

## STUDY NOTES

### Lesson 6: Exodus 14-16

*And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. Deut. 8: 3*

#### EXODUS 14: UP AGAINST THE WALL

The pillar of cloud led the Israelites right into a trap. This was God's intention for He says in Exodus 14:3, that "Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in... and he shall follow after them." God had in mind a miracle of deliverance that would impress upon the Israelites once and for all that there was no problem bigger than their God, and no enemy He could not defeat. God knew the plan; the children of Israel did not.

They were learning to know God. They had seen His power against the gods of Egypt during the plagues. But now to watch the Egyptian army in all its martial glory and might, their chariots and weapons glistening in the bright sun, was too much. These weren't frog gods and storm gods. These were soldiers coming to kill them, resulting in a whole new level of fear. Even though they knew that God was God, they panicked, as we all sometimes do, when the enemy is upon us in full battle array. It melted their courage and "they were sore afraid." Not only can we sympathize, but we can learn from this that sometimes we may be doing exactly what we are supposed to be doing and still wake up to find opposition bearing down on us.

#### MOSES' FAITH

Moses is different. He is *not* cowering in fear, although he does not yet know how God will save them. But God *will* save them. He knows that. That's why he can tell the frightened Israelites, "Fear ye not; stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," even before God has revealed the next step. (Ex.14:13) It is fascinating that the Doctrine and Covenants identifies this very situation as the prototypical example of revelation from the spirit. "Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground." (D&C 8:2-3) We learn from Moses that if we do not doubt and do not fear, the help we need will come in time.

#### THE SPIRIT OF REVELATION

Moses faced down this terrifying circumstance because God directed him through the whisperings of the Spirit and Moses was a man who could hear God speak in that way. If ever a man did not know what to do, Moses was that man. What would he even have imagined as a solution to this problem? But Moses didn't need to think of possible solutions. He only needed the faith to believe that God could solve ANY problem, and the faith to seek God's help. And that's exactly what he did.

Exodus 14:15 contains an interchange that's almost humorous. To paraphrase, God says to Moses, "What are you still crying out to me for! Tell the people to get moving! Hold your rod over your head and point it toward the sea!" Those three exclamation points are necessary. Things were probably pretty noisy at that point and it was time for action. We see that Moses was told exactly what to do and did it. And he was told in real time. Not one week before, or even that morning. We should remember this when we are in our own difficult or terrifying situations. We don't have to see the end from the beginning. That is God's job. We just have to trust, pray and follow the whisperings of the Spirit, for "behold, this is the spirit of revelation, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea." (D&C 8:3) Amazing!

**A HEART HARDENED UNTO DEATH**

The text says here, "I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians." As Pharaoh and his armies see the Israelites slipping away from them, they are enraged and their fury leads them into God's final trap—the sandy floor of the Red Sea. Why would God do such a thing? He explains: "The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord." And also the Israelites "shall know" that their God can conquer any army, and the surrounding nations "shall know." And we shall know. This knowing is not to satisfy some despotic need of God to display His power, but that human beings might have an unambiguous, clear, certain picture of the nature and power of God. Without an explicit revelation of what God stands for and what He can do, there is no certainty in life. Here is the certainty: if one makes oneself an enemy to God, the sure end is death. It is not God's wrath that shows all this to us, but His mercy. He is at pains to display for us here the rules of the game of life.

**EXODUS 15: A SONG OF PRAISE**

When the people realize what has just happened to them—that they have been saved from death by a mighty miracle—they are overjoyed and filled with praise that bursts forth into singing and even dancing. Moses' hymn puts into words God's mighty work of deliverance in their behalf. Poetry was serious business in an age when people did not have books, newspapers, etc. By telling the great stories in verse, often put to music, the tale was more easily remembered and told to succeeding generations. Exodus Chapter fifteen is the oldest example of an epic poem known to us.

Hebrew poetry is marked by repetition and parallelism. Note how often an idea is repeated in two parallel or matched statements--the second time appearing slightly changed or sometimes as the opposite of the original. Other patterns in Hebrew poetry, such as alliteration and a rhythm pattern in words or syllables, don't usually survive translation. But as you read this triumphant song, it is easy to spot the parallelisms. For example, see verse five: "The depths have covered them; they sank into the bottom as a stone." These forms made the song or poem much easier to memorize, and once committed to memory, served to soften the toil of labor, teach the young and generally inspire God's people in their journey through life. Though the times are separated by millennia, you may think of the Mormon pioneers singing "Come, Come Ye Saints" and have some idea of what power such a hymn can have.

**A SONG TO COME**

There is a striking parallel to this occasion of Moses leading the people in a song of triumph. It is found in Chapter 15 of Revelation, verses 2 and 3. Here the saints are celebrating the triumph of those who have "gotten the victory over the beast," who is Anti-Christ, and they sing with harps accompanying. They stand by "a sea of glass, mingled with fire" and they are said to be singing "the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the Lamb." Change beast to Pharaoh, harps to timbrels, and sea of glass to Red Sea and the pictures are nearly mirror images. As the Lord Himself taught Adam, "All things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear witness of me." (Moses 6:63) The great themes of scripture are repeated and woven through the whole scriptural record of man's history like themes in a great symphony. The triumph song that Moses sung in praise of God's defeat of his enemy Pharaoh, will find its parallel at the end of days in the triumph song we all will sing about Christ's ultimate defeat of Satan.

**FROM HEIGHTS TO DEPTHS**

The singing and dancing ended and the people came after three days march to the waters of Marah. Hot and desperately thirsty, the waters looked cool and inviting. How great their disappointment when they tasted it and realized it was alkaline and bitter. Immediately the people began to murmur against Moses. Though God had delivered them from Pharaoh, they do not yet trust or understand Him. Perhaps they assumed that once God took them from slavery He would bring them immediately into a life of ease, the opposite of the life of hard toil they once had. Perhaps they thought that God should use His mighty powers to supply all their needs, or more accurately, all their wants, by miracles. They should have remembered more of God's goodness and His great promises to them. Instead they see only Marah's bitter water, which is a bitter disappointment to them. They should have prayed for guidance, but instead they complained bitterly. These verses, as you see, are a lesson about bitterness—where it comes from and how to get rid of it.

“But God, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not. For he remembered that they were but flesh.” (Ps. 78:38-39). Patiently and mercifully, the Lord directs Moses to cut down a certain tree and cast it into the waters, which then become sweet and drinkable. It is interesting that one of the names of the Savior is The Branch. Zechariah 3:8 refers to “my servant The Branch.” (see also Zech. 6:12) The bitter pain the Savior went through during the atonement can redeem the bitter experiences of our own lives and turn them sweet.

It was God that brought them to Marah, to teach them about life and to make Himself known to them; and it is God that brings us to our own trials to teach us and to make Himself known to us. We need to be able to realize that He is just as much with us in the hard times as in the joyous times, and not be cast into fear, confusion and complaining just because life gets difficult. We should not make the same mistake made by the immature Israelites and think that God’s purpose is to supply every want and need of ours. This is childish thinking.

Life is a series of ups and downs, peaks and valleys. The children of Israel were not yet mature enough to see God’s hand in all their experiences, the good and the bad, the bitter and the sweet. It is easy to acknowledge God when you have just received a great blessing but it takes experience and maturity to realize that *all* things come from His hand, both the times of blessing and the times of testing. Remember, every valley is followed by a mountaintop, and after every mountaintop experience, eventually comes another valley. That is a universal cycle of life. Having to go through a valley does not mean God is punishing you. It means you are mortal.

When we do not teach this principle to our young people, we can set them up for serious misunderstanding and heartache. How many times have we heard disappointed people complain against the Lord for some unmet expectation or difficult circumstance in their life, saying, “But I have kept all the commandments! I have done everything right!” Perhaps, like the Children of Israel, they think it is God’s job to provide for them all the blessings that they think they need and deserve. Didn’t He show His power to do miracles? Couldn’t he make their lives easier if He wanted to?

But all life is a time of testing, or journeying through the wilderness of mortality. God wants to know whether our faith will hold in times of testing as well as blessing. As one wise woman said, “No one ever grows when they’re comfortable.<sup>1</sup>” We grow the most when we have to dig deep and hold on and seek God in our desperate need. God loves us enough to provide these times of testing and growth for us.

### **JEHOVAH-RAPHA**

One of the ways we learn about God is by studying the various Hebrew names and titles for God found throughout the Old Testament. Some are compound names like Jehovah-Sabaoth (the LORD of Hosts) and Jehovah-Shalom (God is peace). Now here in Exodus 15:26 we come to a very comforting name of God: “Jehovah Rapha”, the “LORD who heals.” (In the next lesson we find the other compound name in Exodus.)

The Lord gives this revelation about Himself at Marrah, the place of bitter waters. It’s not a place of physical sickness, but spiritual sickness. Though many bitter experiences in this life have to do with sickness and weakness in our physical bodies, the most serious sickness is what the Israelites were experiencing here. They were filled with resentments and bitterness because God had not taken care of them the way they thought He should. In some ways they were like a baby—a baby nation. A baby cries and gets its needs met. As we mature we learn that God is interested in helping his children grow up and become like him. Some of those growing experiences will be hard ones that include pain. To keep us from all pain and suffering would be to keep us children.

God’s promise is “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. (Jehovah Rapha)” (Ex. 15:26) When we cling to God’s commandments we are greatly protected from the diseases of a sinful world like sexually transmitted diseases and addictions. Yet in a fallen world, we *all* eventually age and die. How wonderful to know that whatever happens to our physical bodies, God has provided healing for our souls, and eventually, for all the failings of our bodies, because He took our sick-

nesses upon himself. (Alma 7:11) Being committed to hear the Lord and follow his commandments protects us in a very basic way from the primary spiritual disease of Egypt: idol worship and all the wickedness that follows behind it. Turn to the Lord and tune your ear to His counsel, and He will heal you of the worldliness that afflicts those who don't know God.

### **EXODUS 16: TIMES OF REFRESHING...**

After Marrah comes a stop in Elim, a refreshing oasis with twelve wells (one for each tribe!). These two places in the journey are a type of the cyclical nature of life, which we have already mentioned. We continually cycle through these peaks and valleys in our human experience. Lewis called this "the Law of Undulations." "As long as [man] lives on earth periods of emotional and bodily richness and liveliness will alternate with periods of numbness and poverty."<sup>2</sup> We see in the pattern of seasons in nature, and even in the basic pattern of night and day an echo of the same cycling pattern playing out in our inner lives, for our spiritual and emotional life has cycles too. This is critical information if we are to make sense of life and avoid Satan's traps.

If we do not understand these inevitable ups and downs, we more easily fall prey to the devil's whisperings. When we are down and discouraged he whispers that we will always feel that way and things will never get better. This is a lie. Things have a way of working out and something better does indeed come along. When something wonderful happens to us, like a new relationship or a convert's baptism into the church, Satan whispers that this is how we will always feel from now on. Life should always be wonderful. Then when we come off the mountaintop into another period that includes difficulty or pain, Satan is ready. "See...this marriage isn't going to work. The love is gone. It's hopeless." Or "See...you weren't cut out for this religious stuff. You'll never make it as a Mormon. It's hopeless." These are the kinds of lies we are susceptible to when we don't understand the nature of ups and downs in human life.

### **EXODUS 16: ...TO TIMES OF TESTING**

From the rest and refreshment of Elim the people are led to another place of testing. They camp in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula, a very barren part of the world. There are somewhere between 1 million and 2 million people to feed. In dealing with this problem the children of Israel have not yet learned to focus on God's power and love for them. Instead they focus so much on their hunger and the limitations of the surrounding country, that they actually begin to yearn to go back to the days of their slavery when they "sat by the flesh pots," or kettles of meat, and had all the bread they wanted. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, "It would not be better for men if they got what they want."<sup>3</sup> The way of wisdom goes through suffering. That is what life on earth provides for us. But before we condemn Israel too strongly for its spiritual immaturity we must be honest with ourselves. Who among us has not panicked in the face of mounting troubles, only to be ashamed later that we had been so faithless?

### **GOD'S ANSWER**

God's answer to the people's hunger is bread "rained from heaven"—Manna. This mighty miracle has resonated with Christians through the ages for its obvious symbolism. The manna that God fed the Israelites with is a type of Christ as the "Bread of Life." Christ himself draws the comparison in what is called the "Bread of Life sermon" found in the 6th chapter of John: "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

We, too, find ourselves asking, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" One obvious correlation is with the sacrament, in which we eat bread in remembrance of his body crucified for us. But there must be more, because gathering manna was a daily process. Daily we must eat "bread" and daily we need spiritual sustenance. The Lord solves the puzzle for us with His words to Israel found in Deuteronomy. "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 thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not,

neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live." (Deut. 8:2,3)

### **THE BREAD OF LIFE: GOD'S WORD**

This is the scripture Christ quoted to Satan at the temptation in the wilderness. If we realized how precious the word of God was we would not neglect it. Reading it every day faithfully plants the very life of Christ within us. We may want to be good people and please God and keep His commandments. But the plain truth is that we cannot live a life like Christ on our own power or through our own determination to do so. Our human frailties are all too apparent to us. Our choices are: 1) to hide our faults and pretend to be better than we are—the Pharisee Plan. 2) quit worrying about it and figure that God's grace will just erase all our mistakes through repentance—the Cheap Grace Plan or 3) to have our very natures changed through Christ until we “come up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” –the Gospel Plan. (Ephesians 4:13)

Do you believe that words on a page can be that powerful and that important? Remember that another name for Christ is “The Word” of God. When we take in His words, we take Him into our hearts and minds and become more like Him. It is interesting to note that the manna lay on the ground for the Israelites to gather only until the sun rose in the sky and then “when the sun waxed hot, it melted.” (Ex 16:21) What was true for the physical manna is true in life for the spiritual manna as well. We are spiritually strongest when we arise early in the morning and gather manna for our day.

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<sup>1</sup> Thank you, Alane Watkins, mental health counselor and senior missionary in Hong Kong Asia Area

<sup>2</sup> The Screwtape Letters, Chapter 8. This wonderful book is told from the viewpoint of a senior devil counseling a younger devil on how to successfully tempt his “patient,” a human being, to abandon his faith in God and turn to evil. In this chapter the senior devil advises his apprentice on ways to make good use of the peaks and troughs in human experience.

<sup>3</sup> <http://rickmarshall.blogspot.hk/2007/11/pathei-mathos.html>