



the Courtship of Messiah & Israel

by Tim Kelley

Today is Iyer 10¹. Thirty-five hundred years plus one month ago, our forefathers were having to make a choice. They were having to choose a lamb, not just any lamb, but a very special lamb . . . one that they would, four days later, sacrifice at the entrance of their home and eat that evening – all the time hoping they had made the right choice, because this lamb wasn't just any lamb, it would be the lamb, whose blood would cover the entrance to their home, and would signal the creator of the universe to cover their entire home and protect their firstborn child from sudden death. It appears that most of them chose wisely.

But this is not the only choice the Israelites had to make. After they were sent away from their homes, they wandered in the land of Egypt for a number of days², heading south instead of east. They probably wondered where they were being lead, knowing that the land of Canaan lay to the northeast, not south. Thus, should they continue following this man Moses, and . . . what about that strange cloud and fire? Is it really that important?

Well, they soon came to see the importance of the cloud, and of the fire, when they found themselves hemmed in by mountains on each side, the vast ocean before them, and Pharaoh's army behind them. So when they saw the cloud move behind them, and what looked like fire coming out of the cloud to give them light, the Israelites chose to step into the sea as the waters divided before them.

On reaching the other side, and after seeing their enemy destroyed in the sea, Moses recorded a very important fact. He said that by that act, the Israelites had been saved. Let's read it –

^{ESV} **Exodus 14:30** Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

I had read that verse a number of times over the years, but never really understood it until I read from Brad Scott's web site³ the Hebrew definition of the word *saved*. The Hebrew word for *saved* is *yasha* (**יָשָׁא** – Strong's 3467), and Brad shows its pictographic meaning. Here's a quote from his article "*What Is Salvation?*" –

"The word *yeshua* contains three consonants which form the word. These consonants are the *yod* (י), the *shin* (שׁ), and the *ayin* (א). Each of these letters has a primitive form and a primitive meaning behind each one. The primitive forms are not in use today. They formed the basis for the early round script which eventually became the modern more "square" look. The early form of the *yod* looked like a hand, and its meaning was a deed or action. The early form of the *shin* was teeth, and its meaning was to consume or destroy. The early form of the *ayin* was an eye, and its meaning was to cast your eyes or to look upon. To the Torah observant early Hebrews, this order of the letters helped to form their understanding of the meaning of the whole word. **To be saved was to begin with an action or deed, a rescue followed by a destroying of the thing you were rescued from, ultimately concluded by a devotion, or casting your eyes upon, that which delivered you.**"

As Brad goes on to show, the first time we see *yasha* in scripture is when Moses went to Midian and saw some of the local shepherds harassing Jethro's daughters, one of whom was named Zipporah. Moses chased them away singlehandedly and went on to marry Zipporah. Obviously, Zipporah was quite impressed with Moses, and cast her eyes longingly on him – her hero.

¹ April 20, 2013 is Iyer 10 according to the Jewish calendar

²For a mathematical study of the time they spent in Egypt

³ <http://www.wildbranch.org/teachings/lessons/lesson20.html> - emphasis on last sentence mine

Courtship of Messiah and Israel

This is the situation in which we find the children of Israel after the sea had swallowed up her enemies. They stood in awe (Hebrew – *yare'*) of YHVH and His great power and they began to trust Him.

You would think this would be the end of the story. Israel would want to dwell under the wings of YHVH, this great leader who had just saved them, but as we know, that was not the case. YHVH knew it too, so for the next 40 or so days, He proceeded to, in effect – court Israel with the hope that they would want to marry Him. This makes a little more sense if we look at it from the aspect of the ancient culture of the day.

Israel was just a race of people when they came out of Egypt. They had no real understanding of YHVH other than that He was the god of their forefathers. Up until the events of the exodus began, He was probably just another one of the many gods with which they were familiar. When Moses came on the scene claiming that the god YHVH was going to deliver them from bondage, and then witnessed some of the things He did, they began to take on a somewhat different view of YHVH. But things were happening so fast. “Who is this god who wants to deliver us?”⁴ they probably thought.

Back then it was customary for a weaker nation (*vassal*) to join into covenant with a stronger (*suzerain*) nation for the purpose of securing protection. We’ve talked about this before, but suffice it to say that this was a common way for a nation that could not protect itself to keep themselves from being attacked, ravished, and annihilated by a rogue nation. As a new nation, Israel was quite weak and quite vulnerable. So Israel had to make a choice – do they continue to follow this invisible leader who hides in the clouds; go to another nation and ask for protection (as they did years later); or return to the relative comfort and familiarity of Egypt, that is, if Egypt would still have them. YHVH knew they had choices, and it was His intent for them to choose Him. Thus began the courtship of the Messiah and Israel.

Three important events happened over the next 40 days, events that I believe were designed to woo Israel into becoming betrothed to God. And what’s more, each of these events would also picture a manifestation of the Kingdom of Israel under the leadership of King Messiah. So let’s take a look at these events. They are -

1. The healing of the waters of Marah and the subsequent encampment at Elim
2. Manna from heaven
3. The defeat of the Amalekites at Rephidim

Israel’s infatuation with YHVH ended only three days after they crossed the sea. They were in the wilderness and had not come upon any water except for a pool of “bitter” water, thus they began to complain. Three days is an important time period in the Bible. There are at numerous events recorded in scripture that happen on or just after the third day. For instance, on the third day of his journey to sacrifice his son Isaac, Abraham shifted the load of wood for the sacrifice from off the donkey and on to his son. In another case, Joseph interpreted the dreams of the butler and the baker, and each interpretation came to pass on the third day. In yet another case, the plague that followed David numbering Israel lasted for three days.

In Israel’s case, Moses had asked to go *three day’s journey* into the wilderness in order to offer a sacrifice.

^{ESV} **Exodus 3:18** And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

So here they were, three days into the wilderness, surrounded by sacrificial animals. but instead of offering a sacrifice, they complain to Moses about the water being unfit to drink – as if he had something to do with it.

Water is absolutely necessary for life, and in Egypt, Israel did not have to look for water. The Nile River, the “River of Egypt” had always been an abundant source of water, but now they had none. So God

⁴ Exodus 2:23 – they cried out, but not necessarily to YHVH

Courtship of Messiah and Israel

used this opportunity to show them how to take a bitter situation and make it good, and by so doing, He introduced them to His Torah.

^{NKJ} **Exodus 15:25** So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD 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,

In the above passage, the Hebrew word for showed is *yarah* (יָרָה - Strong's 7993). What's interesting is that the word is most often translated *teach, shoot, archers, and cast*. In fact, this is the only place it's translated *showed*. You're probably familiar with this word, it's the root word from which we get the word *torah*. I believe it would be better to translate the word as *teach* (or taught) than *showed*. Using *teach* rather than *show*, what did YHVH *teach* Moses? The Hebrew says it was an *etz* (עֵץ - Strong's 6086) – the Hebrew word for tree. There could be any number of things that a tree could represent spiritually, and many related the tree to Messiah – the *Branch* of Jesse, but I believe (based on the next verse) that the tree that Moses was taught was the Torah, which scripture calls a *Tree of Life*, as it does in Proverbs 3 where the Torah is likened to wisdom and understanding -

^{NKJ} **Proverbs 3:1** My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands . . .
¹³Happy is the man *who* finds wisdom, and the man *who* gains understanding . . . ¹⁸She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy *are all* who retain her.

Moses took the Torah that YHVH had taught Him and sent it into the midst of the waters, and the waters became good to drink. In effect, YHVH was showing Moses and all Israel that He would give them a priceless way of life, a way that could indeed sustain their life as is illustrated in these two verses from Deuteronomy -

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 4:8** And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 32:46-47** ⁴⁶ he said to them, "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. ⁴⁷ For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess."

So God showed Israel that if they choose Him, they would be given the words of life and a way that would insure peace and happiness, and as He said in the next verse (Exodus 15:26), if they diligently heeded the Torah, the words of life, they would not suffer from any of the diseases of Egypt.

We might assume that they Israelites then drank the sweetened waters of Marah, but the text does not necessarily state such. Instead, it says that they camped at Elim, a place of 70 palms and 12 wells of water. There is no reason to believe that they didn't arrive there late in the afternoon of this same *third day*.

^{ESV} **Exodus 15:27** Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.

Elim (אֵילִם – Strong's 362) comes from the root word *ahyil* (אֵיל - Strong's 352) which means a *ram*, even a *sacrificial lamb*. I find this quite interesting, for maybe what they did in Elul was to indeed – offer sacrifice to YHVH.

Elim also means a pillar or vestibule. A related word - *eylam* (עֵילָם - Strong's 361) means *porch* or *vestibule*, but in the King James Version, is translated *arches* when it shows up in Ezekiel's vision of the third Temple (which, by the way, is the only place this word appears).

Elim also means *trees*, and according to Gesenius⁵ “. . . *perhaps, palm grove*”. Thus, this was a place of palms. When I think of palms, I automatically think of Sukkot and the waving of the *lulav*, the palm

⁵ J.W.F. Gesenius; Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament (paperback); Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI; 1979; page 38 (Strong's 362)

Courtship of Messiah and Israel

branch. It's also called the *Feast of the Nations* because during the festival, 70 bulls are sacrificed when the rabbis believe represent the 70 nations. Solomon's Temple was dedicated during Sukkot, and palm trees were engraved on the Temple walls, both inside and out. Sacrifices were a major part of the dedication process⁶.

Sukkot is also the festival that pictures living waters –

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 12:1-3** And in that day you will say: "O LORD, I will praise You; Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. ² Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.' " ³ Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

All of these Sukkot pictures were present in Elim. Thus, it's my theory that Israel may have not taken from the sweet waters of Marah, but may have waited till they got to Elim where YHVH gave them a taste of the Messianic Kingdom, their soon to be inheritance⁷, specifically as it would have been under King David⁸. This would have been appropriate. After all, YHVH was wooing His bride.

Moving on, the narrative continues in chapter 16 with the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Sin. It has now been 4 to 6 weeks since the Exodus⁹ - probably two or three weeks from their encampment at Elim. They had recently witnessed the dividing of the sea, the waters of Marah turned sweet, and had had a glimpse of the Messianic kingdom, but now they were complaining again, even accusing Moses of trying to kill them with hunger –

^{NKJ} **Exodus 16:3** And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat *and* when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Not only were they accusing Moses and Aaron of trying to kill them, they were stating that if Moses had simply left them alone, then at least they would have died in Egypt with full stomachs. Obviously, YHVH had a problem! His attempt to woo them at the Elim had not been sufficient to win them over. They still didn't trust that the God their forefathers worshipped would provide for them as did the "gods" of Egypt. Thus, they were willing to go back into bondage in order to satisfy their short-term lusts -

^{NKJ} **Numbers 11:5** "We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic;

Obviously YHVH had anticipated their dissatisfaction because before Moses could take their complaints to Him, He announced a solution. He would provide food from Heaven, but not simply to feed them, but to remind them again of what He had done to rescue them from Egypt and to show them His love for them. He instructed Moses to tell the people –

^{ESV} **Exodus 16:6-7** ⁶ . . . "At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, ⁷ and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD . . .

And that evening He did remind them by bringing quail; so many that they covered the camp. This surely reminded them that YHVH had previously covered the camp with frogs and locusts, but this time, instead of it being a plague, it was satiable food for them to eat. But would the Israelites be impressed by the quail? Didn't the Egyptian magicians bring frogs up out of the Nile just as YHVH had? After all they had seen in the past few months, was bringing food that came from the earth that great of a thing? Probably not, but what they woke up to the next morning certainly was!

⁶ 2 Chronicles 7:1

⁷ Luke 12:32; Matt. 25:34

⁸ Though Solomon is credited with building the Temple, he did so on behalf of his father David – 1 Kings 8

⁹ **Error! Main Document Only.** Ex. 16:1 indicates that this was the 15th. day of the second month after they departed Egypt; not necessarily from the Passover. JPS seems to think that "the fifteenth day of the second month" means 45 days +/- (JPS Torah Commentary, "Exodus", pg. 85). Other commentaries indicate it was the literal 15th day of the second month - Iyar 15.

Courtship of Messiah and Israel

^{ESV} **Exodus 16:14-15** ¹⁴ And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵ When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.

So God gave them something totally new, something they had never seen before, something that didn't come from the ground, was not blown in from the east, nor came out of a river. It was not something that Moses brought them, it simply appeared, then seemed to evaporate in the late morning sun. What's more, it seemed to have a mind of its own. It multiplied if you didn't gather enough, but it turned into worms if you gathered too much. It even behaved differently depending on which day of the week it was gathered, and it never appeared on Shabbat!

YHVH gave them something that not only would feed them, but should have impressed them as well. He gave them *bread from heaven*. The psalms show that He actually opened up the heavens for them -

^{NKJ} **Psalms 78:23-25** ²³ Yet He had commanded the clouds above, And opened the doors of heaven, ²⁴ Had rained down manna on them to eat, And given them of the bread of heaven. ²⁵ Men ate angels' food; He sent them food to the full.

By giving them the manna, YHVH revealed a little bit more of His kingdom to them. They would see that YHVH is a god of order and consistency. Once the manna began, it never stopped until there was no longer a need for it. Even during their frequent times of rebellion, YHVH never cut off their sustenance. Even when they cursed God, they woke up the next morning to His provision.

1500 years later the first century Jewish people understood the manna to be a sign that YHVH was God. Shortly after Yeshua fed 5000 men, as well as their women and children, with just five loaves and two fish, some from the group asked for proof that He was indeed sent by God. They indicated that the proof that Moses was sent by God was the manna –

^{ESV} **John 6:28-31** ²⁸ Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" ²⁹ Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." ³⁰ So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?" ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'

Yeshua used this opportunity to show that He was the true bread of life, that the manna – even though it came from heaven – was only a representation of Himself, and that the manna could only sustain a person for a day, whereas the true bread, the word of God, would sustain you forever.

Yeshua described Himself as the true *bread from heaven*, and the apostle John later wrote of Him as being the "word" of God¹⁰. When asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom would be restored, Yeshua noted that the Kingdom of God was already in their midst¹¹, basically stating that His coming on the scene was the beginning of the restoration.

So, in effect, when ancient Israel ate the manna from heaven, they were witnessing a large aspect of the Kingdom of God by learning about the heart of God found in His instructions, His Torah, and personified by Messiah Yeshua. Remember, the manna was consistent, it came at the same time every day, it followed the weekly cycle flawlessly, it was there no matter what Israel did, ready to provide nutrition to God's people. Yeshua is consistent as well. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever!¹² He, the Bread of Life, the True Manna, the Living Torah, is what the manna represented; it's what they ate; it's what sustained them. Instead of being the "what is this?", He is the "Who is this?".¹³ Thus, the manna was a microcosm of the Torah, around which the Kingdom of God would be built. It is what provided true life, just as Moses said –

¹⁰ John 1:14

¹¹ Luke 17:20-21 The Greek word "entos" (Strong's 1787) literally means "within your midst".

¹² Hebrews 13:8

¹³ Exodus 16:15; Matthew 21:10

Courtship of Messiah and Israel

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 8:3** "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

Now, just a few weeks after He saved them at the Red Sea, God had given Israel two awesome reasons why they should choose him over any other suitors: 1) He had a kingdom in which they could share, and 2) He would give them a perfect law by which they could find happiness.

Let's now move to the third event that happened during this period of the omer count, an event that YHVH hoped would cause Israel to join into a marriage covenant with Him. Other than stating that it fits chronologically perfect into the courtship analogy I'm attempting to paint, we're going to skip over the "striking the rock" story since Paul did a pretty good job of explaining it¹⁴, and we'll move on to the account of the battle with the Amalekites.

As you'll recall, the reason given for YHVH for leading the people south instead of easterly when leaving Egypt was that they might fear war and return to Egypt¹⁵. And indeed, that's what they did. At the Red Sea, they feared the approaching army of Pharaoh instead of turning to beat them back. Obviously, they were not ready for war, and what's more, they had relatively little trust that "YHVH", the God that brought the plagues on Egypt, was able to fight the mighty army of Egypt. So they began to blame Moses for their plight.

Now, 40 or so days later, they again had an army coming from behind, but instead of it being the Egyptians, it was the Amalekites, their enemy and distant relative through Jacob's brother, Esau. According to Moses, they Amalekites attacked the ones who were at the rear of the procession, the ones who were weak. This is what he said –

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 25:17-18** "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, how he attacked you on the way when you were faint and weary, and cut off your tail, those who were lagging behind you, and he did not fear God.

From what we see here, it appears that some of the Israelites were suffering from lack of water and food, but we know that's not the case – God was feeding them manna every day, and according to tradition, the rock that Moses had just struck, out of which water gushed, was following them along the way. So why were they hanging back? Were they weary with the journey and just physically tired, or were they simply hanging back – hoping that as the main body of Israel went out of sight over the next hill, they could simply turn around and go back to Egypt? I would suspect the latter. Amalek was Israel's enemy, and his tactics resemble those of the arch-enemy, HaSatan, the adversary. HaSatan likes to pick off those who are weak and uncommitted to the journey, so it would stand to reason that Amalek would do the same.

In either case, Israel was now drawn into battle. The people, who just 40 or so days earlier feared the advancing armies of Egypt, were now at war.

^{NKJ} **Exodus 17:8-10** ⁸ Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. ⁹ And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek . . .

You would think that if an enemy was attacking the camp, all the men who were able to fight would turn and face the enemy, but that's not what Israel did, instead Moses called on Joshua to "choose" men who he wanted to take with him into battle . . . somewhat like David's *mighty men*. It would be these men, with Joshua as their leader, who would fight back the adversary.

This is the first time we see Joshua in scripture. His name means "Yah is Salvation", and he's introduced as the one leading the army of Israel. In his instructions to Joshua, Moses told him that the *rod of God* would play a role in the battle. It's apparent that Joshua, as well as all the camp of Israel, was aware that

¹⁴ 1 Cor. 10:4

¹⁵ Exodus 13:17

Courtship of Messiah and Israel

the *rod of God* in the hands of Moses and Aaron was what helped secure their release from Egypt, for when Moses or Aaron stretch out their hands with the rod in it, water turned to blood and oceans divided.

It's interesting to note that just as in the case of the plagues and the dividing of the sea, simply having the rod in his midst had no influence on the situation. Moses had to take the rod and stretch out his hands before anything would change. This is consistent with Hebrew thought in that you have to do something, not just believe in something. It's also a good example of the fact that outstretched hands tend to motivate God to intervene for you. Only when Moses' arms were outstretched was Israel able to prevail. If Moses had not stretched out his arms, we can assume that Israel would have been defeated.

This story ends with the statement -

^{ESV} **Exodus 17:13** And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.

The Hebrew word for overwhelmed is *chalash* (Strong's 2522) which carries the connotation of being humbled. Joshua didn't wipe out the Amalekites, he just humbled them and they apparently retreated with their tail between their legs.

This battle apparently had a great impact on Israel, for we see no more murmuring or rebellion until the golden calf incident. Israel had seen that with YHVH's help, they could defend themselves. They would not need the assistance of a larger nation to protect them, but instead, they could depend on the protection of God and the assurance that He would fight their battles for them. Without the need to become a vassal to another nation (which would include another "god") to secure their defense, they would be truly FREE.

Moses later told them that if they would humbly submit to God and walk in His ways –

^{ESV} **Leviticus 26:8** Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.

Joshua, or as it's sometimes pronounced in Hebrew "Yehoshua", is another way of saying "Yeshua". Yeshua is the true "Captain of the Army of Israel"¹⁶. The Kingdom of God will ultimately be established when Yeshua returns as the Lion of Judah. At this time, He will crush the adversaries of Israel and establish God's Torah throughout the earth, beginning at Jerusalem. By witnessing how Yehoshua humbled Amalek, the enemy of Israel, the congregation of Israel had a glimpse at the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God, and their place in it as the Army of Israel.

The next stop for Israel was Mount Sinai, the Mountain of God. YHVH called the people together and recounted what He had done for them the past 40 to 45 days. He said -

^{ESV} **Exodus 19:4** ⁴ You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

I'm sure they were reminded not only of the salvation they received after crossing the Red Sea, but also how they had become infatuated with YHVH, the god that appeared in the cloud and the fire. They also remembered how their new god:

1. Showed them His kingdom at Elim, based on the Law of God
2. Showed them that He would sustain them, not even with bread from heaven, but with the true bread, the Word of God
3. Showed them that by following Him, they can be truly free

Israel now had a choice to make. Were they going to enter into covenant with the one who had been their salvation, or were they going to search for another god. As we know, they chose YHVH and entered into (a marriage) covenant with Him. His courtship was successful – He had won his bride. But Israel, from generation to generation, has to continually make that choice, and that choice is summarized in the immortal words of Joshua himself -

¹⁶ Joshua 5:13-15

Courtship of Messiah and Israel

^{NKJ} **Joshua 24:15** " . . . choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

My prayer is that my children, and all of us, will make that same choice.

Shalom Alecheim