

Come Out from Among Them: Etham

"And they departed from Succoth, and pitched in Etham, which is in the edge of the wilderness," Numbers 33:6.

Egypt was not only a physical place, it was also a biblical symbol of spiritual darkness. Being in Egypt, in a spiritual sense, represents our lost condition, while we are in total bondage to the enemy and without hope in the world.

But Egypt is not the only place mentioned in Scripture with a dual application. Babylon, the famous kingdom of Nimrod (Genesis 10:8-9), is another realm with deep spiritual ramifications. While Egypt represents total spiritual darkness; Babylon, the birthplace of sun worship, signifies the spiritual realm of pseudo-religion and false worship. The story of deliverance from Egypt would not be complete without also noting the spiritual call to come out of Babylon.

Like the exodus from Egypt, the Heavenly Father literally delivered His people from physical Babylon. Terah, Abraham's father, was a wealthy and respected man in Ur. And Ur of the Chaledes was one of many great cities located in the realm of ancient Babylon. Yahweh called Abraham, then named Abram, to come out of Babylon and journey to Canaan.



In a beautiful shadow picture of the "steps" that all the Seed of Abraham will take, our spiritual forefather left the riches and pleasures of Babylon and pilgrimaged to the land Yahweh promised as his inheritance.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Hebrews 11:8-10

In Revelation 18:1-4, we find the prophecy of how Yahweh's End-Time people will be called to come out of spiritual Babylon before the plagues are poured out upon the earth. Thus, we see that the exodus experience of the last days will not only be a call to come out of worldly darkness, but also a call to leave behind the idolatry and false worship of spiritual Babylon.

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Both the call to come out of spiritual Babylon and the warning to leave the borders of Egypt meld together in the End-time message of Israel's second campsite. This camp location was known as *Etham*, or *Khetam*, and was probably a little to the west of the modern town of Ismailia.²² While there, the Israelites were commanded to change their direction, and "turn" towards the south where they would encamp before *Pi-Hahiroth*, or *Pithom*, as it is presently called (Exodus 13:20; Numbers 33:6).

On the eastern edge of the Sinai Peninsula, near the Red Sea's eastern arm, called the Gulf of Aqaba, we find this second camping spot, at *Etham*. The name *Etham* meant "contemplation," "from them," and "plowshares."²³ They were out of Egypt proper, but not out of Egypt's influence. In other words, although they were out of Egypt, Egypt was not out of them.

Have you ever made a serious decision that you believed Yahweh had directed you to make, only to have His voice grow silent after you had made it, and then you were not sure? In the ensuing stillness, did you begin to question your sanity, your sincerity, or your ability to distinguish the voice of God? Most of us have felt like the Children of Israel must have felt at the second campsite in this vast emptiness. Just as the name indicates, the Children of Israel "contemplated," at *Etham*. But rather than remembering how Yahweh had led them in the immediate past, many gave way to doubt: "What in the world were we thinking?" many silently pondered. "We are not even going in the right direction to reach the Canaan land!"

Etham, as meaning "from them" reminds us of another parallel to our spiritual experience in this journey. It is in this meaning that the call to come out of Egypt and Babylon unite. We are told to...

"...come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord," 2 Corinthians 6:17.

And again, in Revelation 18:4, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

Jeremiah has similarly warned us: "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the Lord's vengeance; He will render unto her a recompense," Jeremiah 51:6.

Then, in Zechariah 2:6-7, another occasion required separation: "Flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heavens, saith the Lord. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the draughts of Babylon."

To "come out of Babylon," or Egypt, means to come away from the darkness of polytheism engulfing the religious world today, so that we might serve the One True God of Creation. It means to shun idolatry, immorality, and all that would separate us from the Kingdom of God.

But, Yahweh isn't just calling His people to casually "come out" of spiritual Egypt and Babylon. He is calling us to FLEE from it! In order to flee from these forms of spiritual darkness, we must have our spiritual eyesight firmly fixed upon the prize of Canaan. Only when our focus is on the Heavenly Goal, will we have the motivation to flee from all that would deny us its attainment.

King Louis XVI had the dubious distinction of ascending the throne during a time of great trouble and unrest in France. During his reign, the infamous French Revolution erupted. King Louis was imprisoned and later executed by the revolutionaries. His family was taken captive as well.



The king's heir was held by the same men who had dethroned his father. Believing it might turn the young prince into a beloved martyr, the revolutionaries were unwilling to behead the boy, as they had his father. Thus, they schemed another way to deny the lad his monarchical destiny. The revolutionaries determined that if they could destroy the young teen morally, the people of France would support them in denying him the throne. With this in mind, they devised a scheme.

Pretending to befriend the boy, the men took him to a community far away and there exposed him to every filthy and vile thing that depraved humanity can offer. They offered him rich foods, intending to enslave him to appetite. They used vile language around him constantly. These supposed friends exposed the young prince to lewd and loose women. In fact for six months, twenty-four hours a day, the young man was surrounded by every depravity and devilish "delight" which could drag his soul into the pits of destruction.

But not once in all that time, did the son of Louis XVI partake of these temptations. Aggravated at their failure to bring self-destruction upon the young prince, the pretended friends questioned the lad. Why had he not enjoyed these pleasurable pastimes? They encouraged him again that they were only trying to please him and offer him all that any man could ever want. Why did he not partake? The boy replied,

“I cannot do what you ask for I was born to be a king.” Because his eyes were on the greater goal of ruling France, as he had been born to do, the young prince could not be bought or enticed to sink into depravity and forsake his destiny.

This story aptly illustrates what it means to spiritually flee from Egypt and Babylon. If we would attain the Heavenly Canaan, our gaze must be so focused upon realizing that eternal destiny that we cannot be entrapped by the enemy’s enchantments.

*“... This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ (Yahshua),”
Philippians 3:13-14.*

FLEE FROM WHAT?

Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, enumerates the characteristics of the ones who will not make it through the testing wilderness. In other words, as Galatians 5:21 ends: *“they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”* As follows, Paul's list of attitudes and behaviors to “come out of,” to separate **“from them”** was just what ancient Israel was having to “contemplate.” These following characteristics remain an evidence, then, of being still in Egypt, of still having Egypt in us. These characteristics on Paul’s list won’t make it to the End of the journey (Exodus 14:2). Strong’s Concordance numbers and definitions are included below for clarification:

In the same way that the son of Louis XVI could never ascend the throne if he allowed himself to fall into depravity, so those who practice the following are unfitted to cross over spiritual Jordan:

- **Adultery** (3430) – meaning as it says, marital unfaithfulness
- **Fornication** (4202) – harlotry
- **Uncleanness** (167) – filth in a natural or physical sense, or moral lewdness

- **Lasciviousness** (766) – hedonistic, without self-discipline or moral restraint, sodomy.
- **Idolatry** (1495) – worship of self-interests, money, material things or the worship of anything other than Yahweh.
- **Witchcraft** (5331) – magic, sorcery, pharmacy, medication
- **Hatred** (2189) – enmity, to be in opposition
- **Variance** (2054) – contention, argument
- **Emulation** (2205) – making war on the good in another, with effort to diminish it
- **Wrath** (2372) – impetuous indignation, anger
- **Strife** (2052) – Seeking one’s own advantage, taking bribes, selfish, corrupted by self-will
- **Sedition** (1370) – separating as a faction, bringing division
- **Heresies** (139) – a form of worship or theories that break away from biblical truth
- **Envy** (5355) – personal pain at the sight or thought of another’s success or happiness
- **Murders** (5408) – murder, slaughter
- **Drunkenness** (3178) – (the word does not specify wine) excess, as compulsions, addictions
- **Reveling** (2970) – ungodly feasting and impurity, immoral partying

"Behaviors reveal attitudes and attitudes reveal character. By their fruits ye shall know them."

Who, in the traveling multitude, was free of any of these characteristics of spiritual Egypt? Which of the modern saints expecting to arrive in the Promised Land is free of these areas of bondage? Most of us have been told that our behavior has nothing to do with our arrival at our final destination; the reward is by “promise,” not by “behavior.” If there ever was proof of the opposite, this wilderness journey would be it. It was this list in them that resulted in their tempting God ten times throughout their journey, and even that number is symbolic of the

general attitude which consistently tested Yahweh's patience.

Conversely, when we truly love and trust the Heavenly Father, we will delight to do His will, for His lovely characteristics will be written upon our hearts (Psalm 40:8). Remember, walking under the Blood symbolizes God's part, but walking into the wilderness eight days with unleavened bread symbolizes our part in getting sin out of the life. Both are accomplished by His effort with the cooperation of our will. When we love, we love to honor. When we cannot, or do not know how to love or respond to love, we distort love into permissiveness toward the corrupting attitudes from the Galatians list.²⁴

Behaviors reveal attitudes and attitudes reveal character. Ultimately our characters, which are made up of our thoughts and feelings, are rooted in our attitudes and their resulting behaviors. "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20).

Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw My works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known My ways, So I swear in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, Hebrews 3:8-13.

The side we will stand on in the final day is determined by who is our true spiritual Father. The Heavenly Father claims those who bear the stamp of His beautiful character. While the "father of lies," who is the enemy of souls will claim all who bear his character qualities in the End.

CONTEMPLATING HIS CALLING

Does this make Yahweh harsh and the Way of Life too high a goal? Popular as this viewpoint may be, it is false. Salvation, illustrated in the forty years in the wilderness, is made available to all who will trust and obey. It is in the trusting, in the beholding, in the believing, in the whole-hearted loving, that we receive the heart to obey. It is a "heart-call" that draws us into the solitary place to "hear" His loving

voice. The word “wilderness” (Hebrew *davar*), as in the exodus, actually means “to lead,” or “to speak.”²⁵

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever! Deuteronomy 5:29.

Israel’s experience at *Etham* stands for a re-evaluation of one’s commitment to the call. With the symbols of self-protection and self-preservation, gone; we, like Israel of old, must find our needed focus. Our spiritual eyes are to be fixed upon the leading Light from the cloud and pillar of fire.

In so beholding, our focus shifts from the “arm of flesh” to a new found reliance on Yahweh’s might. This transfer of focus began at *Etham* for the Children of Israel. As they "contemplated" the choice they had made to come out of Egypt, they willingly laid down their weapons.

"Etham... is the spiritual swapping of our swords of self-reliance for the ploughshares of full surrender to the Saviour."

Etham also means "wholeness" or "perfection." This does not refer to the absolute sinlessness of Yahweh, nor to the flawless excellence of the holy angels. The perfection of the *Etham* experience is that completeness of surrender that comes through deprivation and suffering. The Children of Israel’s challenge at *Etham* was to be complete in their resolve to come out.

Ancient Israel had partaken of the Body and Blood of Yahshua through the symbols of the Passover experience. Yet, as we do today, they still fell far short of full surrender to Yahweh. To these ones, still growing in grace toward righteousness, the challenge of Paul is to "press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ (Yahshua)," Philippians 3:14.

Until we fully surrender to Yahweh's Leadership and Voice in the “wilderness,” our spiritual walk is "camped at *Etham*." *Etham* is the

proving ground for our resolve. It is the place of “pondering the plan,” the experience of “exchanging attitudes.” It is the spiritual swapping of our swords of self-reliance for the “ploughshares” of full surrender to the Saviour, to break up your fallow ground (Jeremiah 4:3). Here, at the second campsite, the “Seed of Abraham” contemplated and confirmed their relationship to the God of Heaven. Significantly, this experience also exemplifies the meaning of “two,” in Hebrew Gematria.

But contemplation of their choice to follow Yahweh revealed that the Children of Israel were not fully satisfied. The freedom had sounded so sweet! But the reality had already included some unexpected bitterness.

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To top it all off, they were now set upon a route winding southeastward through the Sinai Peninsula, rather than proceeding directly northward to Canaan. Why couldn't they just follow the trade route – the broad road that led to their destination quickly and comfortably? Why should they go to the Mountain first? It was “out of the way!”

The spiritual parallels here are quite startling and eye-opening. Isn't this the same attitude that pervades Christianity today? Aren't most seeking a quick way to the Promised Land. Why pass by Mount Sinai? “That is bondage to the Law!” most assert. Why don't we just take the most comfortable and direct route? Many, like Israel of old, fail to see that reaching the Promised Land isn't the primary purpose of the trip. If it were, Yahweh certainly had the power to simply zap His people from Egypt to Canaan instantly, an exaggeration to make a point.

The fact that He doesn't choose to do this shows that the growth gained throughout the journey is vital to the final destination. It is during the experiences of the forty-two “camp lessons” encountered along the way, that Yahweh's full Name is placed upon His people! Far from being a waste of time, the spiritual growth of these

wilderness experiences is how Yahweh fully **fits** us to dwell in His ultimate Heavenly Land. And far from being a side-jant, the trip to the Holy Mountain of God is an essential element of growing in grace!

*"At Etham, the
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Like Israel of old, most expect to enter the "Canaan Land" without sacrifice, restriction, self-discipline, surrender, suffering, or rules. But such a journey would leave the traveler unfit for his desired destination. It is because we need the character development found in the experiences of the "wilderness," that:

God hath not promised peace without pain, Joy without sorrow, sun without rain...²⁶

FROM SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES

We have already mentioned the idea that part of the Etham experience was exchanging swords for plowshares. Looking up "plowshares," in the *Strong's Concordance* (#855), we find illumination of the tests and challenges associated with Etham. In Isaiah 2:4, we see an End-time prophecy. "*And they shall beat their swords into plowshares.*" The original Hebrew word translated as "plowshares" is "ayth." It is sometimes rendered simply as "plow,"²⁷



This verse comes from a chapter in Isaiah which tells of the coming Kingdom; a kingdom where we will "learn war no more." That kingdom is not of earthly design. Furthermore, if we expect to enter, we will have put away our ideas of self-sufficiency, self-

preservation, and self-defense. This is a vital part of the second lesson of the journey.

Another prophetic passage related to the concept of “*Etham*,” is found in the second chapter of Joel. *Let the gentiles beat their plowshares into swords – Joel 3:10*. This is a call to the “last battle” – to the Day of Judgment, when God will make an end of the nations that have opposed and oppressed His people. It is clear from these Scriptures, and from Micah 4:3, that the righteous take their journey without weapons for their own defense, whereas the wicked turn their plowing machinery into weapons for the final battle between the good and the evil.²⁸

Clearly the Children of Israel could not have literally beat their swords into ploughshares at this campsite. We can be certain of this because Yahweh calls upon Israel to use those literal swords in a variety of occasions throughout their coming wilderness challenges. The concept of the *Etham* “ploughshares” was more a change in thinking. Israel was to learn here that Yahweh was their only Source of help and defense. He was fully capable of defeating any foe while the people merely stood still and waited upon Him. And whenever Israel’s literal swords were called into use, these implements of war were only effective if the blessing and might of Heaven attended. Thus, *Etham* was the site where Israel was to be taught the importance of full reliance on Yahweh, and Him alone.

It is here at “*Etham*” -their second stop- that “those who prevail with God” were introduced to the provision of Yahweh in the cloud and pillar of fire. At *Etham*, the Covenant-keeping God visibly revealed His presence to His people. Israel’s weapons through their desert wanderings were to be the cloud overhead by day, turning into a flame of fire by night. The nations knew this phenomenon was supernatural, and they kept their distance.

Interestingly, *Etham* is distinguished from all other campsites by this marvelous revelation of the Holy Presence in the water and fire. It was His witness in the earth - the witness of the “water” and “fire” that reappears numerous times throughout Scripture, all the way to Revelation's Two Witnesses.²⁹ Christ’s own ministry extended from

baptism by water to baptism by fire, and so it will be with the Redeemed.

In this station is the identity of the One leading them. Prior to *Etham*, the word for "God," is the Hebrew word, "Elohim" -the Creator in Genesis 1 and Exodus 12:17-18. At *Etham* God more fully revealed Himself as the "Great I Am" who had met Moses at the foot of the "Mountain of Instruction." There at *Etham* He became to them "Yahweh" - the Eternal Father.³⁰

When we, in contemplation of the Gift, the Provision, and the protecting relationship of Yahweh, lay down our "swords," and put behind us the desire for self-preservation, self-defense, self-sufficiency, and self-righteousness, we may press on from *Etham* "under the water" and led by "His Holy Fire"!

Thus, the lesson that we must contemplate as we reach the spiritual experience of *Etham* is a lesson of trust. We must learn to trust and obey our Heavenly Father. This is the core of the *Etham* camp-lesson.



SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWO

- *Etham* means “flee from them” and “ploughshares.” While Egypt represents the full darkness of bondage to sin, Babylon is a symbol of the pseudo-religion that mixes the sacred with the profane. In the message of *Etham*, final Israel is called out of both. But, we mustn’t just get out of Babylon or Egypt, we need the Father to get Babylon and Egypt out of US!
- Yahweh purposely did not take the Children of Israel directly to Canaan. Similarly, for the end-time saints, the **process** of the journey is what fits us for Canaan.
- We must learn the lesson of total surrender and dependence upon Yahweh. We cannot rely on the arm of flesh for anything. He alone is our Guide, Defender, Provider, and Sovereign. *Etham* is about realizing this and submitting to Him in all things.