

The Healing Nature of God in Exodus 15:26

A Research Paper

Presented to

Dr. William McDonald

Graduate School of Theology and Ministry

Oral Roberts University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Course

GBIB 551, Old Testament Synthesis ONLINE

By

John S. Carmichael

April 23, 2017

The thesis of this paper is to explore the healing nature of God as revealed in Exodus 15:26. The examination of this topic has significant impact on the lives of today's Christians and Christian ministry. This subject has accompanying controversy that is significant and has been divisive. This paper will not exhaust the subject of the thesis. Even as a person affirms the healing nature of God as presented, there needs additional exploration of the subject of divine healing.

This paper comes from the premise that healing is God's nature as seen in Exodus 15:26. It is logical to present an examination of the translations of verse itself. Also, it is important to discover the history that surrounds the verse up to the declaration, "your healer." The verse then serves as an outline to establish the thesis.

The thesis is an examination of the healing nature of God in the context of Exodus 15:26. Usually one benefits from looking at a verse in several translations to observe variations. In looking at over twenty translations, this verse is largely translated with little to no variation. To illustrate the uniformity of translation and not to take up too much space two translations of the verse are presented. The first is the New American Standard Bible (NASB), "And He said, 'If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer.'<sup>1</sup>" The second example to uniformity of translation is Young's Literal Translation (YLT) of this verse as follows: "and

---

<sup>1</sup> *New American Standard Bible*. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

He saith, 'If thou dost really hearken to the voice of Jehovah thy God, and dost that which is right in His eyes, and hast hearkened to His commands, and kept all His statutes: none of the sickness which I laid on the Egyptians do I lay on thee, for I, Jehovah, am healing thee.<sup>2</sup>'” There seems to be agreement about the translation of the verse, but there is varying interpretations of the this verse which is the basis of the thesis.

This verse was not written in a vacuum. To stay to true to the interpretation of the verse a brief overview of the story surrounding the verse is necessary. The Israelites had been delivered from Egypt. This happened with the accompaniment of ten plagues. The plagues are important to the thesis of this paper. Greta Hort, states that each plague came about from a series of interactions between Moses, Aaron and Pharaoh for the expressed purpose of obtaining clearance to go a three-day journey and pray to God<sup>3</sup>. H.I. Hester succinctly sums up the plague narrative by saying that the plagues gained in severity each time to ultimately resulting in the death of the first-borns of the land<sup>4</sup>.

The subject of the plagues is a source of controversy. This paper now will briefly look at some of the controversies in a broad scope and later deal with it in the specific scope of the thesis. Hort points out that the plague narrative is considered by some in the theological world as complete myth<sup>5</sup>. The number of plagues are in question. John Van Seters says there are two

---

<sup>2</sup> *Young's Literal Translation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1898.

<sup>3</sup> Greta Hort. "The plagues of Egypt." *Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 1958: 86

<sup>4</sup> H. I. Hester. *The Heart of Hebrew History*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1949. Kindle location 2439-6855

<sup>5</sup> Hort, 84

numbers in the source of plagues narrative<sup>6</sup>. The first number is from the Yahwist which contains seven plagues. He contends that the second group, the Priestly Writers “added three plagues<sup>7</sup>”. Seters also brings up another controversy. He writes that even though some of the plagues are said to come on all of Egypt and they were not “afflictions suffered by the Israelites. . .<sup>8</sup>” Hort would agree by arguing that it is reasonable to assume that even if the text does not specifically say the Israelites were excluded from plagues “none of them affected the Israelites.<sup>9</sup>” There are many who disagree. Seters points to B. S. Childs’ book, *Deuteronomistic Formulae of the Exodus Traditions*, that Childs believes Ezekiel 20, “seems to suggest that God’s judgment in Egypt was on the Israelites, not the Egyptians.<sup>10</sup>” That is quite an interesting take on this story.

Concluding the history surrounding the immediate context of the verse as part of the thesis, finds the Israelites at a three-day journey from the Red Sea. The specific location is a well that is called Marah. This well had bitter water. The water was made “sweet” by God<sup>11</sup>. This happened as Moses cast wood into the water. The “dead tree<sup>12</sup>” clearly did not have the remedy for the water and was effective only by the “word and power of God<sup>13</sup>.”

---

6 John Van Seters. "The plagues of Egypt: ancient tradition or literary invention?" *Zeitschrift Fur Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 98, no. 1, 1986. 31-32

7 Seters, 32

8 Seters, 35

9 Hort, 84

10 Seters, 35

11 Hester, Kindle location 2535-6855

12 Keil, C F, and F Delitzsch. *Keil & Delitzsch on the Pentateuch Vol. 1*. Edinburg 58

13 Keil & Delitzsch, 57

Exodus 15:26 provides the outline of this paper. First there is a presentation of the conditions for healing as it relates to obedience to God, “if you give earnest heed. . .” (NASB). Secondly, this paper addresses the origin and cause of sickness from the statement, “I put upon the Egyptians” (NASB). Thirdly, there will be an examination of the name of God, the Tetragrammaton, “I, the LORD” (NASB). Fourthly, the paper will look at the concepts of healing from the title “rapha”, “your healer” (NASB). Each of these points from Exodus 15:26 provides insight in the healing nature of God.

The first point of this outline addresses the conditions of healing. Finnis Dake presents four conditions for healing<sup>14</sup>. The first of the four conditions concern “heed to the voice of the LORD your God.” This, says Dake, means to give God acknowledgement as their God and do not serve any other idols. The second of the four conditions are to “do what is right in His sight”. This relates to godly conduct and life according to the opinion of God. The third of the four conditions are to “give ear to His commandments”. Dake says this not only includes the ten commandments, but the many others that regulate all right and wrong actions. The fourth of the four conditions are “keep all His commands.” A person must agree with all the regulations of God in the same way God keeps them. This according to Dake, this is to live a life of total concretion to God.

This paper will expound on this point further to provide a greater understanding of the next point about the causation of sickness. Dake says, “No man can expect to be immune for sickness unless he meets the conditions; but every man can expect such blessing when he meets

---

<sup>14</sup> Dake, Finnis Jennings. *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible*. Lawersville, GA: Dake Bible Sales, 1963. Notes on Exodus 15 (c)

them”<sup>15</sup>. The conditions for healing, summed up as obedience, correct the causes for sickness, summed up as sin. Opoku Onyinah, makes the point that Yahweh-Rapha in Exodus 15:26 is a “powerful deity” Who heals those who keep His covenant<sup>16</sup>. The healing provided by God here is conditional. Gerhard Hasel agrees by saying that “obedience to the Lord” provides God’s covenant people some protection from sickness<sup>17</sup>.

The second point of the Exodus 15:26 brings up the question of the origin and cause of sickness. “Does God really make people sick?” “Does God make people sick only to prove to them that He is a healer?” Aaron Jonathan Chalmers would say yes to both questions. In his paper, “*A Critical Analysis of the Formula ‘Yahweh Strikes and Heals’*”, he challenges the notion of God as just healer but says theologians have “neglected the numerous biblical references to Yahweh both striking and healing.”<sup>18</sup> He lists as proofs three scriptures. The first, “I have wounded and it is I who heal. . .” (Deut. 32:39 NASB). The second, “For He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds, and His hands also heal” (Job 5:18 NASB). And thirdly, “The LORD will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so, they will return to the LORD, and He will respond to them and will heal them” (Isa. 19:22 NASB). Chalmers goes on to say that this “formula” exists in more than ten other places in the Bible.<sup>19</sup>

---

15 Dake, notes Exodus 15:26 (c)

16 Opoku Onyinah. "God's Grace, Healing and Suffering." *International Review of Mission* 95, no. 377, 2006, 119

17 Hasel, Gerhard F. "Health and Healing in the Old Testament." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 21, 1983, 197

18 Aaron Jonathan Chalmers. "A Critical Analysis of the Formula "Yahweh Strikes and Heals"." *Vetus Testamentum* 61, no. 1, 2011, 16-17

19 Chalmers, 18

In examining a miracle Jesus performed in John 9, Dunn and Rogerson challenges this line of theology by denying that God would ever put sickness on people just to prove He could/would heal him.<sup>20</sup> Dr. Robert Young brings a special twist to the question of God putting sickness on a people only to heal them. In the *Analytical Concordance to the Holy Bible*, Dr. Young adds a section “*Hints and Helps to Bible Interpretation*”. In that section he writes, “. . .in the original Hebrew, the verb is in the permissive rather than the causative sense. He says though it is an active verb is only expresses the permission of it.”<sup>21</sup> Dake gives the following explanations of God being responsible for this sickness. He writes that God made the law of sowing and reaping, (Gal. 6:7-8); He created penalties for sin and rebellion (v. 26; 23:22-25; Lev.26); and He permitted certain others effective power of “executing the curse” without His additional help (Job 1:6-22; 2:1-13; John 10:10).<sup>22</sup>

So where did sickness come from? Shockingly, John Calvin taught that sickness came because of human sinfulness not God’s will by saying specifically, “sickness was inflicted as punishment for sin.”<sup>23</sup> Emiola Nihinlola, point to Adam’s original sin as the cause of all sickness and disease.<sup>24</sup> Dake writes that if man had not sinned there would not exist any sickness.<sup>25</sup> There

---

20 Dunn, James D., and John W. Rogerson. *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, 1185

21 Young, Robert. *Analytical Concordance of the Bible*. London: The Religious Track Society, viii

22 Dake, notes Exodus 15:26 (d)

23 Pavel Hejzlar, “John Calvin and the cessation of miraculous healing.” *Communio Viatorum* 49, (2007), 72

24 Emiola Nihinola, “By His Wounds We Are Healed”; A Theological Examination of the Nature of Healing in the Atonement.” *Ogbomosa Journal of Theology* XVII (2013), 22

is no mention of sickness before the fall of humanity. To that point, Dr. Onyiah opines that humans have been in a battle against illness and suffering since the fall.<sup>26</sup> Seters points that the sicknesses referred to in Exodus 15:26 are only a result of sin and disobedience.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, sickness is not the nature of God, but comes a result of original human sinfulness.

The next point of this paper is to an examination of the name of God, the tetragrammaton. In Exodus 15:26, God expresses Himself by the saying, “I, the LORD. . .” Dr. Larry Hart, says this is known as God’s proper name<sup>28</sup>. It expressed as four letters, YHWH. A side note, Dr. Hart, points out that Christians pronounce God’s name as Jehovah, in error.<sup>29</sup> This is God’s covenant name. It reveals His nature<sup>30</sup>. When God calls Himself this name it reveals Who He Is. In fact, as Dr. Hart writes, YHWH means “He Who is.”<sup>31</sup>

To further examine the name of God, LORD or YHWH, as it reveals His nature in the thesis, this paper draws upon David Noel Freedman’s paper, “*The Name of the God of Moses.*”<sup>32</sup> Freedman points out that God would use this name to clear up any misconceptions about

---

25 Dake, notes Exodus 15:26 (d)

26 Onyiah, 117

27 Seters 37

28 Hart, Larry. *Truth Aflame*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005, Kindle location 1563-12720

29 Hart, Kindle location 1558-12720

30 Hart, Kindle location 1544-12720

31 Hart, Kindle location 1551-12720

32 David Noel Freedman. "Name of the God of Moses." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79, no. 2, 1960, 151-152

Himself. When God would want to reveal an aspect of His nature He would attach YHWH to an attribute of His desire. Freedman gives definition of YHWH as, “He causes to be, he brings into existence; he brings to pass, he creates.”<sup>33</sup> He also adds that it is translated, “I bring into being.”<sup>34</sup> The name of God reveals the true nature of God. It can be trusted that God gets to be define His own nature as opposed to the doctrine of anyone’s theology. Human’s simply cannot and should not define God on their terms.

The fourth part of this paper is to look at the concepts of healing as it relates to the name of “rapha”. This discussion will start by quoting Dr. Hart. He writes, “Yahweh-Rapha, ‘the LORD who heals’ (Ex. 15:26), was given by the Lord himself as a promise that if Israel would heed his Law, then he would prevent any of the diseases of Egypt from coming upon them.”<sup>35</sup> This paper examines three concepts of healing in the name “Yahweh-Rapha”. The three concepts are, one, the meaning and scope of healing in the OT; two, the attainment of healing; and thirdly, the promise of healing.

The first concept of healing is to define the meaning and scope of healing in the OT. Gerhard F. Hasel writes that the term used in the Exodus 15:26, raphe, is translated “healer”, “doctor”, “physician”.<sup>36</sup> He says that physical healing is a fundamental point of faith that is Biblically based. He points to the recurring theme that the LORD brings healing and health throughout the OT. To get a sense of the healing nature of God, Hasel lists several instances of

---

33 Freedman, 152

34 Freedman, TNGM, 153

35 Hart, Kindle locations 1567-12720

36 Hasel, 200

God healing in the OT. Abimelech and his household gets healed when Abraham prays for them. (Gen. 20:17) The Psalmist prays and the LORD and He “healed them” (Ps. 107:20) or “healed me” (Ps. 30:2). The Psalmist goes on to conclude that God “heals all your diseases” (Ps. 103:3), “heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds” (Ps. 147:3).

The scope of healing in the OT is spiritual, mental, emotional, and in a real sense physical. “A person may be described as healthy when he exhibits that state of body and mind in which all the functions are being discharged harmoniously.”<sup>37</sup> The OT gives a holistic view of healing. The basic concept is found in the Hebrew word “shalom”. This is translated as “wholeness”, or “complete”.<sup>38</sup> This word is used when Jacob told Joseph, “Go now and see about the welfare [shalom] of your brothers.” (Gen. 37:14) As Hasel points out, it seems he was asking about “state of health”.<sup>39</sup> What seems to get missed when discussing healing from an OT perspective, it that God does not compartmentalize humans. He sees humans as complete beings and treats humanity as such. There is not the sense that God will “heal” one aspect of a human while leaving the other aspects afflicted. Old Testament healing of humans is a restoration of relationship with God, themselves, other human relationships, and the environment. It is holistic.<sup>40</sup> In her master’s thesis on Isaiah 53, Deborah Schmid, writes that the OT word “healing” is physical and should be treated as a removal of physical disease.<sup>41</sup>

---

37 Hasel, 191

38 Hasel, 191

39 Hasel, 192

40 Hasel, 197

The second concept of healing from the name of “raphe” is how to attain it. This paper looks to five aspects of attainment of healing in the OT. They are: faith, rest, diet, sexual morality, and forgiveness.

The first aspect of attaining healing in the OT is faith. Healing by faith is to look to God and Him alone for healing. A way to illustrate this is to look at the story of King Asa. Paul W. Walaskay, Ph.D., points out that this the story King Asa having sore feet is the only reference to an “attending physician.”<sup>42</sup> Yet, this was counted as “faithless”<sup>43</sup> as the king was “forsaking the LORD, he consulted with physicians.” (2 Chr. 16:12). Walaskay also points out that God used the medical community with the Shiphrah and Puah the midwives as proof the problem was not use of the doctors.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps, 2 Chronicles 16:12 clears King Asa’s situation up. It says, “Even in his disease he did not seek the LORD but the physicians.” Hasel believes the problem was not that King Asa consulted the physicians, but that he only consulted the physicians and not the LORD.<sup>45</sup> Walaskay observes that God expects His people to rely on Him when they encounter disease.<sup>46</sup>

---

41 Deborah Schmid, “Healing In The Atonement of Isaiah 52:13 – 53:6” Master’s Thesis, Graduate School of Theology and Ministry, Oral Roberts University, 2013 (Schmid 2013), 77-78

42 Paul W. Walaskay. "Biblical and classical foundations of the healing ministries." *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 37, no.3, 1983, 197

43 Walaskay, 197

44 Walaskay, 198

45 Hasel, 199

46 Walaskay, 197

The second aspect of attaining healing is rest. The seventh day Sabbath rest was created for humans. It is to benefit the restoration and healing of human's physical bodies. It is a "gift of the Creator for man".<sup>47</sup> Hasel brings out some very important points concerning the rest God requires for the benefit of the human body. He says it is a time of renewal emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and physically. It also furnishes humans the opportunity to revisit relationships with other humans. "Medical science has shown, however, that the ideal rest period for the healthy operation of the human body and mind is that of one day in seven."<sup>48</sup> He goes on to say that this will help prevent disease as well as be a cure.

The third aspect of attaining healing is diet. There is a link between health and diet. From the beginning, God gave specific directions as to what it is eaten. In Genesis 1:29, "every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed" could be eaten. Then after the Flood, "God allowed meat products to be eaten in addition to the vegetarian diet they were used to" (see Gen. 9:3).<sup>49</sup> The book of Leviticus gives the distinctions between clean and unclean foods. Hasel believes that God was not attempting to be overly controlling rather He was wanting to prevent disease. Additionally, God wants His people to be able to maintain good health.<sup>50</sup> R. K. Harrison points out that God's communication to Moses was the first of its kind to make the connection of infection being transmitted by water and food.<sup>51</sup> God wants humans to stay healthy and diet His is part of His plan.

---

47 Hasel, 194

48 Hasel, 194

49 Hasel, 195

50 Hasel, 196

The fourth aspect to attaining healing is sexual morality. The commands God setup for morality sexually are designed to keep humans healthy and protected from diseases<sup>52</sup>. God established that healthy sexual relationships are between husband and wife (Gen. 1:27-28). There are numerous prohibitions sexually in the OT. Hasel quotes a physician who stated that if humankind would just follow the Biblical commands sexually it “would put an end to the spread of venereal diseases.”<sup>53</sup>

The fifth aspect of attaining healing is forgiveness. This is in keeping with the holistic approach the OT has toward the healing of humans.<sup>54</sup> Healing is more than a process that can be verified by the medical community. Hasel points to several Scriptures that correspond to healing in response to a confession of sin (Ps. 41:3-4; 30:3-6).<sup>55</sup> Hasel succinctly says, “it is apparent that the themes of healing, forgiveness, and salvation are not (and cannot be) separated in Scripture.”<sup>56</sup>

The fourth concept of healing is that is promised. Isaiah 53:5, from Isaiah’s perspective, reveals a future Messiah. In this verse healing appears to connect sickness and sin with healing and forgiveness. It is through this promised Messiah that healing comes to all due to His suffering.<sup>57</sup> Malachi talks of the One Who “will rise with healing in its wings” (Mal. 4:2). This

---

51 Hasel, 196

52 Hasel, 197

53 Hasel, 197

54 Hasel, 201

55 Hasel, 201

56 Hasel, 201

One was to be “actually broken and really crushed, not for sake of His sin, but as substitute for our sin. Thus, His sicknesses are healed on those who were not afflicted by them.”<sup>58</sup> Matthew 8:17 talks about Jesus Christ being the One Who fulfills Isaiah 53, “This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES." This was an explanation of Jesus Christ physically and spiritually bringing healing those who came Him.

The thesis of this paper is to show the healing nature of God from Exodus 15:26. God has directed commands to help humans avoid sickness that comes from disobedience. The sickness that does come is not from the overt will of God but because of the rebellion of humans that occurred in Eden. Some of sickness that occurs is a result of individual sin, but not all. Yet, God clarified His attitude and desire for human healing when He attached His personal name, YHWH or LORD, to the healing. The healing that God provides is not segmented. He desires for all humankind to be healed. Spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically. It is this belief in the healing nature of God that should be at the heart of Christian ministry today. It is at the heart of Oral Roberts University. The school is founded by the word God spoke to Oral Roberts, “Raise up your students to hear My voice, to go where My light is dim, where My voice is heard small, and My healing power is not known, even to the uttermost bounds of the earth. Their work will exceed yours, and in this I, am well pleased.”

---

57 Hasel, 202

58 Hasel, 202

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Chalmers, Aaron Jonathan. "A Critical Analysis of the Formula "Yahweh Strikes and Heals"." *Vetus Testamentum* 61, no. 1, 2011: 16-33.
- Dake, Finnis Jennings. *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible*. Lawersville, GA: Dake Bible Sales, 1963.
- Dunn, James D., and John W. Rogerson. *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003.
- Freedman, David Noel. "Name of the God of Moses." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79, no. 2, 1960: 151-156.
- Hart, Larry. *Truth Aflame*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.
- Hasel, Gerhard F. "Health and Healing in the Old Testament." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 21, 1983: 191-202.
- Hester, H I. *The Heart of Hebrew History*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1949.
- Hort, Greta. "The plagues of Egypt." *Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 1958: 48-59.
- Keil, C F, and F Delitzsch. *Keil & Delitzsch on the Pentateuch Vol. 1*. Edinburg, n.d.
- New American Standard Bible*. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.
- Nihinlola, Emiola. "By His Wounds We Are Healed." *Ogbomosa Journal of Theology* XVII, 2013.
- Onylnah, Opoku. "God's Grace, Healing and Suffering." *International Review of Mission* 95, no. 377, 2006: 117-127.
- Pavel, Hejzal. "John Calvin and the cessation of miraculous healing." *Communio Viatorum* 49, 2007: 72.
- Schmid, Deborah. "Healing In The Atonement of Isaiah 52:13-53:6." *Masters Thesis, Graduate School of Theology and Ministry, Oral Roberts University* , 2013.
- Seters, John Van. "The plagues of Egypt: ancient tradition or literary invention?" *Zeitschrift Fur Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 98, no. 1, 1986: 31-39.

Walaskay, Paul W. "Biblical and classical foundations of the healing ministries." *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 37, no.3, 1983: 195-206.

Young, Robert. *Analytical Concordance of the Bible*. London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d.

—. *Young's Literal Translation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1898.