

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 15:22-27
“The Big IF”

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Exodus 15:22-27

Verse 22

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water.

- After their praise of God for his intervention to save them from Egypt (see Exodus 15:1-21), Israel continued their journey. They traveled through the desert for three days and their water supply was exhausted.

Verse 23

When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.)

- The Hebrews came across a supply of water but they could not drink the water because it was brackish; either polluted or salty.
- Consequently, they called the place “Marah,” the Hebrew word for bitter or brackish. This was not the official name of the place. It was what the Hebrews called it.

Verse 24

So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What are we to drink?”

- Israel is confronted with a new dilemma. There is no safe water to drink.
- Her response to the problem is to complain about it and to blame Moses for what they faced.

Verse 25a

Then Moses cried out to YHWH, and YHWH showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

- God does a miracle to fix the problem. There is no wood that is known to us that has the ability to purify water. None-the-less, God shows Moses such a piece of wood. When the wood is thrown into the brackish water, the water becomes drinkable. This act has nothing to do with the properties wood or with the power of Moses. This is an act of God on behalf of the people of Israel, just as was the crossing of the sea.

Verse 25b-26

There YHWH made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them. He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of YHWH your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am YHWH, who heals you."

- After having established himself as Israel's provider, YHWH Jireh, through the provision of the water to drink, YHWH now establishes himself as Israel's healer, YHWH Rophe. He promises to protect Israel from the diseases which afflicted Egypt. This may be a reference to the plagues of Egypt. Israel will not be afflicted with those plagues or any other disease.
- The promise is conditional. Israel must faithfully obey God to receive the reward.

Verse 27

Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.

- God again proves his intention to provide for his people. He brings them to a place where water is abundant.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Big IF*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)