

Memories of Misery: Marah

"And they departed from before Pi Hahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, and went three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham, and pitched in Marah," Numbers 33:8.

Separated from his hiking companions while climbing Mount Rokko in Western Japan, thirty-five year old Mitsutaka Utchikoshi actually hibernated like a bear, for a remarkable twenty-four days (*Japanese Man in Mystery Survival*, BBC News, December 21, 2006).

"I lay down... in a grassy area... and eventually I fell asleep," Mr. Utchikoshi explained during a news conference at a hospital in Kobe, where he was treated. "That's the last thing I remember."



After becoming separated from his friends on October 7, 2006, he was found and rescued on October 31. During this lengthy period, Mr. Utchikoshi was in a comatose state; he had neither food nor water. When found, he had almost no pulse, his organs had shut down and his body temperature had dropped to 71 °F (22°C). His metabolism had come to a virtual standstill. Yet, after a few days under a doctor's care, Mr. Utchikoshi miraculously made a full recovery.

It isn't going without food for twenty-four days that the medical and scientific communities find amazing. But, surviving without water for so long is nothing short of a miracle. "I find it quite incredible that [Mr. Utchikoshi] had no fluid at all," Dr. Frankie Phillips said. "Physiologically that isn't possible."

Why is water so critical to survival? Two-thirds of the human body weight is composed of water. Water is needed for circulation and other bodily processes including respiration and converting food to

energy. It has been shown that if you lose just 2.5% of your body weight from water loss, you will lose 25% of your efficiency. For a 175-pound man, a 2.5% water loss is only about two quarts of water. As the survivor dehydrates, his blood becomes thicker and loses volume. This causes the heart to work harder and the circulation of blood to be less efficient.

Dehydration is a serious threat to wilderness travelers. According to the *Scientific American*, in severe heat, or in a situation of heat plus physical exertion, an adult can lose as much as 1.5 quarts of water through sweat alone.

How long can a human last without water under these conditions? Survival time notably shortens with each degree of rising heat. But the estimation for an adult, not simply resting in the shade, is three days. Children have even less reserves for enduring situations of water deprivation.

In Numbers 33:8, we find that the Children of Israel had journeyed three days into the wilderness to reach their fourth recorded campsite, at Marah. This trek had been characterized by three days of increasing water deprivation.

Walking through a wilderness wasteland in the heat had brought them to Marah in great need of water. The people were tired, irritable, thirsty, and threatened; as they viewed themselves as being in a potentially life-threatening situation.

A TEST OF TRUST

What a difference these few days had made in the multitude. An outside observer might not have believed that *Marah's* complaining campers could possibly be the delivered people who had praised Yahweh on the shores of the Red Sea just days before!

The Bible records the situation in Exodus Chapter 15.

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. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter... And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? Exodus 15:22-24

The whole atmosphere had been one of a festival, with music, merriment, laughter, and praise (Exodus 15). They had walked through the Red Sea and had been miraculously delivered from the Egyptian host. But now, within days of the Red Sea experience, Israel responded to their thirst with faithlessness, anger, bitterness, and complaint. They were less than a week from the victory of *Pi Hahiroth*, yet were ready to give up on Canaan and turn around!



Although his was an extreme example, situations like Mr. Utchikoshi's survival have shown that people can endure without water longer in cold conditions where they are not physically exerting themselves. But the Children of Israel were in the worst conditions for lengthy water deprivation. They were without water while walking in the heat of the wilderness. As they laboriously plodded on, perhaps they prayed for help. They had witnessed God's might and power. His cloud still lead them.

Certainly, Israel must have replenished their water supply before leaving their camp by the Red Sea. Probably they had carried some water with them on their wagons. But at some point, in that three day journey, their supply had been completely used up. Now they were miserable. And it was likely their little ones who were suffering the most.

Then, as the pool of *Marah* came into view, suddenly someone likely shouted, "Water!" The people could hardly believe their ears, but they must have quickened their pace. Probably running, they scramble to

get to the beautiful, much-needed water. Each step of the way, they likely thanked and praised God for providing their need.

Rushing to *Marah's* pools with parched lips, the first comers must have spat in disgust and despair as they tasted the bitter water. Their hopes seemed dashed as the anticipated campsite offered no relief. No water after three days of dusty wilderness travel? Could they trust Yahweh's leading enough to remain faithful and submitted in such a time of extreme discomfort? More than merely uncomfortable, their lack of water was even possibly life-threatening, without Divine intervention. Their concern was compounded by the fact that their children would not likely be able to endure as long under such conditions. This was a trying ordeal.

"We have nothing to fear from the future, except we forget how God has lead us in the past."

But, as tough as this test would have been, it should have been made easier by the fact that the cloud of Yahweh's Presence was still leading them. Also, only three days past, the triumph of *Pi Hahiroth* should still have been fresh in their minds. But none of this was sufficient to keep the people trusting Yahweh.

And what about contemporary Israel? Would we handle such, discomfort, deprivation, and disappointment with greater grace than our forefathers? Yahweh wants our complete confidence in Him. He gives us great blessings followed by heavy tests, the great deliverances again. When we know His "ways" (Psalm 103:7), there will be no limit to our trust. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him," Job 13:15.

When we can surrender our love of life itself, placing our very existence, even that of our children, in the Hands of our caring but ever teaching-and-testing Heavenly Father, we have learned this lesson of *Marah*.

But, if we do not learn the lessons from those before us, we will be caught in a contemporary form of the same trap. "We have nothing to

fear for the future unless we forget the way God has led us in the past." ¹ Let us pay attention to the past as we keep alert to the future.

When the Holy Spirit leads the Children of Yahweh, to the waters of baptism, illustrated by the Red Sea crossing (1 Corinthians 10:2), we find wonderful deliverance. Yet, how many came up from the cleansing waters of baptism to meet the next test “without the power” felt the day of their cleansing? Reborn only recently, a test finds them spiritually dry! Why, when they look for a blessing, does Yahweh bring them hardship? He does this because God wants them to seek the “water” that is not poisonous, bitter water which first attracts their attention, but the Living Water, which is given to those who seek and “wait.”

This was an opportunity to demonstrate faithful dependence upon Yahweh. Such a test should be faced by praying for Heavenly intervention with quiet grace. Then, patiently we should await Yahweh’s will, even if that means delirium and death! Had the Children of Israel responded in this manner, they would not have provoked Him for the second time (Isaiah 40:31, Psalm 37:9, Isaiah 30:18).

PREPARING FOR FAITHFULNESS

This level of a test of our submission will come to all who claim to follow Yahweh. To be certain that you will pass this important test when it comes to you, consider carefully how you would have



responded had you been with ancient Israel at *Marah*. To answer this question honestly, you must prayerfully reflect on your level of submission in less trying circumstances.

Daniel and his three Hebrew friends, prepared for faithfulness in the flames and in the lions’ den by first standing true at the dinner table. In the same way, we become prepared to

faithfully face the greater life-threatening trials by remaining submitted to Yahweh's will in the smaller tests.

George Mueller told of a time, in early nineteenth-century England, when he was financially desperate. There was no food in the house for his family of orphans, and no money to buy it. Finally, someone came with a gift of money to meet his needs. There was just one problem—George knew that the giver was not paying his rent. Therefore, the money provided was stolen from the landlord. What should he do? Should he place his needs higher than obedience to Yahweh's will? George refused to accept the money. It would have been so easy to reason that he should take it in order to do good for others, but he did not. It was a test passed. God honored his faith, and quickly provided another means of meeting the children's needs.⁴¹

Yahweh uses experiences like this to test us. That is His "Way." It is very easy for us to say that we love God and will serve Him. But our hearts are deceptive. Saying so doesn't make it so. We can deceive others and even ourselves.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, Jeremiah 17:9.

THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

Just because we declare our loyalty does not mean that Yahweh will accept it at face value, for He knows our hearts are selfish. He will test us to reveal what is really in our hearts. Suffering exposes any of our attempts to cover-up, demonstrating the truth and depth of our love and submission to Him.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same suffering which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is

"We become prepared to faithfully face the life-threatening level trials by remaining submitted to Yahweh's will in the smaller tests."

for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation, 2 Corinthians 1:5-7.

Paul is telling us that suffering has the purpose of urging us "toward virtue." The entire Scripture is actually a *paraklesis* (3874-*consolation*), an exhortation, admonition or encouragement for the purpose of strengthening and establishing the believer's possession of redemption...the purpose of which is to strengthen faith."⁴²

Peter also recognized the necessity of suffering in the life of one who will be an overcomer. For it is only overcomers who receive the blessed invitation at the end of the journey.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings: that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy... But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf, 1 Peter 4:12-16.

"... If you receive no chastening, you are not really a child of God... Accept suffering as the refiner's fire..."

Christians today have, for the most part, taken up the philosophy of the ungodly, assuming that one who is brought under suffering must have been rejected by the Lord, and is, therefore, being publicly rebuffed. Not so! As the writer of Hebrews brings out clearly, if you receive no chastening, you are not really a child of God (Hebrews 12:1-5). The New Testament believers were taught to accept suffering as the "refiner's fire" of the Old Testament (Malachi 3:2-3). It was accepted as the Hand of Jehovah bringing grace to the humble.

But the God of all grace Who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ (Yahshua), after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen, 1 Peter 5:10-11.

As Moses, near the end of his life, reminded the Children of Israel:

And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldst keep His commandments, or not, Deuteronomy 8:2 (Emphasis supplied).

Would Israel learn through suffering what it means to be "the sons of God"? The Bible says the Son of God, although perfect, **learned obedience through suffering!** (Hebrews 5:8) Most resisted the suffering, while Yahweh resisted the proud (1 Peter 5:5). To the natural heart, even the "half-hearted" followers, the ways of Yahweh are "foolishness," (1 Corinthians 1:18, 25).

The test of suffering had come to the Children of Israel at this fourth campsite, as they were beginning to seriously suffer from thirst. "What shall we drink, Moses?" was their bitter cry. They lashed out at Yahweh and Moses in anger. But the Word instructs Yahweh's followers to "do all things without murmurings," (Philippians 2:14). How will the End-time saints handle this level of test? Will we bear it prayerfully and patiently, even trusting the survival of our precious children in our Heavenly Father's Hands? Or will we fall short with contentious complaint and doubt?

SWEETENED BY THE BRANCH

While the people collapsed into unbelief, God showed Moses a tree, which, when cast into the waters, would turn the water sweet and drinkable. Amazing! Are there really trees that can purify water? Actually there are! One such tree which is used for purifying water, in the Middle East, is the *Moringa oleifera* (with flowers pictured on the following page). Crushed and poured into bottles of dirty water, moringa seeds turn water transparent within seconds. The seeds' antibacterial properties can turn even filthy lakes and ponds into



potable drinking water in a few short hours. Amazingly, any part of the tree will produce this effect, whether leaves, flowers, bark, or branches.

As a result, this most remarkable tree is now being cultivated heavily for use in the Sudan. The Food and

Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reports that village women have successfully used the tree, *Moringa oleifera*, to cleanse the dirty water drawn from the River Nile.⁴³ People have tried other *moringa* species in Egypt, Namibia, Somalia, and Kenya, and have found that they, too, have properties which clarify water.⁴⁴

We cannot be dogmatic in saying that the moringa was the tree Moses used to purify the waters of *Marah*. Scripture doesn't say what kind of tree was used. It is also uncertain whether the miracle was in showing Moses which tree to use, or in God's revealing an isolated allegory. However, the wording which says, "the Lord showed him [Moses] a tree," seems to favor the solution being in the tree.

"It was in the context of curing Marah's bitter water... that Yahweh promised to protect His people's health."

A PROMISE FOR HEALING

Very appropriately, it was in the context of curing *Marah's* bitter water with the branch of a tree, that Yahweh promised to protect His people's health. The beautiful promise for Divine healing, which God gave at *Marah*, is one still claimed by those who love and trust the Heavenly Father.

And he [Moses] cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, which when cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet; there He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He

proved them, 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, Ex. 15:25-26.

Like the two-fold means used to heal *Marah's* waters, our God has placed in our hands the promise of natural and super-natural resources for finding health. Some say the antidote for every known antigen is to be found within a short walking distance of one another. Thus, we find that even the side notes of this story bear wisdom and instruction to those who will listen. We would be well-advised to learn the herbs and their healing properties in our travels through the "wilderness." Natural remedies, which are obedient to the Heavenly Statutes, are an important vehicle Yahweh uses to restore and maintain the health of those who trust Him.



The promise for Yahweh's healing was given at *Marah*, in a life-threatening situation. Today, how many of us will depend on God for our healing and health while under great physical duress? Many turn to the arm of flesh when their lives are

threatened. But at *Marah*, God revealed that the health of His people is in His hands. It is a gift He has promised to freely give all who will follow His statutes.

During the Dark Ages, for example, Bubonic Plague rapidly wiped out whole villages. But, the Hebrew people, by following the Levitical statutes for foods and cleanliness, were protected from this scourge. None of them died of the plague.

DELIVERANCE FROM BITTERNESS

Now, let us back up in the story so that we might find more parallels for “our admonition.” “*Marah*” (4785, from 4784) means “bitterness,” as we have already discovered. But *Marah* also means “to be rebellious,” “to quarrel,” to be in “defiance.” The same Hebrew word, *Marah*, is translated “rebellious” in Deuteronomy 21:18-20, referring to the needed discipline of a rebellious, defiant son. It is translated as “provocation” in Job 17:2.⁴⁵ This bitter experience of Israel’s second provocation, is included in Hebrews, where we read:

Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years. When I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known My ways, Hebrews 3:8-10;

quoting Psalms 95:8-10.

As we consider the concept of our own coming tests, it is good news to note that each trial ends with deliverance. At *Marah*, the deliverance came when the “Branch” was placed in the “bitter water,” quickly purifying it.

*“Each trial ends
with deliverance.”*

Through Jeremiah (23:5) and Zechariah (3:8; 6:12), we know the Messiah is *The Branch*. His Name embodies the characteristics to cleanse and purify “water” (philosophies and spiritual beliefs of nations and peoples), as referenced in Revelation 17:1 and Daniel 12:6,7. Just as the needs of Israel were provided literally and symbolically by Yahshua, the Healing Branch, so will He be our Source of restoration in the end of time. Today, as then, He is the One Who heals our bitter spirits and purifies our souls!

Herein is more strong evidence that the trying experiences of wandering Israel will be repeated in our Christian lives to prove us. There would be no reason to warn us of temptations, like those in the wilderness, unless we will face the same challenges, or

"provocations," in a modern guise. Will we learn from their mistakes, or will "the deceitfulness of sin" lure us into unbelief? (Hebrews 3:13).

*"Seeking a
Branchless path to
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bitterness instead of
relief."*

Trees are a symbol of healing throughout the Scripture. Yahshua, our Righteous Branch, is the One by whose "stripes we are healed," (Isaiah 53:5) having been crucified for our eternal healing. What lesson was Israel to teach us at *Marah* that has to do with health and healing?

We may see the spiritual lesson, but there is also a figurative one.

Marah spiritually reminds us that in the stream of life, there are times when we sense a "dryness in our spirit," an "empty cup," a "broken cistern." At such times, a trial of our faith may result in bitterness within. This is when we must turn to The Branch to cleanse and purify the soul. Only the Branch has the healing properties that will restore fullness of life, delivering us from bitterness. (The Branch will restore to health His people the pure Water of Life.

TRIAL BY WATER – TWICE!

Notice that the first two crises and provocations had to do with "water." The first crisis was external, with water threatening Israel's safety from without. The second crisis was internal, with water threatening their lives from within. *Marah's* water contained something dangerous. "Water" represents a "spirit." Living water, is symbolic of the Holy Spirit, while threatening water, is of the enemy.

"Bitter" or "poisonous" water is also symbolic of vain philosophy. In Revelation 12:15, we find that the enemy will try to overwhelm God's people with a terrible "flood."

And there was given upon him a mouth speaking great things, and blasphemies...forty and two months...And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His Name, His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven, Revelation 13:6-7.

Perhaps Satan's last-day "flood" will come through a mouth speaking deceitful words, leading many down a path of blasphemy and death.

One way an earthly power "speaks" is through legislation. It may be that the final "water attack" will come through laws that bring you face-to-face with certain death. Having been miraculously delivered from the first, more overt, "flood;" it may be that Satan will tempt God's people to partake of his "water pools" of seductive compromise. But seeking a "Branchless path" to deliverance offers, in the end, bitterness instead of relief. Thus, in both water tests, we must not waver. The Great I Am provides the Rod and the Branch to calm your fears and supply your need! This He will do for all who patiently and prayerfully ask Him.

When faced with the bitter waters of *Marah*, the Children of Israel doubted Yahweh's love and care for them. This was no small offense. And should we repeat it, our sin would be even greater than theirs; for we have Israel's example and should learn from their mistakes.

Why was our forefathers' mistrust at *Marah* such a big deal? Doubting in this manner is tantamount to "blaspheming against God," and maligning His character for "God is love" 1 John 4:16a. To mistrust Heaven's provision is also to curse against "them that dwell in heaven," for even the angels are "all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation," Hebrews 1:14. To murmur and complain is to commit blasphemy against God's Name, for the word "name" in Hebrew includes His mission, character, and power to deliver.⁴⁶

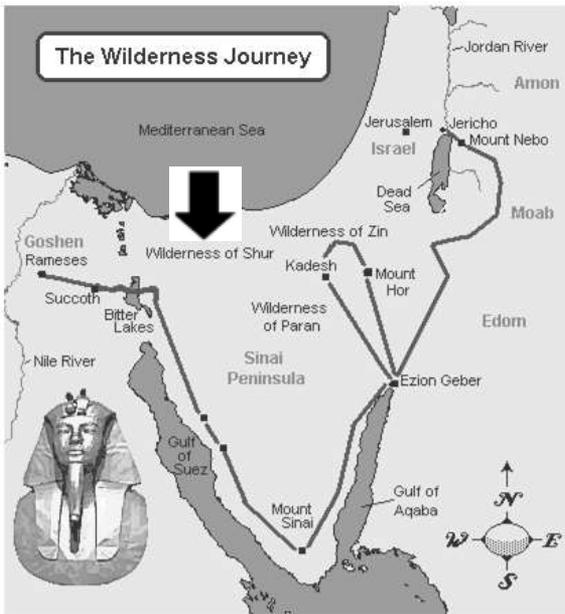
Yes, our God will supply all our needs when we trust Him. This includes His promise to purify the bitter spirits of all who allow the Righteous Branch admittance. He was in the symbol of the Blood on the doorpost, in the cleansing Hyssop with which it was applied; He was in the symbol of the Rod that parted the Red Sea, and the Fire and Cloud that protected the travelers. It was Yahshua, The Branch, that purified the bitter water at *Marah*, and He will cleanse your bitterness when you invite The Branch into the center of your life-stream.

With such a cloud of witnesses before us, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, (Hebrews 2:3).

THE WILDERNESS OF SHUR

Many scholars who accept a southern route for the Exodus, locate Marah about forty-seven miles southeast of the Suez. At this location, there is a salty spring called *Ain Hawarah*. We are told that the soil of this region is alkaline and the waters of this region are salty and bitter to this day.⁴⁷

The problem in mapping out the route of the Exodus is complex. The enemy of souls has worked to cover the campsite locations, thus, extinguishing the spiritual light for us! The map shown on the next page, though accepted as accurate by many, is not the route of the biblical Exodus. The Bible states plainly that the Children of Israel



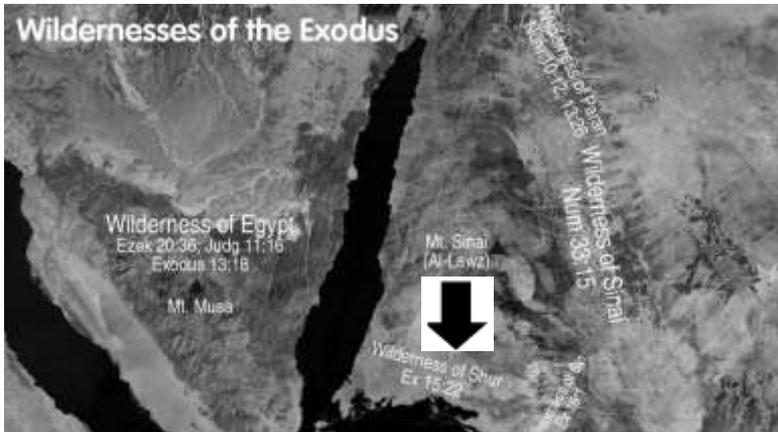
came to *Marah* three days after they crossed the Red Sea, (Numbers 33:8). The Bible also says that *Marah* was located in the Wilderness of *Shur*. But on the above map, *Shur* is near Goshen, it appears as if they had crossed the Bitter Lakes instead of the Red Sea, only to return to the borders of Egypt. Additionally, on this map,

Mount *Sinai* appears in the *Sinai* Peninsula.

According to the Bible, the *Sinai* Peninsula is **not** the location of the true "Mount *Sinai*." Far from being biblically accurate, the currently accepted site of Mount *Sinai* was originally designated as such by Constantine's psychic mother. In actuality, Arabia is Mount *Sinai*'s true location.

Not only is Mount *Sinai* misplaced on the prior map, the placement of the Wilderness of *Shur*, takes Israel back to Egypt, as indicated by the arrow, if indeed this were the correct region for the campsite of *Marah*. But, the multitude were heading for the Mountain of God, which Paul records was in Arabia (Galatians 4:25)! Therefore, the prior map has misplaced Mount *Sinai* as well as the Wilderness of *Shur*.

Some Bible students place the Wilderness of Shur on the east side of the Gulf of *Aqaba*, as shown on the map on the following page. On this map, Mount *Sinai* is in Arabia, where it should be. Archaeology also confirms this map placement of *Shur*. For chariot wheels found on the floor of the Gulf of Aqaba, provide evidence to support this location. This site also puts the multitude in line for their route to *Jebel el Lawz*, as the true Mount *Sinai* is now called.



Having placed these events on the map, let us now return to the spiritual dimensions of this important campsite. When we have left Egypt under the blood of Yahshua, have buried the old man of sin in baptism, and have entered the wilderness, we may find ourselves "up against a wall." As we have noted, *Marah* was located in the Wilderness of *Shur*. "*Shur*" means "wall."⁴⁹ What could be the significance of that name?

The Son of God went into the grave as we go into baptism - death from sin for Him; death to sin for us. For three days, there was no

Spirit in Him, for He took the Second Death for us. At the end of three days, He came forth glorified, in the fullness of the Spirit. He had faced "the wall" and had broken it down. Two New Testament passages together reveal the Spiritual parallel in this part of the narrative.

Then said Paul unto him (Ananias), God shall smite thee, thou whited wall. Acts 23:3

For He is our peace, Who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us... Eph. 2:14-15

In the Acts reference above, Paul uses the term "whited wall" to mean a house painted to appear attractive, but the external attributes are only a thin veneer attempting to hide the rot of hypocrisy within. Then, in Ephesians, Paul specifies an inside wall that forms partitions between people. In type, this "wall" must be no longer a barrier. This means that after our Saviour's death, any, Jew and Gentile would drink of His Spirit, as the mixed multitude drank of the "healed water."

Furthermore, there are insights left to us from the history of the Wilderness of *Shur*, as it relates to the lives of Israel's ancestors. *Shur* (#7793) meaning "wall," turns out to be the same place as the Desert of *Etham*.⁴⁰ It is first mentioned in Genesis 16:7, where on the way to *Shur*, Hagar was met by an angel who sent her back to her mistress. She was on her way to build a "wall" between her son and Isaac, but the angel sent her back to Abraham's tents. Then, in Genesis 20:1, Abraham journeyed here, and in Genesis 25:18 we find the descendants of Ishmael dwelling from *Havilah* unto *Shur*. Many years later, the first king of Israel, King Saul, slew the Amalekites, from *Havilah* unto *Shur*; apparently the very same place. It was here that Samuel rebuked Saul, saying:

Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry, 1 Samuel 15:22-23a.

All of these lessons dove-tail together in the message we glean from *Marah's* healing. With the Branch -Yahshua *haMashiach* - in our

"water" supply we are certain to find the pure Water of Life, whether we are Jew or Gentile. And we must claim this Living Water by faith. For Yahweh is faithful, Who has promised (Hebrews 10:23). Thus, whether we perceive our souls filled with heavenly refreshment, or feel dusty and dry; we press forward in faith claiming His promise as fact despite our apparent emotional malaise. We do not doubt God's leading or commitment. And we remain loyal to Him continuing to seek "that better country," no matter what trials will come.

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, 1 John 2:15.
Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?
James 4:4*

Not only do the site names bear spiritual significance, but also their numeric sequence adds another spiritual dimension. *Marah* was the fourth campsite; and four is the number of "the doorway" or "pathway discovered." When we surrender bitterness toward any and all, we have put our feet on God's pathway to Life. In fact, guarding against bitter words is a doorway to Life. We will be tempted to give up, or turn away from that pathway that leads though Pilgrim's "Slough of Dispond,"⁵⁰ perhaps beyond discomfort to the point of potential death, before rest and relief is ours. Taming the tongue is an important goal taught by the experience at *Marah*. This lesson becomes even more pointed later in Israel's wilderness journey.

One need not ask if you have ever murmured. At one time or another, every one of us has done so. Some among us do it rather consistently. It is rebellion, as it stands in contrast to submission and trust, and it increases the burden of others. The book of Exodus reveals that murmuring was a dominant theme of Israel's life in the wilderness. And it was not just the laity who murmured; even leaders like Aaron, Miriam, and Korah murmured under the chafing discipline of sun and sand; even Moses fell a time or two.

Let us be on guard against bitterness, and murmuring. It is rebellion, which is as serious as witchcraft. Note what the Bible says about bitterness in the following scriptures:

Let all bitterness, and wrath... be put away from you... Eph. 4:31
Looking diligently lest... any root of bitterness spring up. Heb. 12:15

The Hebrew word for "murmur" is *lun*. Its synonyms are: grumbling, griping, groaning, whining, whispering, complaining, carping, self-pitying, or playing the role of a victim. It can also mean to hold a grudge.⁵¹ It is what started the fray between Isaac and Ishmael. Because murmuring is so prevalent, even among God's professed people, it is good for us to be reminded of its seriousness in the eyes of Yahweh.

Yahshua said, "Do not murmur among yourselves," John 6:43
Paul repeated, "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer," 1 Corinthians 10:10.
And again, "Do all things without murmuring and disputing."
The Pharisees were continually murmuring against Yahshua and His disciples: Matthew 20:11; Luke 5:30; 15:2; 19:7; John 6:41, 61; 7:12.

According to Strong's Concordance and the Zodhiates dictionary and lexicon of the New Testament, "murmur" (Strong's **Greek**: #1111. **goguzo** (gong-good'-zo),⁵² means to grumble and complain. Notice that number 1111 is part of a "family" of words (1110, 1111, 1112, also 1113="a grumbler"), having to do with expressing superior knowledge. The next related entry in the Greek dictionary is number 1114. It means "a wizard (as in muttering spells)," "a seducer!"

Even the truth, spoken with malice and intent to defame is like an evil spell to destroy another's reputation. Do you know someone who always wants to tell you what is wrong with some leader, some church, or some government? Be careful. Even if their words are true, the spirit may be of the "seducer," the "wizard" to weaken your regard for another.

The Bible is clear that we are never to engage in defaming and disrespectful speech about those in authority.

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong," Romans 13:1-3

The first lesson in the Wilderness of *Shur* is that we must henceforth have Pure Water. The weakening contamination of darkness will not substitute. The second lesson is that when you come to that "wall," be thankful for the warning it affords, for without something to stop you, habits of the past could regain their hold. Finally, if you do thoughtlessly partake of the contaminated juices of self-pity, criticism and doubt, it will be bitter. Let us choose the way of the Branch, always waiting on Him and enjoying the sweet water of patient praise, no matter the adversity.

Learn from the mistakes of others, You cannot live long enough to make them all yourself!



SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR

- At *Marah*, the Children of Israel were tested with thirst. They did not bear the trial patiently, but complained and grew embittered.
- When faced with the bitter waters of *Marah*, the Children of Israel doubted Yahweh's love and care for them. This was no small offense. And should we repeat it, our sin would be even greater than theirs; as we have ancient Israel's example and should learn from their mistakes.
- Spiritual Israel, in the last days, will most assuredly face instances of physical deprivation. When we experience this *Marah* test, we must remain submitted to Yahweh, praying for deliverance but patient in tribulation.

- Murmuring bitterness and complaint about our circumstances, is really a lack of gratitude for and submission to Yahweh. He is our Provider. When we complain about what we have been given, Heaven views it as nothing short of rebellion against the King of kings.
- The remedy for *Marah's* bitterness was the Branch, representing the life-changing power of Yahshua. This shows us, spiritually, that the antidote for bitterness and a complaining spirit is the full infusion of the Saviour's Presence into our lives.
- Here the promise was given that Yahweh would not only provide our daily physical needs, He will also give His Children healing. Thus, we wait upon Him to supply the promise.