

September 12 Su (Optional) — Exodus 15:22-27 — Bitter water made sweet

The symbolic grain that Elisha added to the poisonous stew to make it edible is similar to something that Moses had done to purify undrinkable water in the wilderness. This experience happened just after God had parted the Red Sea and at least two million Hebrews walked across on dry land.

*<sup>22</sup> Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. <sup>23</sup> When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah.<sup>[fn]</sup> <sup>24</sup> And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” <sup>25</sup> And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log,<sup>[fn]</sup> and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.*

*There the LORD<sup>[fn]</sup> made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, <sup>26</sup> saying, “If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer.”*

*<sup>27</sup> Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.*

#### ESV Footnotes

(15:23) *Marah* means *bitterness*

(15:25) Or *tree*

(15:25) Hebrew *he*

There are three kinds of water mentioned in this passage. The first was the saltwater of the Red Sea. God miraculously dealt with that problem by making a passageway through it. The second kind of water was the bitter water of Marah that God transformed into drinkable water through Moses' act of throwing part of a tree into it. The third kind of water was found at Elim—12 springs of fresh water. This was natural water that had apparently always been there. The saltwater was a temporary barrier for travel. The bitter water was a temporary danger for consumption. The springs of water seem like they might have been a reward. Notice that just before they went to Elim, God “*tested them*” (v. 25) by challenging them to “*diligently listen*” to His voice and to “*keep all his statutes*” (v. 26). God said that the result of that attentive obedience was that “*I will put none of the diseases on you ... for I am the LORD, your healer*” (v. 26). Then, He led them to the fresh springs of Elim. What kind of “water” are you experiencing in your life? Is there a barrier that seems impossible? Does your life have a bitter taste that makes it seem not worth living? Or are you refreshing yourself in the waters of obedience that God provides for those who trust in Him?

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September 13 M Reading 182 — 2 Kings 5:1–19a — Naaman healed

*<sup>1</sup> Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper.<sup>[fn]</sup> <sup>2</sup> Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. <sup>3</sup> She said to her mistress, “Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.” <sup>4</sup> So Naaman went in and told his lord, “Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel.” <sup>5</sup> And the king of Syria said, “Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.”*

So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels<sup>[fn]</sup> of gold, and ten changes of clothing. <sup>6</sup> And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy." <sup>7</sup> And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me."

<sup>8</sup> But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel." <sup>9</sup> So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. <sup>10</sup> And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." <sup>11</sup> But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. <sup>12</sup> Are not Abana<sup>[fn]</sup> and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. <sup>13</sup> But his servants came near and said to him, "My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" <sup>14</sup> So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

<sup>15</sup> Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so accept now a present from your servant." <sup>16</sup> But he said, "As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive none." And he urged him to take it, but he refused. <sup>17</sup> Then Naaman said, "If not, please let there be given to your servant two mule loads of earth, for from now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the LORD. <sup>18</sup> In this matter may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon your servant in this matter." <sup>19a</sup> He said to him, "Go in peace."

#### ESV Footnotes

(5:1) *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

(5:5) A *talent* was about 75 pounds or 34 kilograms; a *shekel* was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

(5:12) Or *Amana*

**From High to Low** — The greatness of Naaman is emphasized at the beginning of this story: "...a great man ... in high favor ... a mighty man" (v. 1). He was great, not only in the eyes of the king of Syria and the people but also in his own eyes. He was offended when he didn't get the personal attention from Elisha that he expected: "I thought that he would surely come out to me ... and call upon the name of the LORD ... and wave his hand..." (v. 11). He felt that he deserved the drama. But for one to receive personal attention from God, there must be humility. The "great man" (v. 1) must become like the "little girl" (v. 2). When the disciples of Jesus asked about human greatness, He replied, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:4). Naaman's lowly servants had caught the promise in Elisha's message, that if he washed seven times in the Jordan River, "you shall be clean" (2 Kings 5:10, cf. v. 13). Thankfully, proud Naaman humbled himself and obeyed. Sometimes our pride keeps us from blessings. God wants us to be humble, to obey Him, and to trust Him. We all have sinful, selfish pride; ask God to reveal one evidence of pride in your heart that needs to be lowered.

**Meditation:** Here is a little math and strategy exercise to think about: Calculating from the ESV footnote for v. 5, Naaman brought 750 pounds (341 kg) of silver and 150 pounds (68 kg) of gold to

give as a hopeful reward for being cured. As I write this, the current market price of gold is \$1,823/oz and silver is \$24.77/ounce; assuming that the same value ratio existed in those days, Naaman could have brought just 10.2 pounds (2.2 kg) of additional gold instead of the 750 pounds of silver. Why did Naaman do that? Why didn't he just bring all of the value in gold? Share your ideas in the "Leave a Reply" place at the bottom of this website page.

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## September 14 Tu Reading 183 — 2 Kings 5:19b-27 — Gehazi's greed

<sup>19b</sup> *But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance,* <sup>20</sup> *Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not accepting from his hand what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him."* <sup>21</sup> *So Gehazi followed Naaman. And when Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him and said, "Is all well?"* <sup>22</sup> *And he said, "All is well. My master has sent me to say, 'There have just now come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.'"* <sup>23</sup> *And Naaman said, "Be pleased to accept two talents."* *And he urged him and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and laid them on two of his servants. And they carried them before Gehazi.* <sup>24</sup> *And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and put them in the house, and he sent the men away, and they departed.* <sup>25</sup> *He went in and stood before his master, and Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?"* *And he said, "Your servant went nowhere."* <sup>26</sup> *But he said to him, "Did not my heart go when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants?"* <sup>27</sup> *Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever."* *So he went out from his presence a leper, like snow.*

**From Lies to Leprosy** — Greed is not only wrong but it also leads to other sins. James gives us this extreme example: "*You desire and do not have, so you murder*" (James 4:2). Gehazi's greed was close to the surface; Naaman had only "*gone from him a short distance*" (2 Kings 5:19b) before Gehazi came up with a plan to get some of the wealth that Elisha had refused. In his greed, he first conceived of a lie: "*My master has sent me to say...*" (v. 22). His request was for a talent of silver plus two garments. (I don't know why he didn't ask for the equivalent value in gold, which he could have carried in his pocket!) Then, when he returned, he lied to Elisha's question about where he had been (v. 25). But God sees everything, even the thoughts and motives of one's heart, and He revealed to Elisha not only what had happened at the chariot, but apparently also that Gehazi had the intention of investing his newfound wealth in "*orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen ... and servants*" (v. 26). I wonder what happened to the silver and garments?! The next time you catch yourself longing for some material thing you do not have, think about Gehazi. His greed led to lies and it all resulted in being punished by getting leprosy. Does sin pay? Yes—it pays ... punishment.

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## September 15 W Reading 184 — 2 Kings 6:1–7 — The floating axe head

<sup>1</sup> *Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "See, the place where we dwell under your charge is too small for us."* <sup>2</sup> *Let us go to the Jordan and each of us get there a log, and let us make a place for us to dwell there."* *And he answered, "Go."* <sup>3</sup> *Then one of them said, "Be pleased to go with your servants."* *And he answered, "I will go."* <sup>4</sup> *So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees.* <sup>5</sup> *But as one was felling a log, his axe head fell into the water, and he cried out, "Alas, my master! It was borrowed."* <sup>6</sup> *Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?"* *When he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw it in there and made the iron float.* <sup>7</sup> *And he said, "Take it up."* *So he reached out his hand and took it.*

**Practical Provisions** — This story reminds me of the kind of provision God might give to us, like when a close parking place in a crowded lot opens for us at a time when it is painful or tiring for us to walk. God cares about our practical problems, as He demonstrated to this student of Elisha. A borrowed axe head flew off into the Jordan River and the man was dismayed. He turned immediately to Elisha, exclaiming, *“Alas, my master...”* (v. 5). That is the way we ought to go to God at the very beginning of any dilemma that falls upon us. Elisha cut off a stick, that would float, and threw it at the spot where the axe head fell, and the axe head miraculously floated also. As Jesus said, *“What is impossible with man is possible with God”* (Luke 18:27). Look for a practical problem today that seems beyond your ability to solve, then turn quickly to God to ask for His miraculous help. He loves you!

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The Divided Kingdom							
Judah				Israel			
Years B.C.	King	Prophet	Scripture	Years B.C.	King	Prophet	Scripture
870-848	Jehoshaphat	Jehu	1 K 22 2 C 17-20	874-853	Ahab	Elijah	
848-841	Joram/Jehoram	Obadiah?	2 K 8-9, 11-12 2 C 21-24	853-852	Ahaziah	Elisha	1 K 22
841	Ahaziah			852-841	Joram/Jehoram		2 K 1, 3
841-835	Athaliah			841-814	Jehu		2 K 9-10
835-796	Joash/Jehoash	Joel		814-798	Jehoahaz		2 K 13

September 16 Th Reading 185 — 2 Kings 6:8–23 — Chariots of fire; capture of Syrian army

<sup>8</sup> *Once when the king of Syria was warring against Israel, he took counsel with his servants, saying, “At such and such a place shall be my camp.”* <sup>9</sup> *But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, “Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are going down there.”* <sup>10</sup> *And the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God told him. Thus he used to warn him, so that he saved himself there more than once or twice.*

<sup>11</sup> *And the mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing, and he called his servants and said to them, “Will you not show me who of us is for the king of Israel?”* <sup>12</sup> *And one of his servants said, “None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.”* <sup>13</sup> *And he said, “Go and see where he is, that I may send and seize him.”* *It was told him, “Behold, he is in Dothan.”* <sup>14</sup> *So he sent there horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city.*

<sup>15</sup> *When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?”* <sup>16</sup> *He said, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”* <sup>17</sup> *Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.”* *So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.* <sup>18</sup> *And when the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the LORD and said, “Please strike this people with blindness.”* *So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha.* <sup>19</sup> *And Elisha said to them, “This is not the way, and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.”* *And he led them to Samaria.*

<sup>20</sup> *As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, “O LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see.”* *So the LORD opened their eyes and they saw, and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.* <sup>21</sup> *As soon as the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, “My father, shall I strike them down? Shall I strike them down?”* <sup>22</sup> *He answered, “You shall not strike them down. Would you strike down those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water*

*before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.”<sup>23</sup> So he prepared for them a great feast, and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel.*

**Multiple Blindness** — This passage graphically emphasizes the reality of a spiritual world about which we are aware but do not see. The all-seeing God revealed to Elisha the plans of the king of Syria so that it seemed like the prophet heard even the bedroom talk of the king. Later, Elisha’s servant was blind to the massive angelic army that surrounded the Syrian forces that encircled the city. Elisha prayed and God temporarily opened the servant’s eyes so he could see the heavenly throng (v. 17). We are a lot like that servant in fearing the physical threat without seeing the divine solution. However, we are promised that God’s spiritual beings watch over us and care for us: “*For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways*” (Ps. 91:11). The writer of Hebrews also asked, “*Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?*” (Heb. 1:14). We don’t see them but they are there. Perhaps our passage for today is the biblical basis for the statement in Michael W. Smith’s song that “It may look like I’m surrounded but I’m surrounded by You.” Elisha prayed again (v. 18) and God temporarily blinded the surrounding Syrian army so they could be led to Jehoram, the king of Israel in Samaria. Elisha’s third prayer (v. 20) reopened the eyes of the army. Jehoram was also somewhat blinded as to what he ought to do with these enemies and he asked Elisha, “*My father, shall I strike them down?*” (v. 21). No, feed them instead! We, also, are mostly blind to the spiritual reality that surrounds us. That is why I quote part of this prayer hymn every morning as I begin to read God’s Word: “Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth Thou hast for me ... Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit Divine.”

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September 17 F Reading 186 — 2 Kings 6:24-33 — Syria sieges the city of Samaria

<sup>24</sup> *Afterward Ben-hadad king of Syria mustered his entire army and went up and besieged Samaria.*

<sup>25</sup> *And there was a great famine in Samaria, as they besieged it, until a donkey’s head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and the fourth part of a kab<sup>[fn]</sup> of dove’s dung for five shekels of silver.* <sup>26</sup> *Now as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, “Help, my lord, O king!”* <sup>27</sup> *And he said, “If the LORD will not help you, how shall I help you? From the threshing floor, or from the winepress?”* <sup>28</sup> *And the king asked her, “What is your trouble?” She answered, “This woman said to me, ‘Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.’”* <sup>29</sup> *So we boiled my son and ate him. And on the next day I said to her, ‘Give your son, that we may eat him.’ But she has hidden her son.”* <sup>30</sup> *When the king heard the words of the woman, he tore his clothes—now he was passing by on the wall—and the people looked, and behold, he had sackcloth beneath on his body—* <sup>31</sup> *and he said, “May God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders today.”*

<sup>32</sup> *Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. Now the king had dispatched a man from his presence, but before the messenger arrived Elisha said to the elders, “Do you see how this murderer has sent to take off my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold the door fast against him. Is not the sound of his master’s feet behind him?”* <sup>33</sup> *And while he was still speaking with them, the messenger came down to him and said, “This trouble is from the LORD! Why should I wait for the LORD any longer?”*

#### ESV Footnote

(6:25) A *shekel* was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams; a *kab* was about 1 quart or 1 liter

**Why Wait?** — King Jehoram seems to have been sitting on the fence, spiritually. At some time in the past, he had seen Elisha’s involvement in averting an attack on Samaria by leading the blinded Syrian army into the city (6:8-23). That should have been enough for Jehoram to trust in Yahweh.

But now that the capital city was under full siege and the people were close to starvation, the king's trust was being challenged. Elisha had apparently told the king to wait in Samaria for God's deliverance but he wasn't sure whether to believe it or not. The king's reply to the grieving mother ("*If the LORD will not help you, how shall I help you?*" — v. 27) suggests that his hope for God's deliverance was wearing thin. His final message to Elisha also showed that he had been waiting for God's action: "*Why should I wait for the LORD any longer?*" (v. 33). Even "*the elders were sitting with him*" (v. 32) in Elisha's house, apparently waiting for a hopeful word from God. They seemed to have had more faith in Elisha and Yahweh than Jehoram did. Another evidence of the king's fence-sitting was that when he tore his robe, it revealed that he was wearing sackcloth, normally a sign of humility and repentance. He was wearing it underneath his robe, however, apparently wanting God to see that he was somewhat remorseful but not wanting to expose it to the public. We Christians also sometimes ask ourselves in the midst of a trial, "*Why should I wait for the LORD any longer?*" It boils down to trust; whom do we trust? Will we wait for God's solution or will we buy a lottery ticket instead? Will we seek answers in God's Word or would we rather flip a coin?

**Meditation:** Did you gag at the thought of eating someone's baby, a donkey's head, or dove's dung? I read in the 19<sup>th</sup> century commentary of the British theologian, Charles Ellicott, that "*dove's dung*" was likely the name of some kind of vegetable produce because Arabs call one form of the herb kali "sparrow's dung." Not quite so repulsive! Even in the midst of this drastic shortage and impending death with the surrounding Syrian army, some people inside the city were selling things to eat. What were they planning to spend the money for in the grave?!

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### September 18 Sa (Optional) — Isaiah 42:6-20 — Dealing with blindness

The spiritual and physical blindness we read about recently brought me to this passage in Isaiah that speaks of both kinds of blindness. Pick them out as you read this.

- 6 *"I am the LORD; I have called you<sup>[fn]</sup> in righteousness;  
I will take you by the hand and keep you;  
I will give you as a covenant for the people,  
a light for the nations,*
- 7 *to open the eyes that are blind,  
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in darkness.*
- 8 *I am the LORD; that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to carved idols.*
- 9 *Behold, the former things have come to pass,  
and new things I now declare;  
before they spring forth  
I tell you of them."*
- 10 *Sing to the LORD a new song,  
his praise from the end of the earth,  
you who go down to the sea, and all that fills it,  
the coastlands and their inhabitants.*
- 11 *Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice,  
the villages that Kedar inhabits;  
let the habitants of Sela sing for joy,  
let them shout from the top of the mountains.*
- 12 *Let them give glory to the LORD,*



- and declare his praise in the coastlands.*
- 13 *The LORD goes out like a mighty man,  
like a man of war he stirs up his zeal;  
he cries out, he shouts aloud,  
he shows himself mighty against his foes.*
- 14 *For a long time I have held my peace;  
I have kept still and restrained myself;  
now I will cry out like a woman in labor;  
I will gasp and pant.*
- 15 *I will lay waste mountains and hills,  
and dry up all their vegetation;  
I will turn the rivers into islands,<sup>[fn]</sup>  
and dry up the pools.*
- 16 *And I will lead the blind  
in a way that they do not know,  
in paths that they have not known  
I will guide them.  
I will turn the darkness before them into light,  
the rough places into level ground.  
These are the things I do,  
and I do not forsake them.*
- 17 *They are turned back and utterly put to shame,  
who trust in carved idols,  
who say to metal images,  
“You are our gods.”*
- 18 *Hear, you deaf,  
and look, you blind, that you may see!*
- 19 *Who is blind but my servant,  
or deaf as my messenger whom I send?  
Who is blind as my dedicated one,<sup>[fn]</sup>  
or blind as the servant of the LORD?*
- 20 *He sees many things, but does not observe them;  
his ears are open, but he does not hear.*

#### **ESV Footnotes**

(42:6) The Hebrew for *you* is singular; four times in this verse

(42:15) Or *into coastlands*

(42:19) Or *as the one at peace with me*

An ESV footnote points out that in all four times the Hebrew word for “*you*” is used in verse 6, it is singular in form, which is referring to the anticipated Messiah. One of His purposes in coming to earth was “*to open the eyes that are blind*” (v. 7). The next time blindness is mentioned in this passage, it is from the voice of Yahweh (“*I am the LORD; that is my name*”—v. 8) who “*will lead the blind ... I will guide them*” (v. 16). In the final mention of blindness here, the “*servant*” is not the Messiah but refers to those who have positions of spiritual leadership but are lacking in spiritual quality: “*Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send?*” (v. 19). If we have been born again by yielding completely to Christ, we have the freedom to walk in the light, seeing clearly. But we must avoid slipping into patterns of sin, which clouds our thinking and our ability to see the truth, like the one who “*sees many things, but does not observe them*” (v. 20).