

Exodus 15:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.

Analysis

Finding water at Marah should bring relief, but 'they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter.' The name 'Marah' means bitterness. Undrinkable water is worse torment than no water—mockery of hope. The explanation 'therefore the name of it was called Marah' makes this a memorial of disappointment. Yet God orchestrates this to teach dependence and test faith. Bitter providences serve divine purposes.

Historical Context

Marah's location is uncertain but likely somewhere in northwestern Sinai. Bitter (possibly alkaline or saline) water sources exist throughout the region. The naming reflects Israel's experience there.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when God's provision seems to mock your need (water present but undrinkable)?
2. What 'Marah' experiences has God used to teach you dependence rather than self-sufficiency?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּבֹאוּ	מָרָה:	וְלֹא	יָכְלוּ	לִשְׁתּוֹת	מֵי יָם	מָרָה:
And when they came	Marah	H3808	they could	not drink	of the waters	Marah
H935	H4785		H3201	H8354	H4325	H4785
כִּי	מָרָה יָם	הֵם	עַל	כִּי	קָרָא	שֵׁם הַ
H3588	for they were bitter	H1992	H5921	H3651	of it was called	therefore the name
	H4751				H7121	H8034

מָרָה:
Marah
H4785

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 33:8 (Parallel theme): 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.

Ruth 1:20 (Parallel theme): And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.