

LESSONS: *Wandering in the Wilderness*



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DESERT OF SHUR: “Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went **into the Desert of Shur**. For **three days** they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, **they could not drink its water because it was bitter**. (That is why the place is called Marah.) So, **the people grumbled** against Moses, saying, ‘**What are we to drink?**’ Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. **He threw it into the water**, and the water became **fit to drink/sweet**... the LORD 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 who heals you’” (Exodus 15:22-26).

LESSON: The Desert is a place void of life, that is, God’s Word. They traveled for three days, which is the period of time that God considers to be divinely complete and they found water, but it was bitter. Water symbolizes the cleansing of the Holy Spirit, which through baptism brings a spiritual re-birth. The bitter waters symbolize the many lies, misinformation, and disinformation spread continually by those who oppose God. Because the Israelites were carnal, they grumbled against Moses. The 21st century house of Israel continues this practice of blame. When things go wrong, their first response is a blasphemous “Jesus Christ!”, “Jeez”, “God!”, “O My God!” Moses took the piece of wood, like a staff, symbolic of authority from God and threw it in the water, purifying it, so that it was fit to drink. **The lesson is through God’s Holy Spirit you will recognize truth and avoid sin by obeying His commands and decrees. With a willing heart to obey God, He will heal us from the consequences of sin when we fall.**

“Then they came to Elim, where there were **twelve springs and seventy palm trees**, and they camped there near the water” (Exodus 15:27).

LESSON: The twelve springs are representative of the twelve tribes of Israel and the seventy palm trees are the umbrella of God's perfect council of seventy. God's plan for the establishment of His kingdom will prevail against the wiles of the powers and authorities in heavenly places. He is the ALL MIGHTY GOD. God's perfect government of twelve will be sealed. "Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel" (Revelation 7:4) and "Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and **with Him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads...** No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for **they kept themselves pure. They follow the lamb wherever he goes.** They were purchased from among men and offered as **first-fruits** to God and the Lamb. **No lie was found in their mouths; they were blameless**" (Revelation 14:1, 3-5).

DESERT OF SIN: "The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the **Desert of Sin...** they **grumbled against Moses and Aaron.** The Israelites said to them, '**If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt!** There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to **starve this entire assembly to death.**' Then the LORD said to Moses, 'I will rain down **bread from heaven** for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. **On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days'**... He has heard your **grumbling against him...** At **twilight you will eat meat,** and in **the morning, you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'** That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning, there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor... Moses said, 'It is the **bread the LORD has given you to eat...** On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much... and the LORD commanded: '**Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD...** the Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; **they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan**" (Exodus 16).

LESSON: The Israelites entered the next desolate place because they had a lot to learn. As usual, they grumbled because they did not have any food. Yes, they were starving—more spiritually than physically. God used their hunger pangs to introduce them to the future sacrifice of Christ—the Word, where his body became by design, symbolic of unleavened bread like the wafer-type bread, they called manna.

"And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, 'Take, eat: **this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me**'" (I Corinthians 11:24) and "Jesus then said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but **it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.** For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.' Then they said to Him, 'Lord, always give us this bread'" (John 6:32-35). "This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. **I am the living bread** that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh" (John 6:50-51). God was teaching them about His plan for their spiritual growth, development and salvation

through Christ. He sent quails at twilight and manna in the morning. They were instructed to gather manna for six days, but not on the seventh day because it is a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Keeping this day with the LORD was a sign between God and His people. **The Israelites ate manna until they entered the Promised Land.**

“The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was **no water for the people to drink**. So, **they quarreled with Moses** and said, ‘Give us water to drink’... They said, ‘**Why do you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?**’ Moses cried out to the LORD... The LORD answered Moses:

1. **Walk on ahead of the people**
2. **Take with you some of the elders of Israel**
3. **Take in your hand the staff** with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb.
4. **Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.**’

So, Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel and they called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, ‘**Is the LORD among us or not?**’” (Exodus 17:1-7)

LESSON: God chose the path of their 40-year journey through the deserts, so that the steps of salvation would be revealed.

The first desert taught the need for truth and baptism—a re-birth. The “sweet water” is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. **In this desert, the Israelites get water when Moses who was accompanied with their leaders, strike the rock. This is the salvation step of the crucifixion.** It was the Jewish leaders who demanded that Christ be crucified, regardless of the outcome of the Roman courts. Many of the Jews do not recognize Christ as the Son of God. “Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate, knowing **it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.** But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead” (Mark 15:9-11). Despite the apparent injustice of Christ’s crucifixion, it was the sacrifice planned from the foundation of the world. Jesus Christ is the rock they struck. “Come, let us **sing for joy to the LORD**; let us shout aloud to the **Rock of our salvation**” (Psalm 95:1) and “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am laying in Zion **a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes will be unshakable**” (Isaiah 28:16), “And coming to Him as to a **living stone** which has been **rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God**” (I Peter 2:4).

DESERT OF ZIN: “In the first month the whole Israelite community arrived at the Desert of Zin... Now **there was no water for the community**, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. **They quarreled with Moses** and said, “**If only we had died** when our brothers fell dead before the Lord! Why did you bring the LORD’s community into this desert, **that we and our**

livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to **this terrible place?** It has **no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates.** And there is **no water to drink!**" (Numbers 20:2-5).

Moses and Aaron left the assembly of Israelites and went to the Tent of Meeting and asked God what to do. He said:

1. Assemble the Israelites
2. Take a staff
3. **Speak to that rock** before the assembly of Israelites (Numbers 20:8).

LESSON: This event occurred during the last year of the Israelites wandering in the desert. God was teaching the final step of salvation and that is the **need for prayer.**

"They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same **spiritual drink**; for they drank from the **spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ**" (I Corinthians 10:3-4).

Unfortunately, this lesson was neither demonstrated properly by Moses nor understood as it was intended by the Israelites. Moses did not follow God's instructions, instead he:

1. Took the staff
2. Assembled the Israelites
3. Said, "Listen, you rebels must **we** bring water out of this rock?"
4. **Raised his arm** and **struck the rock twice** with his staff (Numbers 20:9-11).

The danger for mankind holding positions of authority under God is not to take as their own the credit for the power of God. When Moses said, "Listen, you rebels must **WE** bring water out of this rock?" he was referring to himself and Aaron. Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence, which was symbolic of accepting authority from God and in front of all the Israelites, he raised his arm and struck the rock **twice**. Previously in Exodus 17:6, Moses was told to strike the rock once symbolic of the smitten, crucified Christ. This time, he strikes the rock twice in front of the whole assembly and by his actions, he insinuates a second crucifixion. He was told this time to **speak to the rock**. The whole assembly did not get the message of the importance of prayer. God punished Moses for his disobedience. Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because God made it clear that all who are disobedient and those who misrepresent God's word will not enter into the spiritual Promised Land. Despite Moses' bitter disappointment of his actions, it had to be so.

The 40-year journey through the wilderness where the Israelites complained and rebelled over and over again, tells a story of this evil age of rebellious mankind. During their journey in the deserts, God sustained them with "sweet water," quails, and "manna" before they entered the Promised Land. Water (the Holy Spirit), Christ's sacrifice, God's word and the Word (meat and bread), and finally more water to show the need for prayer asking continually for the Holy Spirit, while growing closer to God, were provided as the Israelites wandered in places that were spiritually dead. Their salvation plan was given to them hundreds of years before the events occurred.

Did they learn the lessons? Probably not. Today, however, 21st century believers have both the Old and the New Testament carefully bound into one great book. The real question is—do **WE** get it?

Christ's first recorded miracle was turning water into wine. It was said that the best wine was served last. "So, the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matthew 20:16). All the lessons that the Israelites struggled to understand were saved for the believers who have the complete writings of God. So, much more is expected from us who have a wealth of information at our fingertips. Yet in our great wealth, we have grown fat and lazy. "But Israel soon became fat and unruly; the people grew heavy, plump, and stuffed! Then, **they abandoned the God who had made them; they made light of the Rock of their salvation**" (Deuteronomy 32:15). Such is the case for 21st century Israel—**both houses. GOD IS NOT DONE WITH ISRAEL!**

A TIME OF TROUBLE IS COMING: "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time" (Daniel 12:1).

BOTH HOUSES OF ISRAEL WILL CALL OUT TO GOD: Moses wrote, "When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the Lord your God and listen to His voice" (Deuteronomy 4:30).

"In those days, at that time, the people of Israel and the people of Judah together will go in tears to seek the Yahuah, their God. They will ask the way of Zion and turn their faces toward it. They will come and bind themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten" (Jeremiah 50:4-5).

IN CAPTIVITY AGAIN, THEIR REDEEMER HEARS THEM: "The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah as well. All their captors hold them fast, refusing to let them go. Yet the Redeemer is strong; Yahuah Almighty is his name. He will vigorously defend their cause so that he may bring rest to their land, but unrest to those who live in Babylon" (Jeremiah 50:33-34).

A SECOND EXODUS IS PROPHESED: "Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand, the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea" (Isaiah 11:11).

"So, the ransomed of the LORD will return, and come with joyful shouting to Zion, and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away" (Isaiah 51:11, 35:10).

The 21st century houses of Israel will come to know who they are and they will be ashamed of their sins. The final great witness will go out to the whole world and a great multitude of people from all nations will seek God during the time of great distress. Our graceful God will forgive them and finally this evil age will come to an end.

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