It was only because of God's mercy that they didn't die of hunger in the desert.

*“If you’ve done six impossible things this morning why not round it off with breakfast lunch or dinner at Milliway’s, the Restaurant at the End of the Universe”*

### **Water from the rock**

After the desert of sin they reach Rephidim (resting-places), another place with no water, suffering from drought.

Maybe there was the feeling that God was just not being fair. Or that he had turned his back on them and forgotten them. (Sometime since breakfast manna time.) Anxiety and stress led to complaining and more grumbling. Blaming Moses, but really blaming God, God just doesn't seem to know what he is doing.

### **Exodus 17:1-4**

Stop and think a little about the story. After all that God had done for the Israelites, did they have faith in Him? Were their hearts full of praise and thankfulness because of all that He had done for them? No! They did not trust God. Instead they complained and spoke against the God who had already saved them from so many, many dangers.

Gods answer  
**Exodus 17:5-7**

What did God do? The Lord God, in His patience and His goodness, gave them food and water in the desert. Did the people of Israel deserve God's goodness? No! They only deserved God's judgement. Why did God show them His goodness? Because God is **faithful** and **merciful**.

Israel had asked a question – Is God among us or not? The provision of water from a rock proved he was! Enough supply for 2 million people and their flocks and herds. Not a trickle of redemption but a generous ample supply for all was available.

He provided food and water for the Israelites, even though they were ungrateful sinners! If their salvation from hunger and thirst depended on the goodness and merit of the people themselves, God surely would have let them die in the desert.

**NT parallels**

**John 6: 30-35** Jesus the bread of life

Out of the rock comes living water. John 4:14 “whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life”

And who supplied all their needs – **1 Cor 10:2-4** JESUS!

## **Conclusion**

Why do we question God and accuse him of abandoning us. Why do we worry? Why does anxiety so easily conquer our faith? What can we learn about trusting God from the Israelites experiences? Do we ask, is God real? Does he care? Can he meet the needs of my situation?

We must learn to trust in a God who provides  
We need to depend on him daily – “Give us this day our daily bread”

We can expect only what we need.

We must co-operate with obedience. God delivered the food, but they had to collect it, cook it and serve it. God only does what we cannot.

He is here, he does care, he is among us by His Spirit, he is the all sufficient almighty God “My God who will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” Phil 4:19

*Suggested antidote to complaining – praising.*



It is the disobedience of man ever since Adam that caused sickness to enter the world & we are all susceptible to it. Disease is rife and rampant the world over. (Recent flu epidemic) Sickness can be a punishment for an individual's sin, but not necessarily as Jesus made clear (John.9:1-3) Healing is a divine attribute. There are various areas of healing - Physical (as today) mental & emotional, moral and spiritual. Examples in OT and even more in NT (as we may see in future weeks)

If you disobey, I love you enough, like a father to chasten you.  
If you obey I will love you and bless you.  
Sickness and healing

What most needs healing ?

Healing is free and available to all who want it.

May we let the divine physician work on our hearts - which Jeremiah tells us is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. (Jer.17:9)

All healing is from God, because God is healing.

Overview of healing All healing comes from God

Through his design plan for man to recover naturally. For we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

His gifts of medicine & surgery

Miracles. Instant or a beginning

Sufficient grace to endure if the answer is no.

. For all who dwell by the bitter pools of human existence He brings the living water of eternal life (John.4:13-14).

Jehovah Rophe

: What did the Israelites have to do so they would not perish in the desert? They simply had **to gather and eat the food that God sent down from the sky**. From where did their deliverance come? Did it come from their own efforts? No, their deliverance came from God. They had no power to save themselves from hunger and death. They couldn't do anything but **gather and eat the food that God had sent down for them**.