

COMMENTARY - EXODUS - Childs

Brevard S. Childs. The Book of Exodus: A Critical Theological Commentary (The Westminster Press, 1974),

THE WATERS OF MARAH Exodus

15:22-27

Then Moses ordered Israel to set out from the Red Sea,* and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went for three days in the wilderness and found no water. ²³When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter. That is why it was called Marah.* ²⁴And the people complained against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?' ²⁵He cried out to the LORD; and the LORD showed him a piece of wood;* he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the LORD* made for them a statute and an ordinance and there he put them to the test. ²⁶He said, 'If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you.'

²⁷ Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they camped there by the water.

The word (murmur) denotes a grumbling and muttered complaint.

Threw piece of wood - turning in to sweet water - healing of water

Yahweh did not effect a miracle through his word; rather he instructed Moses in the use of a special tree by which to work the transformation. ¹

Yahweh healed the water, but he now offers a far greater promise. He has revealed himself (I am Yahweh) as "your healer" from all the diseases of Egypt. But the promise is made conditional on Israel's obedience to God's will expressed in the statutes and ordinances. Perhaps Israel was tests and had responded in unbelief. The motif of murmuring is evidence that she had failed the test. The author uses the story as a background for his renewed challenge to obedience and promise of healing. ²

¹ Brevard S. Childs. The Book of Exodus: A Critical Theological Commentary (The Westminster Press, 1974), 268.

² Brevard S. Childs. The Book of Exodus: A Critical Theological Commentary (The Westminster Press, 1974), 270.