The Hebrew people feel let down.

Moses has taken them from what they knew, a hard life, but one of some certainty and next to the Nile they at least had water.

But out in the desert, all they could see and understand was their thirst, and their anger at being sold a pup.

So, they badger Moses, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?”

This sort of disappointment is a deep-seated one. I am not sure what expectations they may have had in their minds when they left Egypt with Moses, but whatever they imagined, it certainly was not this. Thirst is not something easily fixed.

This complaint about being thirsty comes on top of their complaint about being hungry, and the story just before the one we have read today is the story of the gift of mana. So, you might be right in wondering, don’t they ever give up, what will they complain of next.

So, this feeling of being let down is deep seated, and even though they have the miraculous gift of food, presumably without water it was not much use.

It seems to me, that what is going on here in this story and others is a deep sense that God is not fully on their side, that God has left them, gone.

They are let down, abandoned by God.

Given the gift of Mana that you would think rationally might show them that God was with them, this feeling expressed here must run deep.

The second story, is also about loose, abandonment. As we know the woman who Jesus meets at the well is there on her own at the middle of the day – that time of the day when the sun was highest, the heat unbearable, when no other person would be at the well, because normal people would get their water with everyone else, in the cool of the morning, or in the evening before the evening meal. This woman fetches her water when no one is around.

We learn that she has had many husbands, possibly a euphemism. She could have been a prostitute.

So, she was lonely, ostracised. To the Jewish people who may have read this story, or heard it being told, they would have been puzzled that Jesus would have even gone near her.

So, we have these two stories, one about a people who rightly or wrongly feel abandoned in the world, that God has forsaken them, while in our other story, a woman who has hit rock bottom, who though it might appear that that she has found love, has not.

These are very real human emotions.

Is God with us or not. Are we lovable or not?

These feelings, these, for want of a better word, experiences are not unique to the people in the two stories, they are ones that we may have experienced and known in our lives.

Where is God, ware we loved?

How are the stories resolved?

The first story is resolved miraculously.

God instructs Moses, you can almost get a slight hint of exasperation in God’s voice, listen to it again and pick this up:

*The Lord said to Moses, ‘Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.’*

I find the refence to the staff telling. This was the staff that struck the Nile, turning it into Blood.

Are these people for real, if you want proof that God is with you then that spectacular event alone should be stunning proof.

What I take from this is that trust in God comes from something else altogether, and not from stunning miraculous events like the provision of Mana, of water from a rock, or the turning of the Nile to blood. The Hebrew people continue to have a very chequered career with God, and even after this event continue to complain and grumble.

In our story from John the resolution is very different.

Here Jesus walks alongside this woman, is honest with her, compassionate towards her, welcoming of her she leaves him, full of admiration of him, ready to share her story with others.

What do these stories say to us?

Yes I would like God to visit us with all the bells and whistles of a parting of the red sea, or a gift of mana or maybe lotto, so that Somervell is bursting at the seams and all our problems are answered and our worries gone, but a part of me thinks that such miraculous-ness would be short lived and not lasting, and that instead, love and grace is found in the more lasting water of relationships and communities working together, of a shared love and welcome that Jesus demonstrates and the gift of the spirit in our lives gives.

We love because God first loved us, we love because others have loved us, and we love because we do and can love, and that form of love is more nourishing and deeper than any mana, more quenching than any water, because we know it is the water of life.

Amen.