

General Church Education



# The Waters of Marah

Exodus 15:22-27

## Lesson 9

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 3: The Lord Is Our Lawgiver

For ages 8-9 years

# The Waters of Marah

## Exodus 15:22-27

### For Parents and Teachers

The Lord saved the Israelites from terrible danger. They were elated by the victory over the Egyptians at the Red Sea. We can imagine them starting their journey through the wilderness with renewed spirit and hope. But it was not long before discouragement set in again. The desert was hot and dry and there was no water to drink. When they finally came upon some water, it was bitter and undrinkable. So the Israelites complained. They forgot about the Lord's presence and power and complained loudly. Once again the Lord came to their aid and showed Moses a tree which made the waters sweet and drinkable. Shortly after that the travelers came to an oasis in the desert where both water and shade revived them.

These cycles of work and renewal are repeated over and over again in all of life. In the internal sense we find that these cycles picture periods of temptation or trial in life and the consolation that comes from remaining faithful to our purpose. In this story we are also reminded once again that we cannot prevail over temptation on our own. It is the Lord Who gives us the victory when we keep doing our part. We are rewarded by beautiful states of fulfillment and peace when we persevere.

### Ideas for Children

- Doing what the Lord asks makes us happy.
- Trying to do the right thing is not always easy, but it is good to force ourselves.
- The Word is the story of our lives too.

### From the Writings

Just as water and drink refresh a person's natural life, so truths and knowledges of truth refresh his spiritual life. For one whose life is spiritual, desires to sustain that life with such things as are called heavenly food and drink, which are the forms of good and the truths of faith, even as one whose life is natural, desires to sustain this with such things as constitute natural food and drink. *Arcana Coelestia* 8562

Anyone may see that washing does not purify a person from evils and falsities, only from the filth that clings to him. Yet because it belonged among the religious observances commanded in the Church it follows that it embodies some special idea, namely spiritual washing, which is purification from the filth that clings to us inwardly. Members of that Church therefore who knew these things and thought of purification of the heart, that is, the removal of the evils of self-love and love of the world from the earthly self, and tried to achieve it with utmost zeal, practiced ritual washing as an external act of worship. The spiritual self is purified by knowing, understanding, and thinking the truths of the Word, and the earthly self by willing and doing them. *Arcana Coelestia* 3142 and *Apocalypse Explained* 475

# The Waters of Marah

Exodus 15:22-27

## Words to Understand

**bitter**—having a sharp, acid, unpleasant taste

**complain**—to express pain or unhappiness

**diligently**—working carefully and steadily

**heed**—to pay close attention to

**statute**—a rule or a law

**oasis**—a place in the desert where there is water

**ancestor**—a person earlier in a family line such as a grandparent or great-grandparent

## Celebration

After crossing the Red Sea and seeing the destruction of the Egyptians, the children of Israel were so happy that they celebrated with singing and dancing. Moses' sister Miriam and other women played music with an instrument called a timbrel which is a kind of tambourine. They thanked the Lord by singing beautiful songs to Him. They were very grateful and eager to go forward to return to the home of their ancestors.

The Israelites found themselves in a desert where it was hot and dry. The sun was hot overhead and the sand was hot on their feet as they walked. Sometimes the wind blew, but it blew hot, sandy dust on them. Worst of all, there was very little water in the desert wilderness. Can you imagine living with nothing to drink? Do you think the Isra-



elites were happy?

**Read Exodus 15:22-27.**

### **Discouragement**

Remember that in Egypt the Israelites had food, water and houses to live in. Now on their journey through the desert they slept in tents at night and had to find food along the way.

We can't live very long without water, especially in a hot place, and the people became very fearful because of their great thirst. What do you suppose the people did when they became discouraged? They forgot to trust the Lord. They forgot all the miracles He had done for them. They forgot about His power that they had seen. Although the Israelites should have known from experience that the Lord would take care of them, they began to grumble and complain. They murmured or spoke against Moses because they were so unhappy. They asked him, "What shall we drink?"



Moses cried to the Lord and the Lord answered. He gave the people another miracle. What was that miracle? The Lord showed Moses a tree and told him to throw wood from it into the water. The water became sweet! Now all the people had plenty of water to drink. They were satisfied and revived. It was here at Marah that the Lord made a statute for the Israelites. The Lord said He would protect them from all the sicknesses and diseases that had come upon the Egyptians if they would listen to Him and obey His laws.

### **The Oasis at Elim**

In the next chapter we read how the Israelites traveled on and came to a wonderful place to make camp. The desert is mostly barren with nothing growing in the sand. But now they came to a place called Elim which means "trees" in Hebrew. Here the Israelites found not only twelve wells of water but also seventy palm trees. Can you imagine how nice it would be to find plenty of good water and shade after wandering in the hot desert? They stayed at Elim for about a month. Then they were refreshed and ready to move on again.

### **The Story of Life**

This story shows that we can trust the Lord even when we are unhappy. As we have men-

tioned before, this story is our story too. When we first try to obey the Lord in some way, it may not be easy. In fact, it may seem hard and dry—like the desert. It is not much fun trying to change old habits of selfishness, is it? We may even get discouraged and complain. Sometimes we might whine about our situation. But if we keep on trying because we want to please the Lord and our parents, we can find that everything changes. Just as the bitter waters of Marah became sweet, our efforts to do what the Lord asks can make our life sweet as well. Wanting to please the Lord is a good thing. Wanting to do good is like the wood



that Moses threw into the water. It changes everything. We find happiness because we are doing the Lord's will. This brings us happy feelings. Remember that if we choose the Lord's way, He will always take care of us and lead us to happy times both in this world and in heaven.

### Discussion Ideas

- Water is crucial to our bodies just as truth is to our minds—we cannot live without them! Compare water and truth. Discuss why both are needed for good health.
- Life has many cycles—in moods, experiences and seasons. How can we learn to seek the Lord's help when we need Him?
- Some life experiences are bitter, some are sweet. Explore bitter experiences that have brought sad thoughts and feelings. How can we get help from the Lord help at times like that?

# Activity Overview | The Waters of Marah

## Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” Exodus 14:13,14

## Songs

*Lead Us and Guide Us Lord*

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-lead-us-and-guide-us-lord/>

*Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-guide-me-o-thou-great-jehovah-2/>

## Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Activity 1 | Finish the Sentence
- Activity 2 | Make Lemon Juice
- Picture to color—The Bitter Waters at Marah (Exodus 15)

## Additional Activity Ideas

- Try tasting something bitter, for example vanilla (diluted in water), coffee, green tea, or unsweetened chocolate. After tasting the foods add honey or sugar. Compare the way the bitter foods tasted before and after adding the sugar. Which do you prefer?
- Make a timbrel and dance.
- Make a warm or cool refreshing drink to serve others.
- Complaining is an important way to talk about pain, unhappiness or dissatisfaction. Sometimes complaining is an important way of getting a problem taken care of. At other times we may complain just to get our own way. This can be annoying to others and harmful to us. Make two columns on a page. Brainstorms situations when it is useful to complain, and when it isn't.

## Activity 1 | Finish the Sentence

As you read the beginning of each sentence below, finish it with words from the lesson or in your own words.

1. The Children of Israel were so happy after they crossed the Red sea they celebrated
2. with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The biggest challenge the Children of Israel faced in the desert was lack of
4. \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The Israelites responded to this challenge by \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The waters of Marah were not drinkable because they were \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The waters were made drinkable because the Lord told Moses to throw wood \_\_\_\_\_.
8. When they came to Elim, the Children of Israel found twelve wells of water and \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Elim means \_\_\_\_\_.
10. True happiness comes from \_\_\_\_\_.



## Activity 2 | Make Lemon Juice

Make bitter water turn into sweet water. Throw a popsicle stick into bitter lemon juice to remember how Moses threw a piece of wood into the bitter water at Marah.

### Materials Needed

- lemons
- small paper cups
- pitcher of water
- popsicle sticks
- sugar
- knife (to cut lemons in half)
- cutting board

### Directions

1. Give each student a cup. Pour water into each cup.
2. Slice the lemons in half. Give each student half a lemon. Invite students to squeeze juice from the lemon into their cups. Remind the children that the children of Israel walked for three days without finding any water.
3. Take a taste of the “bitter water.” Remind the children that when the children of Israel at last found water it was bitter. Discuss the bitter lemon taste.
4. Sprinkle some sugar into each child’s cup—if possible, without the children seeing.
5. Hand out the popsicle sticks. Invite the children to “throw in” the popsicle stick and stir the water—just as Moses threw a stick into the water. Taste the water again.
6. The Lord cares for us just as He cared for the children of Israel.



