

CHAPTER 10

BAPTISM AND A NEW LIFE: FOLLOWING ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT

All were baptized into Moses, in the cloud and in the sea.

—Paul

GOD PASSED OVER Israel for judgment and saved Israel and those believing Egyptians who also came under the blood of the lamb and departed Egypt (Ex. 12:48–49). For Israel, it was the Passover. For the Egyptians, it was the pass through (Ex. 12:12).

That first Passover foreshadowed Christ, the merciful Passover Lamb from God. Paul said Israel's journey out of Egypt was for us to learn from today (1 Cor. 10:11).

BAPTIZED IN THE RED SEA, RISING TO A NEW LIFE

God brought His people out of Egypt while they were still in bondage to sin. God began saving Israel,

not because of their good works, but by offering them salvation by His love and grace. God saved Israel before He gave them His righteous law of love. During their Egyptian captivity, the sons of Israel had lost God's laws that their free fathers Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others had followed. Salvation has always been by God's grace, not our works. But God does expect repentance and change to accompany His gift of salvation. God is not mocked (Gal. 6:7).

As Israel (and the strangers who went with them) descended down into the depths of the Red Sea, they were baptized. They passed through a watery grave, which not only foreshadowed Israel washing away their past, but it also symbolized becoming dead to their past sinful habits. As they rose up on the other side (no longer in Egyptian territory), it was like a resurrection to a new life. Israel was no longer immersed in the sin-laden ways of Egypt; now they were immersed in the cloud of God's spiritual presence, where they were loved and fed with bread from heaven and with the wisdom of His laws (Deut. 4:6). The Red Sea was a watery grave for the Egyptians. Since they did not put their faith in the blood of the lamb, they had to pay for their sins with their own blood. The whole army of Egypt perished in the sea (Ex. 15:4-5)! But Israel ascended safely up the banks of the Red Sea opposite Egypt. This foreshadowed the resurrection from bondage leading to death to live a new life as free people with just laws that allowed them to thrive. This was their tutoring that would eventually lead them to

Messiah, who would fulfill all things (Gal. 3:24). Now that they were God's free people, they needed to repent of the lifestyle inherited from their former captors, along with all its false values and false religious beliefs. Their old way of life was to be replaced with God's truths, laws, testimonies, promises, and leadership. Indeed, this is why the apostle Paul called Israel's crossing through the Red Sea a baptism, because it was a type of our Christian baptism and the changed people we are to become as we flee the bondage of a sin-filled lifestyle today. Paul said the history of Israel was recorded for true followers of Christ to apply in the latter days (1 Cor. 10:11).

Baptism is a type of death of the "old man" and the death of his past values and lifestyle (Rom. 6:1–6). Water baptism is also a type of having our sins and sinful past washed away (Acts 22:1; 1 Cor. 6:11). Coming up out of the water after baptism pictures the resurrection back to life—a new life, one that is based on loving God with all our heart and loving others as ourselves (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Mark 12:30–31). It is a life of grace and obedience to God (Rom. 6:4–13). Israel experienced a baptism of water in the sea. This signified the death of the "old men" as their old sinful ways that led to death

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were being symbolically washed away. Paul further explained that Israel was baptized under the cloud of God's presence. This was a type and picture of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.10:1–4). Many do not realize that the One—the Rock—whom Old Testament Israel followed was also the Savior of all humankind, for it was Jesus (Yeshua) the Christ (1 Cor.10:4). Indeed, these events were all recorded for the future admonition of the church of God and all who would become the people of God (1 Cor.10:11).

Israel's baptism in the Red Sea (and the Gentiles who were baptized with them) foreshadowed the baptism that Jesus, John, and the apostles taught and practiced. True baptism was always to be accompanied by two things: (1) true belief in the loving, forgiving, and saving nature of God and His Son; and (2) the recognition of the need of a Savior, which included real repentance from sin (Matt. 3:2; 4:17), the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). Let's examine these required elements.

BELIEF—THE TRUE FAITH

To believe in God and His Son is not just to believe they exist. James said even the demons believe God exists (James 2:19–20). But proof that the demons' belief in God is not a true faith is that it has not produced fruits of godliness or a trusting understanding of God's righteous, loving nature. Israel also believed God exists, but they lacked true faith *in* God. They lacked the belief or faith that God loved them and was saving them. Do you lack this kind of true faith?

Israel believed *in* God, but what they believed about God was evil, nor did they believe what He told them. Why? Their lack of real trust in His love for them contributed to their lack of belief in what He told them. *Ancient Israel believed in God, but they did not believe God.* They thought He was a cruel and harsh God who sought to catch them in their sins so He could punish them unto death. While God was in the process of lovingly saving Israel, they actually accused Him of being out to destroy them (Deut. 1:27)! Israel, illogically, thought God hated them. This kind of thinking is accusatory toward God and is an evil affront to Him and His loving character. Though God repeatedly demonstrated many great acts of caring love, tolerance, and forgiveness for Israel, they still did not develop faith in God or His pure motives for them. Clearly, they did not know God.

Do you know God? Have you learned that God loves you and will save you? Do you believe in God's loving nature, purpose, and power to save you; or do you doubt God's loving nature and motives and power for good?

Deuteronomy 1:27 tells us what Israel believed about God: "And you complained in your tents, and said, 'Because *the LORD hates us*, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.'"

Moses tried to encourage the people by reminding them of all God had done for them, all He was doing for them, and all He promised to continue to do to

save and bless Israel. But they remained unbelieving. Oh, they knew God existed, but they lacked true faith in Him.

We have read what the children of Israel said about God and what they believed His motives were. Now let's read God's words, as He recounts all He had done for His unbelieving accusers:

Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, *as a man carries his son*, in all the way that you went until you came to this place." Yet, for all that, you did not believe the LORD your God, who went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day. And the LORD heard the sound of your words, and was angry, and took an oath, saying, "Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the LORD."

—Deut. 1:29–36, emphasis added

Is this at all a reflection of the kind of "faith" (or lack of faith) you have? If so, you do not truly know God!

As we count and recall the “omer”—the journey Israel and all humankind must make away from the bondage of sin to freedom in the coming utopia—we would do well to remember all God has done and is doing for us. God has demonstrated repeatedly His loving saving motives toward us and His awesome power to carry out His will.

Think about this: God gave us perfect laws and statutes, which when followed, make us wise and lead us into pleasant, loving, and respectful behaviors toward others (Deut. 4:6; Ps. 119:97–105; Rom. 7:12; 13:8–10; 1 Tim. 1:5; 1 John 2:3–5). God also gave us many encouraging testimonies, which teach us about His loving nature and reveal His desire for us to learn to love Him. He seeks a Father-son relationship with each of us. God gave us positive millennial prophecies so we would be filled with hope. He gave us many prophetic warnings and testimonies to aid us in coming to repentance and salvation. God even gave us His Son to ransom us from Satan and sin! Jesus died for us so we don’t have to. He is our Passover Lamb, sent by God, to pay the death penalty in our stead and make atonement for us to God. Jesus the Christ came to save sinners—not to destroy them (1 Tim 1:15).

Have you accepted the Christ as your Passover Sacrifice who paid the penalty for your sins? God has abundantly demonstrated His powerful love for us. What else can He do to show us He loves us and is determined to save us?

Considering the loving and faithful nature of God and all He has done and will do for us, it's no wonder why God calls a continuing lack of faith in Him "*an evil heart of unbelief*" (Heb. 3:12).

The book of Acts tells of a eunuch who had been placed in great authority over many of the business affairs of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, and wanted to know more about the Messiah. After a thorough study of the Scriptures about Jesus the Christ (Acts 8:26–38), Philip and the eunuch saw the need for the eunuch to be baptized (Acts 8:36). But before Philip would baptize him, he asked if the man believed God and His plan of salvation with all his heart (Acts 8:37). Do you believe God with all your heart?

REPENTANCE

Repentance means to cease sinning and to live a new way of life. Yeshua always taught that those whom He forgave were to cease from practicing sin, or else their troubles would increase (John 5:14; 8:11). *True repentance is not the mockery of "lip service" to God* (Gal. 6:7). Real repentance is always evidenced by the actions or fruits of changed lives (Matt. 3:7–8). The apostles taught repentance and baptism as the first steps we all must make in our walk with God, wherein we follow Christ out of Egypt, out of the bondage of sin (Acts 2:36–38). True baptism involves heartfelt belief in the Messiah *and* real repentance. As we properly number Pentecost, we recall Israel's baptism in the Red Sea and their baptism in the cloud of God's presence or Spirit, all

of which was orchestrated by God to point us to Christ (1 Cor. 10:1–4; Gal. 3:24). As we number Pentecost, we recall Israel’s journey toward the Promised Land. (I encourage you to read the book *Pentecost: A Countdown to Freedom* to build upon the intriguing and meaningful lessons learned through keeping God’s holy days. A copy may be obtained at your local bookstore or through a link at www.godslawislove.org).

Baptism and the Feast of Unleavened Bread portray a life of coming out of sin—discontinuing the practice of the way of sin, dying to sin, repentance from sin, having our sins washed away—and the resurrection to a new, free, and better life with God. Paul wrote,

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:1–4)

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Remember, the merciful Christ who is full of grace is also the God of the Old Testament dispensation who calls Himself the “I AM” (Ex. 3:13–14; John 8:58; Rev. 1:8). He is also the great King of Kings (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14), a Master and King who requires obedience (Mark 7:6–7; Luke 6:46). And Yeshua is also the Rock whose voice uttered God’s great law on Mount Sinai (1 Cor. 10:4). Grace accompanies repentance and obedience (Matt. 5:17–19; 1 John 2:4).

REPENTING OF THE EFFECTS OF THE SINS OF OTHERS

When we repent, it is good to remember that we not only repent of our own personal sins. We must also repent of the effects of a society immersed in sin. Just as Israel had to unlearn the ways they had practiced once they left Egypt, so we too need to repent of the sins of our society, as part of our walk with God.

We each have sinned personally by breaking a number of God’s righteous laws (Rom. 3:23). But we also have each become a product of society. *True conversion is repenting of what we have become, not just of what we have done.* We each have enough of our own sins. But our unrighteous state is made worse by the sins of the society that has helped shape us. Often, the sins of others rub off on us, like a man who slips and falls into a dung hill. Though he may not have personally sinned by falling, he still stinks and needs to be cleaned!

This is why a person who has been abused may become overly introverted—closing others out from their circle of trust or love, or they may become overly controlling or develop other ungodly beliefs, all in an attempt to protect oneself. This is understandable, but it is also hurtful to loved ones and it is limiting to one's personal growth and happiness. *It's not one's fault he/she was abused, but it is necessary to let go of that abuse and be cleansed and freed from its bondage!* The blood of our Messiah and the power of His holy spirit working in our conversion can heal and free us—if we are willing. An abused person may not be able to love or receive love, or they may find it difficult to have a healthy, loving relationship. Yet God commands us to love, and He said marriage is honorable and the marriage bed undefiled (Heb. 13:4). With God, we can learn to love and be loved. There is always real change when Christ begins to live in us, as we become a new person through Him (Gal. 2:20).

A person may have learned from society to dress in ways God dislikes (Deut. 22:5). God has much to say about how we dress, groom, and adorn our bodies. Tattoos, though accepted by society, are forbidden in God's Word (Lev. 19:28). God said earrings were a sign of submission and were therefore acceptable to adorn women as a sign of submission to their husbands, or for slaves as a sign of being under the authority

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of their masters (Ex. 32:2; Deut. 15:17)—but were otherwise inappropriate for men. This is why when Jacob told his sons to “purify themselves,” they removed their earrings (Gen. 35:2–4). These may appear as small things, but they reflect ways in which things accepted by society have rubbed off on us all and put us at cross-purposes with God.

Society and the influence of the media often tend to develop in us disrespectful behaviors toward our elders and toward our country’s leaders, which are unacceptable to God (Lev. 19:32; Jude 8–10). Even the Sabbaths and festivals of God stand in contrast to Sunday and the world’s religious holidays. Yet, God says keeping His Sabbaths and feasts is a sign of His true people and that they identify the true God to those who seek Him (Ex. 13:6–9; 31:13, 17; Ezek. 20:12). We can be sure that we all have many things that we learned from our “fathers” that do not fit the holy Scriptures. This is why God commands us to repent of our personal sins and the sins received from the influence of our forefathers and society:

And those of you who are left shall waste away in their iniquity in your enemies’ lands; also in their fathers’ iniquities, which are with them, they shall waste away. But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the

land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt ...”

—Lev. 26:39–41, emphasis added

It is when God’s grace is accompanied with genuine repentant obedience that we become a new creation in Christ and a fitting vessel for God’s Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32; 2 Tim. 2:21). We must all come out of this world’s “Egypt” in our marriages and families, in our conduct, in our friendships, in our entertainment, in our work, and in our worship of the Most High. As we become aware of our worldly practices—practices that do not fit the Scriptures—we repent, and then with the help of our Shepherd’s leadership, we follow Him away from those practices to a new life according to His Word. We replace our old practices with the practice of righteousness that we learned from keeping God’s laws (1 John 3:3–10). Indeed, this kind of repentant lifestyle is the very way the children of God and the children of bondage (to the devil) are made manifest (1 John 3:10).

THE WATERS OF MARAH HEALED—A TYPE OF JESUS OUR HEALER

God instructed Israel to recall, beginning from the second day of Unleavened Bread, each day of Israel’s journey out of Egypt until the Feast of Pentecost when God gave His laws and spirit (see Lev. 23:15 and *Pentecost: A Countdown to Freedom*). This time was named “counting the omer” for the quantity of

grain that was offered on the first day of harvest of the firstfruits, which began the count toward Pentecost. This count was much more than a mere numbering of the days. It included recalling each day's lessons encountered in the journey out of Egypt and toward the Promised Land and the freedom God's laws and Spirit bring. There's a reason why both God's laws and Spirit were given on Pentecost.

As we continue to count the omer and learn from Israel's journey toward freedom, the next thing we see is God bringing Israel to the bitter waters of Marah. There God healed the waters and revealed Himself to them as "YHVH-ropheka," meaning "God their Healer." It was after He healed these waters in their sight that God promised them that if they would diligently hearken unto His voice and obey Him, He would be their healing God and not put upon them the diseases of Egypt (Ex. 15:22–26). This again perfectly points to Christ our forgiving Healer. However, since none of us has obeyed God's just laws perfectly, we all need to be forgiven, and often we need to be healed. That's why God has given us Passover Lamb of God, leading to our atonement with Him! This is very interesting in light of how many times Jesus and the prophets tied healing together with God's forgiveness of sins.

"Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" — He said

to the paralytic, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

—Mark 2:8–12, emphasis added

David, the brave and faithful king anointed of God who was called the “sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Sam. 23:1), connected healing with the forgiveness of sins in Psalm 103:2–4: “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: *who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases*, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies” (emphasis added).

One of the greatest works of Jesus’ ministry was that of healing. He used it to confirm His words (Mark 16:20). Peter said Jesus fulfilled the messianic promise of healing through the cruel whippings and beating that He suffered as part of His Passover sacrifice to atone for our sins (Isa. 53:4–8; 1 Peter 2:24–25).

As mentioned, healing was also part of that first Passover, for God had healed all who departed from Egypt so they could make the journey (Ps. 105:37–38). You could never find a mass of three to five million people without statistically having many thousands who were sick, lame, or feeble. Yet God’s Word says of the Israelites that “there was none feeble among them” when they departed from Egypt, even though they had suffered under poor conditions as slaves. Part of the miracle of Passover was a mass healing.

Interestingly, there was also a mass healing at Hezekiah's famous Passover (2 Chron. 30:18-20). Messiah's forgiveness paves the way for our healing. It's all part of our Passover, the forging sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Indeed, "By His stripes, we are healed" (Isa. 53:5, 1 Pet. 2:24).

God used the Passover and the waters of Marah that He healed to point to the anointed Messiah, our Forgiving Healer. Indeed, God is the strength of our lives.

As we continue the countdown journey toward that first Pentecost, let's look at Israel's next recorded experience from which we can benefit (1 Cor. 10:11).

ELIM, REST, AND ENCOURAGEMENT: A SMALL TYPE OF PARADISE

After the waters of Marah were healed and made sweet, Israel continued on to Elim, where God allowed them to take a comfortable rest (Ex. 15:27). There were twelve water wells at Elim (one for each tribe of Israel), and the shade of seventy fruit producing palm trees (one for each of the seventy leading elders of Israel [Num. 11:25]). This little bit of paradise in the desert thrived from the water and shade God gave it. It was also said to have an abundance of tamarisk and other trees, and to flourish with dates and tall grasses. Though life's journey is sometimes difficult, God will either heal the waters of life for us, or lead us to better waters. Indeed, if we are patient, we will see that God will always protect and lead His people to the serenity

and comfort of still waters and green pastures (Ps. 23), even as we travel along life's difficult journey toward the Promised Land—paradise in God's kingdom! God is teaching us that though we may suffer for a little while, it is to build our faith and trust in Him (1 Peter 5:10). Psalm 34:19 says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all."

Be patient. God will never leave nor forsake us (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5). He is teaching us to faithfully trust Him. It will not be long before "The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4:2) and God's people will burst forth in joy as a palm-dotted desert healed by God with blessings and water, and decorated like a blossoming rose (Isa. 35:1–2)!

MANNA AND THE TRUE BREAD FROM HEAVEN

Israel then left the comfort of Elim and traveled on to the Wilderness of Zin. Here God was going to teach all of His people (especially God's people today) some valuable lessons in faith and priorities.

In Exodus 16:1 we read, "And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin [Zin], which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt."

We are now studying about the thirtieth day of the omer, the recounting of Israel's journey away from slavery and sin and toward total freedom with God. God was now beginning in earnest to teach Israel to daily look to Him, and to think differently, to think like

God's people, to begin to practice one of the very things that God says identifies a people as being His children: keeping His annual and weekly Sabbaths and His law of love (Ex. 13:6–9; 31:13; Deut. 6:1–8). Of course, the other identifying sign of God's true people is love (John 13:35), which is the fulfilling or application of God's laws (Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:14; 1 Tim. 1:5; 1 John 5:3). God used this marking point along Israel's journey to teach some important spiritual principles.

The Manna Test

God used the manna to test people to see if they will obey His instructions, statutes, and laws (Ex. 16:4). People are more willing to obey God if it makes sense to them. It's raw human nature. For example: Most understand the importance of not stealing or lying or murdering, but most do not see or want to obey God's Sabbath commands. God uses His Sabbaths (both weekly and annual Sabbaths) and other of His statutes to test us to see if we are stubborn and rebellious and to see if we will only obey God in matters that we deem important—as if we know more than God.

The Sabbath Mark

God used the manna to mark the Sabbath (the sign) with a double portion of manna on the preparation day (the sixth day) and instructions that no manna was to be collected on the Sabbath. This repetitious reminder continued to accent God's Sabbath day for forty years. God was reinstating the Sabbath in the minds of His

people that their fathers kept before it was lost to Israel during their Egyptian captivity. God was and is teaching His people to pay close attention to His commanded holy Sabbath (Ex. 16:4–5; 22–26). God’s weekly and annual Sabbaths are, and always have been, a sign or mark of God’s faithful people (Ex. 13:9; 31:13; Ezek. 20:12). Satan and the beast have a different false day, in honor of the sun, as part of their identification or mark. Indeed, Jesus said He was still Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 12:8), the holy day that honors God (Isa. 58:13), the day that celebrates freedom (Deut. 5:15), and the day that commemorates when the Most High Father rested at creation (Ex. 20:11). The Sabbath is not to be confused with the Gentile day honoring the pagan sun god [Sunday] (Ezek. 8:16).

The Sabbath Preparation Day

God used the manna to teach His people the importance of using the Sabbath preparation day to avoid disrespecting God by breaking His Sabbath (Ex. 16:23). When we do not take the time to take care of the heavy cooking and cleaning, the wood gathering, food or fuel purchases, and so forth before the Sabbath, then we are often pushed to break the Sabbath by doing those things God intended for us to do ahead of time. This is one reason why so many who claim to be God’s true people disobey God by trading with food merchants on the Sabbath or holy days; they are no longer being taught how to keep Sabbath or about the importance of God’s preparation day. Many have watered down God’s joyful

Sabbath laws and now even seek to justify, to explain away God's clear words, or to make excuses for their liberal compromises in order to uphold their church traditions or personal preferences regarding God's holy Sabbaths. This practice is a shameful and licentious teaching that maligns God's truth. Peter wrote, "Even so, many will follow their licentious ways, and because of these teachers, the way of truth will be maligned" (2 Peter 2:2 NRSV).

This is nothing new. Many leaders among God's people taught the traditions of men over the doctrines of God in Old Testament times and up to Jesus' day, as well (Matt. 15:3–7). Nehemiah had to deal with the people of God who had become so liberal that they justified and excused their habit of "profaning the Sabbath" by purchasing food from the "fast-food carts" of their day (Neh. 10:31; 13:15–18). Today, many use "tradition" and the teachings of their modern "spiritual fathers" to justify their violation of God's Sabbath by trading with the food merchants on God's weekly Sabbath or festival holy days. Jesus warned against blind guides (Matt. 15:14). God's Word is clear and unambiguous on this. Indeed, the Sabbath is yet a test commandment today!

All of us fall somewhat short and thus we rest our hope on our forgiving Savior. However, with proper use of the preparation day, and by sharing home, food, and fellowship after each Sabbath service as the early church did (Acts 2:46), the Gentile practice of buying food (by eating out on God's Sabbaths) is not necessary!

Obedience and faithfulness to God does require some preparation time, but the rewards are always great. Is our walk with God today worth a little preparation? Or are our daily activities and traditions more important to us than God's directives as the Father of His family? Jesus never sinned. Jesus never ate at a merchant's establishment on the Sabbath. Like the church He founded, Jesus ate at people's homes for Sabbath fellowship and a meal (Luke 14:1). Let's follow Jesus' example.

Christ, the True Bread from Heaven

God was and is teaching us all that Christ is the life-giving bread that we are to seek and eat daily! This is of primary importance. God's Words are revealing: "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Behold, I will *rain bread from heaven for you*. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota *every day*, that *I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not*'" (Ex. 16:4, emphasis added).

Yeshua the Christ is the true bread from heaven. The manna was used to make flat wafers or cakes, like unleavened bread (Num. 11:7). It sustained Israel for forty years in the wilderness. But they had to "go out and gather a certain quota every day." So, too, we must seek and "eat" Christ daily! Jesus is the Living Bread from heaven!

Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You?"

What work will You do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.” And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”

—John 6:30–35

Just like Israel needed to eat the manna daily, so we too need to eat Christ the true Bread from heaven daily. While the manna was a teaching symbol of Christ, it was only a temporary substitute for something much better, something (someone) that would not only extend temporary life but grant life eternal. God used the manna as an image to beautifully foreshadow for us Jesus’ flesh and life as our humble, life-giving, and sinless (unleavened) Passover Bread (Col. 2:16–17; Heb. 10:1).

This is why the apostle Paul said that Israel ate the same spiritual food that we take at Passover today (1 Cor. 10:2). He said, “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16). Throughout 1 Corinthians 10, Paul directly compares the manna Israel ate in the desert to the unleavened bread we eat at Passover

and during God's Feast of Unleavened Bread today. Now that we have Christ the True Bread from heaven, let's eat!

“I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?” Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

—John 6:48–54

WATER FROM THE ROCK—“THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST”

After some time with the manna in the Wilderness of Zin, it was time for Israel to move on and experience more of God's thoughtful shepherding.

Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink....And the LORD said to Moses,

“Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, *I will stand before you there on the rock* in Horeb; and you shall *strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.*”

—Ex. 17:1, 5–6, emphasis added

This is a very beautiful passage indeed, because it wonderfully pictures the life-giving waters of the Savior, God’s Holy Spirit. Notice in Jesus’ own words to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well:

Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, 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.*” The woman said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?” Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But *the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.*”

—John 4:9–14, emphasis added

This time, God did not bring Israel to another stream or brook. This time, God brought water from a flinty rock (Ps. 114:7–8). Flint is a rock that when struck can bring fire. Here, the flinty rock also brought water. God is a powerful, consuming fire (Ex. 24:17; Heb. 12:29), but He also brings us the joy of His life-giving water to refresh and rejuvenate us unto salvation (Isa. 12:2–3). Paul called Christ the Rock that gave Israel water to drink. “They drank the same spiritual drink ... and that Rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4). Peter also referred to Jesus as that Stone that the builders rejected and a Rock of offense to the disobedient, but precious to those who believe (1 Peter 2:8). The water out of the rock was clearly portraying Jesus our Rock who gives us the life-giving waters!

It was after the rock was struck that the life-giving water came forth (Ex. 17:6). It was after Yeshua, our Rock, was stricken that we too have life (Isa. 53:8). It was after His death that He poured out His life, giving His Holy Spirit upon us. Praise the Lord!

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

—John 7:37–39

However, if we continue to “strike” the flinty Rock of Israel through persistent unfaithfulness and disobedience, we may also experience the “fire” of His correction (Mal. 4:1; Heb. 4:1–6; 12:28–20). Let’s not do that!

Jesus is our Rock, our Bread, our Living Water, our Hope, our eternal life, our precious gift from the Father. Jesus said it is those who hunger and thirst for righteousness who will be satisfied (Matt. 5:6). Are you thirsty?

SATAN’S DETRACTORS

First Satan tried to use the threat of Pharaoh’s army to dissuade Israel from leaving Egypt. With Israel now en route to the Promised Land, and while she was camped in Rephidim, Satan sent his detractors to seek to fight with Israel. This was another attempt to use fear and distractions to prevent Israel from entering the Promised Land. This clearly portrays our battles on life’s road to live a more godly life. It shows us our real daily need for our defending Shepherd. Anytime someone begins to draw near to God, Satan tries to discourage or sidetrack that person (Matt. 13:26–28). Remember, it was on the seventh day of unleavened bread, seven days after Israel departed from Egypt, when Pharaoh tried to attack Israel and bring them back into a life of slavery and false religion. But God saved Israel by drowning all the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, and He will save each of us as we trust Him.

It was the children of Esau the brother of Israel (Jacob) who, driven by envy, sought to kill all Israelites to prevent them from inheriting what God was giving them. Satan used the Amalekites, the children of one of the dukes of Esau, to attack Israel (Ex. 17:8–16). But God brought about a victory for Israel. God will always defend His true people. This is one more lesson we are to be reminded of each year when we “count the omer.”

Do you sometimes get discouraged and feel as if you can't struggle against Satan's world any longer? That's Satan talking. But be of good cheer. Jesus our powerful, loving King has overcome both the Devil and this world (John 16:33). There will be times when it will be hard while we are tested in order to build our faith and character, but God is building in us something far more lasting and precious than fleshly things or gold (1 Peter 1:6–7). Let's remember God's promise that all things will work together for good, to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). We may forsake Him, but God will never leave nor forsake His elect (Heb. 13:5). Though He punishes as any good Father does, God's love is undying. Isaiah tells us, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands” (Isa. 49:15–16).

“Salvation is not earned! But salvation can be wasted or discarded!”

God has shown and is continually demonstrating His love for us. He has gone the extra mile in every way. He loves us, is saving us, and will see us through *every* trial (1 Cor. 10:13). Do we believe Him? The psalmist wrote, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all” (Ps. 34:19).

After God granted victory over Amalek, it was on to Midian and the mountain of God. Israel was now very near God’s presence and the receiving of His law, which would make Israel’s freedom complete! The counting of the omer is complete—or is it? You see, God teaches us to recall these events each year between the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost (His Feast of Firstfruits).

Every step of the way, each thing Israel experienced was pointing toward Christ our Messiah. Pentecost and God’s law were no different! God’s law was given fifty days after Israel’s departure from Egypt, on what became known as Pentecost, and the laws (Torah’s) aim was Christ. The Holy Spirit was given on Pentecost, and He encourages us, comforts us, and writes God’s laws on our hearts (Ezek 36:26; Heb. 10:16).

We not only are to learn from Israel’s mistakes and successes, but we are to consider our own state with God as we prepare for Pentecost and learn to properly appreciate and use God’s Holy Spirit. Let’s not waste our lives. Let’s not waste God’s precious Spirit. Let’s make the countdown to freedom permanent through the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.

Once God's laws were given, Israel had an advantage over all other nations of the world (Deut. 4:6). But without God's Spirit, they would soon stumble through weakness. That's why we must realize that God's laws alone cannot save us! A servant or slave only gets what he or she earns! We cannot earn life or the right to become sons of God, that is, royalty. Royalty is only passed on by being an heir, by being a son of the king, in this case, a son of God (Rom. 8:16–17). Salvation is not earned. But salvation can be wasted or discarded.

I know God's law is great and I love it and strive to live by it, as we all should. But Christ is better, and I love Him and our Father God much more. But when Christ is living in us, He will live the same life in the flesh that He did two thousand years ago. A true Christian's life will not be a life of compromise and disobedience to God's laws. It will be a life of change and encouragement as we grow in the freedom of God's truth.

God's laws provide opportunity for us to build character. They are a light to our path (Ps. 119:105); but Christ is the path, the way, the life, and the truth (John 14:6).

God's law is the mirror that shows us our defects so we can change and be more Christ-like (Ps. 19:8–12). Paul said, "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). He also taught that sin, through the law, shows us where we need to change, and it shows us the need for our Savior, when we fall short (Rom. 7:7, 13).

The statutes and laws of God work like a tutor or personal nanny, teaching us the godly character of how

to live like royal sons of God. Princes and princesses are taught and prepared by personal tutors on the manners and conduct required of the royal family. They also need to be groomed by their tutors on how to rule justly, based upon the laws of the kingdom over which they will govern. God's law is the tutor (Gal. 3:24) that teaches us how to rule with Christ as kings (Rev. 5:10). God's Spirit will write His law on our hearts because His law helps prepare us to be like He is. It teaches us how to love God and others (Mark 12:28–34). And it teaches us of the need for our saving Messiah. As Paul said, Christ is the end—the goalpost or the aim—of the law and the target it points to (Rom. 10:4). School is not the point; it's the education and instruction it brings (Gal. 3:24–25). So it is with God's law. The purpose of God's Law is:

- To lead us to Yeshua Messiah
- To tutor us in His Majesty's ways so we can be like Him
- To show us our faults and the need for God's mercy
- To teach us to both appreciate His mercy and to learn to be merciful
- To help us build character—to be made into His image with the help of God's Holy Spirit
- To bring us up and teach us how to live like a good schoolmaster or tutor, but as sons not slaves

- To prepare us to rule under and with Christ and our grand, loving, holy Father
- To teach us how to love God and our neighbor. Indeed, *God's law met love, and they kissed!* They are inseparable.

As beautiful as God's kingdom is, God is greater. With all the beauty of the newly healed landscape, all the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, and the peace in paradise, God is greater! God's law is good, a great and wise gift from God. But God Himself is what His law aims us toward. God is greater than His Law. He is the purpose and the Most High, and His Son is the Way. As David said, "A day with God is better than a thousand years without Him" (Ps. 84:10).

MAY GOD WRITE HIS GOOD LAWS ON
OUR HEARTS WITH HIS HOLY SPIRIT AND
EMPOWER US TO WALK IN HIS PATHS, AND
MAY HE HAVE MERCY ON OUR SOULS. AMEN

