

# The First Test in the Wilderness

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The day prior was Pesach Sheni – the second Passover.

*“<sup>9</sup> Then YHWH spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>10</sup> “Speak to the children of Yisrael, saying: ‘If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or is far away on a journey, he may still keep YHWH’s Passover. <sup>11</sup> On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.” Numbers 9:9-11*

It was a second chance for certain people unable to attend the regular Passover.

Interestingly, in the year that Yahushua was crucified and resurrected, the Pesach Sheni fell on Day 28 of the omer count. That left twenty two days until Shavuot for those who entered into the Covenant during the second Passover. Those twenty two days would essentially be like a final countdown – aleph through tau.

The Spirit fell upon individuals who were present in Jerusalem at the tau. Of course, the tau represents the mark of the Covenant. So this

is a very significant time that we are in, and most fail to see all of the prophetic implications, or the lessons.

Well, this past week we passed the halfway point in the Omer Count. Today is Day 30 in the omer count, and it is the fifth Sabbath in the count. Yesterday was the aleph in the countdown and today is the bet, which represents a house. We are supposed to be dwelling in our homes on Shabbat, but most of us are still in exile.

Again, remember that Yahushua was resurrected on “the first of the Sabbaths.” (John 20:1) So this period also encompasses the 40 days that Yahushua remained on the Earth after His resurrection. (Acts 1:3)

I always recollect the fact that after the resurrection, Yahushua was still present and very much alive during the Pesach Sheni. I wonder if He attended a seder? Can you imagine Him explaining what just happened to a select few who were rehearsing the second Passover meal. Mind you, it was likely at the time of the harvest when people were shifting their focus from the barley to the wheat.

As previously explained, this period of time hearkens back to the journey of Yisrael from Egypt to Sinai - from the Feast of Unleavened Bread to Shavuot.

They passed through the waters while leaving Egypt, and went into the wilderness to be tested. The purpose of testing was so that they could learn to grow up, and mature.

Imagine for a minute if your children never grew up. While we all look back fondly at the different stages our children passed through, consider how it would be if they got stuck in one of those stages.

What if they never left the diaper stage? What if you needed to change your child's diaper for their entire life?

I used to have a celebration every time one of my children grew out of diapers. I nearly went broke each time. I can't imagine if there was no end to it.

What if they never were weaned, and needed to be fed milk all of their lives?

Those fond memories would turn into a nightmare. My wife and I would probably be long dead.

While our son is a prince of a young man, he nearly killed my wife from exhaustion, and we both have gray hairs with his name on them. We are both thankful that he grew past the first two years, and matured into a fine young man.

The point is that we are given the lesson of parenthood so we can get a little taste of how our Heavenly Father looks upon us. It is just a glimpse, and it is truly a gift. We are supposed to understand that He wants us all to grow up.

He doesn't want to change our diapers or spoon feed us our entire lives. While He surely will provide for our needs, and carry us when necessary, He wants us to learn to stand up and walk on our own. He wants us to be potty trained, and be able to dress ourselves.

That is why He gave specific instructions how to act, what to eat, how to dress, and even how to relieve ourselves in a sanitary fashion. It's all there written in the Torah.

Ultimately, He wants us to grow and mature so that we can be ready for a royal wedding someday.

YHWH prepares us and teaches us through various tests. During the omer count, it is a good time to consider the tests that Yisrael experienced on their journey from Egypt to Sinai.

One of the major “revelations” I received in my journey out of Christianity and into the Covenant walk was the fact that the so-called Last Supper was a Passover meal.

Another one was the fact that Yisrael was taken to Sinai for a wedding. I was always taught that the Church was the Bride of Christ. I was never told that Yisrael was the Bride of YHWH.

That wedding was scheduled to occur at the Appointed Time of Shavuot, and the Bride needed to learn some lessons before that important event.

She was already shown that her Husband would deliver her, protect her and defend her. YHWH destroyed the most powerful Nation on Earth in order to teach her that lesson.

He didn’t just do it for those Yisraelites leaving Egypt though. He did it for us as well – to build our faith. When we recount the story of the Exodus at Passover each year, it is so that we will be ready to take that same journey, and pass the tests that the Yisraelites failed.

With that understanding, let’s examine another one of the tests that the Yisraelites experienced during this time of the omer count.

Last week we mentioned how Yisrael “*put [YHWH] to the test ten times*” by not obeying his voice. (Numbers 14:22) We looked at how the first time when Yisrael was blocked between the Red Sea in the front, and Pharaoh’s army behind them, they became terrified with fear.

It was the first test because it is probably the most important. In fact, it was “the straw that broke the camel’s back” because it was also the tenth test, when they feared the giants before entering into the Promised Land. (Numbers 14:1-5) Fear is the opposite of faith.

YHWH promises to help us. If we believe Him, then we trust Him, and we do not fear.

So, it is imperative that we don’t respond with our eyes, or our emotions. You may be chased by Pharaoh, or run into giants along your Covenant journey. No need to fear. He has our front, and our backs.

*“For you shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight; For YHWH will go before you, and the Elohim of Yisrael will be your rear guard.” Isaiah 52:12*

After we realize that YHWH “has our backs” we can then pass through the waters, and continue to follow Him into the wilderness.

That leads us to the second test that the Yisraelites experienced – the waters of Marah. Here is the account that we read about after Yisrael passed through the waters of the Red Sea.

*“<sup>22</sup> So Moses brought Yisrael from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. <sup>23</sup> Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. <sup>24</sup> And the people complained against Moses, saying, ‘What shall we drink?’ <sup>25</sup> So he cried out to YHWH, and YHWH showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, <sup>26</sup> and said, If you diligently heed the voice of YHWH your*

*Elohim and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am YHWH who heals you. <sup>27</sup> Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.” Exodus 15:22-27*

At Marah they found bitter water. Marah literally means “bitter.” It could range from simply a bitter taste to poisonous. Therefore, the water was possibly consumable, it just didn’t taste good.

The solution to the bitterness was interesting. YHWH “showed” Moses a “tree” (ets). The Hebrew word for “showed” is “yarah.” It is a root of the word “torah,” and literally means “point” or “teach.” So there was an important lesson at Marah involving a tree.

The Hebrew word “ets” typically means “tree” as in The Tree (ets) of Life. So did Moses uproot an entire tree, and throw it in the water?

Well, ets can also mean any wooden object, like a branch or stick. The important thing is that the tree made the bitter water “sweet.” The Hebrew word is “mataq,” which means “sweet” or “pleasant.” So He made what was bitter - sweet.

Remember that they just ate bitter herbs “meror” at the Passover Seder, while they were covered by the blood of the lamb. Now they were brought to bitter waters, three days after finally leaving Egypt through the waters of the Red Sea.

The fact that they ate bitter herbs and did not die likely reveals that the water was simply brackish, and not tasty. It was a continuation of the lesson at Passover that we need to accept the bitter. Therefore, I doubt that the water was poisonous.

They were not happy with the water that was provided. They wanted

something that tasted better, not bitter.

The “tree” made the water delicious. That harkens to the Messiah Who declared to the Samaritan woman at the well: *“If you knew the gift of Elohim, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”* John 4:10

He later cried out in Jerusalem, at Hoshana Rabbah: *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup> He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”* John 7:37

Now let’s consider the context of Marah again.

Yisrael was a bride on her way to a wedding. YHWH had just protected and redeemed her by the blood of the lamb, and delivered her from the “bitterness” of bondage in Egypt. (Exodus 1:14).

YHWH brought her into the wilderness of Shur. The Hebrew word “shur” means “wall.”

This was the first test after she was completely delivered and set free, so we must assume it was very important.

This bride was instructed to eat bitter herbs at the Covenant meal. After three days without water, the Yisraelites literally hit a wall, and were offered bitter waters to drink. They did not want to drink the bitter waters, and YHWH then pointed to a tree as the solution.

What tree? Well, that is the subject of great speculation. Those who follow Yahushua understand that He was hung on a tree.

*“The Elohim of our fathers raised up Yahushua whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.”* Acts 5:30

*“And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Yahudim and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.” Acts 10:39*

The fact that Yahushua was hung on a tree was a sign, that was supposed to bring us back to this very important teaching. He was also referred to as “the Branch” (tsemach). (Isaiah 4:2; Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12)

We then understand that this lesson was all about Yahushua and His Bride – us. The solution was provided on a tree, through The Branch.

Later, Yisrael would learn the reason for the test of the bitter waters. It was the test of an adulterous wife, when a man experiences a spirit of “jealousy.” (Numbers 5:11-31) Now interestingly, the Hebrew word for “jealous” is “qana” or “cana.” The root can also mean acquire.

Do you remember where the first recorded miracle of Yahushua occurred? A wedding in Cana. Coincidence? Of course not.

Yahushua was at a wedding feast, revealing that He was there to “acquire” a bride through His blood. He turned water into wine. At that point in the feast, the wine would typically have been inferior. That’s when they would pull out the “vinegar” – the cheap and bitter stuff.

The text in John 2 records that the Master of the Feast “*tasted the water that was made wine,*” and it was delicious. It was the best.

Of course that water was placed into stone water pots that were empty. That is because they were used for the waters of purification that the bride had bathed in, to prepare herself for her husband.

So this test was all about the Messiah, and His future Bride.

We know the bride Yisrael still had Egypt in her heart when she passed through the waters of the Red Sea. She showed herself to be an adulterous bride later at Sinai, in the midst of the wedding ceremony. She worshipped the gods of Egypt while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Tablets of the Covenant. They were the Ketubah - the Marriage Contract.

Since Yisrael broke the Covenant, Moses broke the tablets. Yisrael was actually made to drink the “bitter waters” containing the ground up idol of gold. (Exodus 32:19-21) The Bride failed to learn the lesson of Marah, she did not diligently heed the voice of YHWH spoken from the mountain.

Thankfully, YHWH sent His Son to “fulfill” the Covenant by accepting the punishment that the bride deserves. Now, all those joined with Yisrael through the renewed Covenant do not need to drink the bitter waters and suffer the consequences of an adulterous wife. Instead, we are directed to the tree where Yahushua was crucified, and took the penalty upon Himself.

He took the bitter waters and gives us delicious water of life to drink. That is why we read in Revelation: *“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”* Revelation 22:17

So, the lesson for us is that we deserve the bitter waters, and the penalty of an adulterous woman. Thankfully, we can look to the Messiah when we thirst. He will make the bitter waters sweet.

Now consider what happened after the lesson at Marah

YHWH made a statute and an ordinance for them. Mind you, this is

before He gave the Torah at Sinai.

Here is what He provided. *“If you diligently heed the voice of YHWH your Elohim and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am YHWH who heals you.”*

So, He is laying it out right from the beginning. Diligent obedience is what He expects from His Bride. If we fail to heed His voice, we will end up drinking the bitter waters.

He then brought them to a special place named Elim. Elim literally means “big trees.” There were twelve springs of water, and seventy palm trees – tamar.

If you have read my messages and books, you should be aware of the fact that twelve and seventy are highly significant in the Covenant plan of Elohim.

They are the framework for the restoration of the Nations, represented by seventy, that will flow through Yisrael, represented by twelve. Yahushua made that perfectly clear when He first sent out the twelve, followed by the seventy. (see Luke 9-10)

Now recall that at Elim, the Yisraelites were still carrying the bones of Joseph with them. That would have been a constant reminder that this journey had much to do with a covenant fulfillment through Joseph.

Of course, all of this should have made them remember the promise to Joseph as they experienced an oasis after the Wilderness of Shur (wall).

*“Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall (shur).” Genesis 49:22*

Look at the various pieces of wood in this passage. The Hebrew word for “bough” is “ben,” which means “son.” The Hebrew word for “branches” is “bat,” which means daughter. We are looking at “a family tree” through Joseph, that is nourished by spring waters.

At Elim we learn that the only way to the spring waters is past the wall – the test of the bitter waters. These are the incredible prophetic implications concerning the Messiah ben Joseph.

So, what a beautiful picture that YHWH provided three days after their entrance into the wilderness. Of course, Yisrael would later learn the deeper significance of three days. It would be a sign of the Messiah.

Yahushua specifically stated: *“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”* Matthew 12:40

It is no coincidence that Jonah was in the water for three days and three nights. Yahushua would be “cut off” after being hung on a tree. He was in the tomb for three days and three nights, and then resurrected on the first of the Sabbaths in the omer count.

So this count we are in has deep significance for those who follow Yahushua. What at first seems like a mundane exercise in counting, turns out to be filled with lessons for our future.

Last week we talked about the harvest and winnowing that would occur during the count, because we are in the midst of the grain harvest. The entire omer count involves cutting, gathering, threshing,

winnowing, collecting and storing grain. First the barley and then the wheat.

It is a very work intensive time, that is a direct result of man's sin in the garden. While YHWH provided fruit trees (ets) in the Garden, because of man's sin we now need to toil for our bread.

*"<sup>17</sup> Then to Adam He said, Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': 'Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. <sup>19</sup> In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; For dust you are, and to dust you shall return."*  
Genesis 3:17-19

It's the same problem from the beginning. Whose voice are you going to heed? Are you going to diligently obey the voice of YHWH, or some other voice?

So, this period of time should still be an intensive time for those who are the wheat of the Messiah, and focused on the harvest.

It is a time of the grain harvest when people would be focused on their daily bread for the upcoming year.

Next week, we will look at how bread also became a test.

Until then, may we all examine our condition as a bride headed to a wedding. Are we still carrying the gods of Egypt and Babylon in our hearts? Are we a faithful bride with oil for our lamps?

Consider the bitterness that we deserve, and the living waters available and waiting for those who are wise.

