

of Isaac, and by extension Jacob and the twelve tribes, possible.

It is fitting, then, that the language used regarding the dwelling place of God should reflect the language of the original Creation (see [table](#)). The concept of Israel being a new creation living in an Eden-type paradise is enhanced by consideration of the details given about the Feast of Tabernacles in Leviticus 23: "And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs [mg. fruit] of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days" (v. 40, cf. 26:1-4). The symbology is exquisite. Just as Adam and Eve had dwelt among the trees of the garden before the fall, so Israel was to recreate that happy picture: fruit; leafiness; land; the delightful sound of the brook; living, running water.

Note the transition from Genesis 1, where God speaks from the darkness and then in angelic manifestation walks with man in the garden. In the redemption pattern, He speaks from the bush, promising to deliver His people from the land of Ham (darkness), and finally He moves from Mount Sinai with its darkness to speak out of the tabernacle from the mercy-seat. What is of

especial interest is that the Divine Name, YHWH, is first revealed in Genesis 2 within the context of a completed and blessed creation. It is in a sort of dual form, YHWH Elohim (the LORD God), where the title of Creator is allied to His personal covenant Name.

So Israel as God's very special creation is separated as a people for His Name. They are to be *His* people and He will be *their* God. Hence the foundation sentence of the Law is, "I am the LORD *your* God". Twenty-one times in Leviticus we have the statement, "I am the LORD", and twenty-one times we have, "I am the LORD your God". So, in this book of approach, sanctification and holiness we have the Creator and Redeemer of Israel stressing not just *who* He is but what He wishes and intends to be; not just Yahweh the Holy One, but *their* God. Just as the completed creation was seen to be very good, so they are told that the laws that He gives them are *for their good* (Deut. 10:13); and not just for their good, but "for [their] good *always*" (6:24). A continuance under His discipline would mean that their tenure of the Land would be as fixed and guaranteed as the ordinances which controlled the movements of heaven, and which governed all creation.

(To be continued)

Moses: earth's meekest man

13. Spiritual geology

John Mitchell

Even the geography of the country in which Israel began their journey to the Promised Land provides spiritual lessons, both in the colour of the rocks and the need to sweeten their water supply.

is correct, for the children of Israel had entered limestone country that contrasted sharply with the sandstone on the Egyptian side which gave the Red Sea its name.

WHEN THE children of Israel, led by the pillar of cloud, turned their backs on the carnage that floated on the surface of the Red Sea they faced an entirely different landscape. In front of them, at a distance of about twelve miles, they saw a long range of white cliffs that ran parallel to the coast. According to *Hastings Bible Dictionary*, the cliffs presented the appearance of a wall, and some travellers have considered it the origin of the name, "the wilderness of Shur" (Ex. 15:22), Shur meaning 'a wall'. Whether or not that is true, the geology

Red and white

This detail opens up the possibility that the geology of the place had a spiritual significance not mentioned in Scripture, but relevant nevertheless. We all know the significance of the colour 'red' in relation to sin, and that without the shedding of (red) blood there can be no remission. In consort with the idea, therefore, might there not be an extension of it to the colour of the rocks, in what might be called 'spiritual geology'?

Certain it is that the first man, Adam, was formed from red earth, and that his name

witnessed to that fact, which would seem to suggest that either the Elohim just happened upon a patch of red earth when they created him, or that the red earth was put there by Yahweh in the geology of ages primarily for that purpose. And although this latter notion would never be accepted by the wisdom of this world, other events along similar lines would seem to support it.

For example, Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, had two sons who were twins; not identical twins, but twins who were markedly different. Esau was born first and came out red (or ruddy) all over, like a hairy garment, whereas Jacob, born immediately afterwards clutching his brother's heel, was smooth-skinned and of normal colour. Esau had all the rights of the first-born, including the blessings of Abraham and the family priesthood, which his brother, being more spiritually minded, coveted. The climax for them both came when they were grown men, and Esau, who was a great hunter, came in from the field exhausted and faint with hunger. Whereupon, enticed by the aroma and his guileful brother, he bartered his birthright for a bowl of lentil soup, saying, "Feed me . . . with that . . . red pottage" (Gen. 25:30).

Thereafter his colouring pursued him even to his dwelling-place, for when he left home in the limestone area of Beer-sheba to become a marauding chieftain he went to live in Mount Seir, which was also called Edom because of its red colouring. So the question can be put, When God laid the foundations of the earth, did He distribute the red rock to emphasise a spiritual lesson, or was Esau's choice of habitat in the red mountains purely coincidental?

To return, then, to the children of Israel in their crossing of the Red Sea, it would seem that they not only underwent a form of baptism into Moses in the cloud and in the sea to emphasise their new life, but also exchanged a red landscape typifying sin for a white landscape typifying righteousness. So close, it would appear, is the affinity between what God has created and His eternal purpose.

Early stages of the journey

No exact time is given in Scripture as to the period which elapsed before the children of Israel took up their Sinaitic journey. It could not have been in haste, for the power that had menaced them had gone. Nor, if the placings are correct, was there anything but advantage in favour of a rest and of refreshment. This is how Alfred

Edersheim, writing over a hundred years ago, describes the area:

"The first camping place was, no doubt, the modern *Ayun Musa* (Wells of Moses), about half an hour from the sea-shore. Even now the care of the foreign consuls has made this a most pleasant green and fresh summer retreat. One of the latest travellers has counted nineteen wells there, and the clumps of palm-trees afford a delightful shade. There is evidence that, at the time of Moses, the district was even more cultivated than now, and its water-supply better attended to".¹

So what better place in which to pasture the cattle and fill the water-skins to the full before venturing into the wilderness? Moreover, under the overriding care of the Almighty, the signal to move would not have been given before the people were prepared. When the sign was given and the cloud that accompanied them lifted, the children of Israel moved, not towards the white cliffs that confronted them, but towards the south in the corridor between the cliffs and the sea. It was to prove a hard beginning and a bitter experience in more ways than one. We will let Edersheim continue the story:

"Nor is there any doubt as to the next stage in Israel's wilderness-journey. The accounts of travellers quite agree with the narrative of the Bible. Three days' journey over pebbly ground through desert wadies, and at last among bare white and black limestone hills, with nothing to relieve the eye, except, in the distance, the 'shur', or wall of rocky mountain which gives its name to the desert, would bring the weary, dispirited multitude to the modern *Hawwarah*, the 'Marah' of the Bible. Worse than fatigue and depression now oppressed them, for they began to suffer from want of water. For three days they had not come upon any spring, and their own supplies must have been well-nigh exhausted. When arrived at *Hawwarah* they found indeed a pool, but, as the whole soil is impregnated with nitre, the water was bitter (Marah) and unfit for use . . . The circumstances seemed indeed hopeless. The spring at *Hawwarah* is still considered the worst on the whole road to Sinai, and no means have ever been suggested to make its waters drinkable".²

-
1. Alfred Edersheim, *The Exodus Journey and the Wanderings in the Wilderness*, p. 92.
 2. *Ibid.*, pp. 92,93.

Then began the first of a long line of murmurings and complaints by the people against their leader, Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?". And Moses, in the first of a long line of appeals to Yahweh, "cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet" (Ex. 15:24,25). It was an act of benevolence towards, and concern for, the children of Israel, almost casual in its presentation, yet highly significant in its implications, some of which are stated, and some not.

First there was the question of the tree. Many travellers have searched the Hawwarah area for such a tree as would sweeten the waters, but have found none. Nor could they, for the tree that was shown to Moses was unique and was never reproduced. The bitter waters represented the waters of this present life soured by sin, and the tree the cross of Christ without which they could not be healed.

Secondly, the name 'Marah' is the Hebrew equivalent of 'Mary',³ the name of the mother of the Lord Jesus, who contributed the human side in the make-up of her Son, and knew the bitterness of it at the foot of the cross.

And thirdly, the miracle of the healing of the waters was a twofold guarantee, not only to the children of Israel, but to believers of all ages, of the overriding care of Almighty God through-

out their 'wilderness journey'. It is written of the Israelites that "there [God] made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them" (v. 25). Now a statute is a legislative rule in perpetuity, so strong that it cannot be changed unless abrogated by the one who made it. And an ordinance is a legislative decree that backs it up as of right and privilege according to the test of faith. The three-day journey without water was to be the first of a whole series of such tests upon which the welfare of the children of Israel would depend. God was making it clear to them that their future welfare, even life itself, would be dependent upon faith and obedience. So He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His eyes, if you pay attention to His commands and keep all His decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD [Yahweh] Who heals you" (v. 26, NIV).

Thereafter the bitter waters were behind them. They came to Elim where there were twelve springs exuding sweet and potable waters, and seventy palm trees. And they encamped contentedly there by the waters.

[\(To be continued\)](#)

-
3. Compare Naomi's plea to be called 'Mara' on her return from Moab (Ruth 1:20).

Your Letters



Brother Thomas's "fence post analogy"

In the exchange of views under the heading "Daniel 12 and the Mount Olivet Prophecy" ([Mar. 2007, p. 95](#)) Brother Stephen Hughes refers to Brother Thomas's "fence post analogy". There is, however, a problem with this analogy which perhaps he did not appreciate. Brother Thomas likened the three comings of Christ to three poles, the first representing his first advent, the second representing A.D. 70 (which he believed was Christ's second coming) and the third Christ's latter-day return. He contended that when the apostles penned their epistles they were between

the first and second poles. They could not, and therefore did not, distinguish between A.D. 70 and the latter day: He says:

"The apostleship of the circumcision occupying a stand point after the first coming and the ascension, could see an interval between that and the second [A.D. 70]; but beyond this the wisdom given did not enable the Twelve to see that there would be an interval between the second and the third. John living until the Lord came to destroy the Commonwealth of Israel, and according to tradition, for many years after, could see the second interval, a long intervening period between the second and third. Paul being a teacher of the Gentiles,