

Contemporary Mystic Christianity **Bible Self-Study Supplement**

Bitter Waters Made Sweet

Again the Israelites felt themselves deserted because they were left for a season to their own resources. How else could their abilities be called into use and developed? They thirsted for the living waters of life; that which they found was bitter. It was not from the depthless wells whose content is sweet and whose powers bring restoration to a weary, drooping soul. The waters of Marah are the strange cold waters of Isaiah, the waters of life turned downward through generation into degeneration instead of being uplifted into regeneration. Moses sweetened the bitter waters by casting into them a tree. As the sap of the tree rises upward it is an apt symbol of the liquid fire ascending from the base of man's spine to his head centers. In ancient Babylon a neophyte was told: "The price of purification is a tall palm tree."

The palm tree symbol is so used in this passage. Three score and ten stand beside the twelve wells (soul attributes) which the Israelites later found at Elim (a name meaning trees), where they found it good to encamp for a season.

The Israelites "went for three days in the wilderness and found no water." In a cosmic sense these days are three

Periods that an unindividualized spirit passes through before reaching individualization in the present fourth or Earth Period. They also refer to the three principles in man: physical, etheric and emotional. Just as three Periods are traversed before awakening to self-consciousness, so the three vehicles named must be purified before inner centers open and the Ego awakens to the mysteries of inner worlds.

The Israelites' three-days of wandering in the wilderness have the same significance as the three-day journey connected with rites of the Ancient Mysteries, when a candidate for Initiation was given an opportunity of recapitulating past conditions and studying inner-plane activity. The symbolism is preserved in modern Masonry; and the supreme theme of Christianity is the three-day burial of the Master of Masters that culminated in the Resurrection of the Light of the World.

The hardships encountered by the Israelites in the desert were their trials by Fire. These are met again and again on the Path on an ever ascending spiral of progression. With each trial successfully passed, the vehicles become purer, the faculties stronger, spiritual perception clarified, and realization of omnipresent divinity deepened. More than one trial by Water and by Fire had been met and mastered by Moses before he became the meek and mighty leader of his

people, and before he could sing the exultant song of deliverance beside the Red Sea.

The Bread of Life

After a period of restoration by the wells of Elim, the Israelites resumed their journey. This time they went into the wilderness of Sin. It proved exhausting and seemed for a time to be past endurance. It would have proved so had it not been for the "salvation of the Lord," an ever present help in their hour of need.

Their faith was not yet strong enough for them not to murmur when things were hard, but the mercies of the overshadowing Presence dealt with them not according to their momentary frailties, but in keeping with their essential divinity. The faltering steps of the neophyte, like those of a child, are steadied by a guide whose feet do not stumble.

The Lord again rendered good for ill. Whereas the children of Israel said to Moses and Aaron: "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger," the Lord responded by promising to rain upon them "bread from heaven."

A child is not disowned for its weakness; an aspirant is not rejected because of failures. So long as the child grows and the aspirant tries there is help, protection and encouragement. It is when childhood is past, when any attempt to follow the way has ceased, that the parent or the teacher withdraws his authority and the Lord "strives" with him no more.

In moments of soul ecstasy complete dedication to things of spirit is easy. It is when the call comes to carry the light received on the mountain peaks of illumination down into the wilderness of mortality that the way becomes hard and human nature is prone to rebel. Murmurings of the Israelites find an echo in every human heart until the last shred of personality has been woven into the texture of spiritual being.

One of the most subtle tests on the Path is the ability to stand alone, unshaken in the midst of doubt, criticism and rebellion, as did Moses when charged by his people with having mistakenly led them into a state of misery worse than they had known before. Only a strong, self-reliant soul can keep calm, self-possessed and helpful under such circumstances; only one who has been long tried can face opposition and yet retain implicit trust and confidence in the righteousness and ultimate success of his appointed mission. Moses, having passed the test by Water, had so

stilled his emotions that he had attained inward poise and outward calm. Such self-mastery is the mark of an Initiate.

Mystically, the bread from heaven is the living word, the divine wisdom on which the spirit nourishes itself as it journeys from impotence to omnipotence. Where there is spiritual hunger there is spiritual food to satisfy that hunger. "If I do not have the heavenly manna within myself," writes Paracelsus, "I cannot attract the heavenly manna."

Spiritual truth comes to the seeker in a measure determined by his own capacity to receive. Therefore, all did not gather an equal amount of manna; but those who had little "had no lack" and those who "gathered much had nothing over."

Again and again the Israelites failed. The bread from heaven had not yet weaned them from the flesh pots of Egypt. They called for flesh, and their lusts were satisfied. But they died. That is, consciousness of divine wisdom faded out. The incident is recorded in:

Numbers 11:31-34

And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as

*it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth.
And the people stood up; all that day, and all that night,
and all the next day, and they gathered the quails; he
that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they
spread them all abroad for themselves round about the
camp.*

*And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it
was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against
the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very
great plague.*

*And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hat-taa-
vah: because there they buried the people that lusted.*

Another stage on the journey brought Israel to Rephidim. The name means wandering. They were still unsettled, their thoughts and feelings shuttling between their higher and lower natures. Again they were without water — there will always be thirst when forsaking the wells of the water of life — and again they complained. Disgruntled, they asked Moses, "Is the Lord among us, or not?"

Exodus 17:4-7

*And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying. What shall I do
unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.
And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people,
and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod,
wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand,*

and go.

Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Moses met the Lord (attuned himself with the workings of cosmic Law) on Mount Horeb (an elevated state of consciousness). And again he demonstrated his mastery over his emotional nature and his control over the element of Water. With his rod of power he smote the rock, and forth flowed a river of water. Moses called the place Massah and Meribah, meaning trial and contention, respectively.

It is to be noted that the power possessed by Moses was not used promiscuously. It was never drawn upon in order to relieve the Israelites from putting forth their utmost in thought, faith and action. To have done so would have meant nursing their weakness and dependency, while the purpose of evolution is to develop strength and self-reliance in man until he becomes truly as one of the gods. Nor did Moses ever resort to his magic wand for self-help or glorification. Initiate powers are pledged solely in service to others; to violate that pledge is to automatically forfeit the powers gained. It is a perversion of spiritual qualities which ultimates in their dissolution. The higher the attainment and the greater the power, the deeper is humility and the

more complete is dedication to selfless service. Moses was mighty and majestic in his meekness. Of himself he was nothing; with the Lord (Law), the very elements in nature did his bidding.

Exodus 17:8-16

Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

*And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it
Jehovah-nissi:*

*For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord
will have war with Amalek from generation to
generation.*

Moses, (spiritual power of discernment) calls on Joshua (highly perfected personality) to go out to make war with Amalek (lusts of the lower nature). The Commander in Chief (the spiritual self) takes his stand "on top of the hill with the rod of God" in his hand. In the struggle he is upheld by Aaron, (holiness) and Hur (nobility). When Moses (spirit) held up his hand (sustained consciousness on high), Amalek (lower propensities) was subdued. When his hand fell (consciousness descended) Amalek (earthly passion) prevailed.

After this victory, Joshua (ascending personality) became the foremost disciple of Moses, occupying a place in his life similar to that of the beloved John in the life of Jesus. Joshua and Jesus are variations of the same name. The victory which Joshua won over Amalek is, moreover, paralleled by the great temptation in the life of Jesus.

Moses Assumes a High Command

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, having "heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the

Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt," took Zipporah, Moses' wife, and her two sons-Gershom and Eliezer-and came to Moses in the wilderness, "where he had encamped at the mount of God."

Now Jethro was a priest and a wise man. Seeing how Moses sat to judge the people who stood in a line awaiting his decisions from morning unto evening, he recognized that the burden was far too heavy for one man to carry. "The thing that thou doest," said he, "is not good . . . I will give thee counsel ... Thou shalt shew them (the people) the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they inust do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing . . . then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace." Moses "hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said."

Moses had qualified for promotion. He had been faithful in small things and was, therefore, placed over greater. Others

stepped forward to relieve him of lesser duties. This is the ladder of life; it has many rungs; there are ascending beings on each one, from the lowest to the highest. The hierarchical plan of government operates on all planes and in every sphere of life. Cooperation extends throughout. Those below rise through the power of those above; those above ascend through the support rendered by those beneath. The lesser judges in Israel had acquired from Moses ability to undertake some of his labors; whereas Moses was able to assume a position of more extended service because of the burden shared by those he had qualified to work under him.

Specialization and division of labor belong to the order of nature. Organized activity prospers when this is recognized and acted upon. Whether the sphere be spiritual or material, all enterprise or movement rises no higher than its source. If the fountainhead of its inspiration functions on a high level, its possibilities of attainment are of at least equal elevation.

The names of Moses' two sons are keys to the consciousness and mission of Moses. Aware of his spiritual home world, he felt himself a stranger wandering through a wilderness and leading a blind band of pilgrims toward the land of light. Gershom means stranger, an alien in the land — Eliezer signifies Moses' faith in the divine power that was

leading him on his return journey to his eternal home. He had united himself to Zipporah, the shining one, and received counsel from Jethro, the priest whose name means excellent.

Initiation By Air

Exodus 19:3

And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain.

As the sea belongs to the Water element and the desert to the Fire, so does the mountain choose for its home the Air. Moses, having taken Initiation by Water at the Red Sea and Initiation by Fire in the wilderness, was now qualified to take a third degree by Air on the height of Mount Sinai.

This third Initiation was taken in the third month after the Israelites had gone forth from Egypt. It was, moreover, on the third day devoted to special preparation for the Lord's descent "in the sight of the people upon Mount Sinai."

Under the power of three a candidate mounts a step higher in attainment. In accordance with the numerical law, occult Schools provide three classifications of aspirants for Initiation: student, probationer and disciple. In the Masonic Order the same grades are expressed in the ascending degrees of apprentice, fellowcraft and master.

In the Initiation by Water the aspirant's emotional nature is stilled; in Initiation by Fire his lower nature is overcome; in Initiation by Air his mind is spiritually illumined. The Zohar states that Moses, by reason of his union with the Shekinah, had become the light of the Moon; and that the Moon, therefore, became the symbol of his attainment in that "she and he were one." The name Sinai may be related to the Babylonian Moon god Sin, to which the mount was early dedicated. Hence, Moses' union with the light on Mount Sinai signifies that the feminine wisdom principle had become increasingly active in him through his Initiation by Water.

Having reached this stage Moses was capable of viewing more clearly and in greater perspective the universal character of the work he was commissioned to execute in that and succeeding lives. He realized more fully that his service to personalities with whom he happened at any time to be associated was only incidental to the service he was required to render his race and humanity as a whole. He was a world character. Such souls must needs pay the price of loneliness for their mountain-top seclusion. They are truly in the world but no longer of it.

The commanding, pioneering qualities that characterized Moses were again dominant when he returned later as Elijah and, in the early Christian era, as John the Baptist.

He was ever a voice in the wilderness, going before his people and pointing for them the way from the old to the new.

Moses was a leader of his people because of his great strength, faith and wisdom. He was capable of ascending the mount (rising in consciousness) "up to God" (spiritual planes), there to commune with the Lord (Law) "face to face." Looking into the Memory of Nature, he could see the path that he and his people had traversed in their past evolution, the position they then occupied, the direction in which they were destined to move, and the mission they were called to fulfill. From the heights of realization he spoke to his people "as one having authority."

The Initiate has power because he knows. Belief has become knowledge. On the luminous summit of Sinai, Moses, as an agent of Cosmic Purpose, as the mouthpiece of the Lord, addressed his people on lower levels as follows:

Exodus 19:4-6

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine.

And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.

Obedience to the law gives both wisdom and power. An ancient maxim reads: "If ye keep the law ye shall know the doctrine." In similar words the Christ declared: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, Whether it be of God . . .

Exodus 19:9

And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and will believe thee forever.

Moses was mediator between the Lord and his people. He served in the capacity of a transformer. The power he was able to tap could not be transferred to the people except at lower voltage. For the people's sake, therefore, the Lord mercifully screened Himself in a cloud so that they might hear, yet not be blinded or annihilated by His radiant Presence. Special precautions were taken for their protection. Moses was carefully instructed to "set the bounds unto the people" and to warn them not to go "up into the mount, or touch the border of it" because whosoever did so would surely die. (Exodus 19:11-13)

These protective measures were taken, not to deprive the many of the privileges extended to one, but to save the

unqualified from ignorantly destroying themselves. Temples of Initiation exist for the benefit of all, but their doors are open to those only who have earned the right to enter. Even to come within sight of such holy sanctuaries calls for a degree of purification. The people who were permitted to come "before the mount" were given three days in which to sanctify themselves in preparation for the approach of the Lord's consuming Presence.

Comparatively few persons could endure the presence of an Angel; scarcely none, an Archangel. The high spiritual status of Moses is shown by the fact that he was able to stand in the very presence of Jehovah, the highest Initiate of the angelic life wave, and behold the glorious vision of One whose radiations were Light itself.

The Israelites encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai — an estimated two million in number — are representative of the mass of people who have an intellectual concept of spiritual truth but have it not inwardly by the power of the spirit. They are on their way; they have reached the mount, but may not yet ascend it.

Initiation quickens the whole of life's processes. It follows upon a cleansing of the vehicles and a transmutation of physical forces into spiritual. Consciousness is raised, and the atomic action of the body is accelerated in accordance therewith. This renders the physical vehicle capable of

dealing safely with forces of such potency as would bring instant death to a body not so atomically attuned.

A long and careful preparation, during which earthly elements and worldly ideas are progressively eliminated, precedes ability to ascend to higher levels of being and function consciously thereon. It is quite beyond the range of reasonability for an ordinary person to hold frequent, intimate contact with great spiritual Beings. It is, in fact, impossible — as the case of the Israelites before Mount Sinai clearly teaches, and as spiritual science so amply corroborates. A person could no more directly contact the Archangel Christ and live than he could exist in a physical body on the Sun, which is but His outer garment. It was a ray of that Christ Light that manifested in the Master Jesus; yet he who contacts that Ray has touched the Light.

From those who go before, like Moses and Aaron, come instruction as to how all may attain the powers and privileges of the mount. Followers of Christianity will eventually awaken to the fact that a true priesthood "is recruited by Initiation" and that "religious forms perish when Initiation ceases in the Sanctuary."

— ***Corinne Heline***