

# Manna, Mo'ed and the Moon-God: Wilderness of Sin

*"And they removed from the Red Sea (Yam Suph), and encamped in the Wilderness of Sin," Numbers 33: 11 (KJV).*

Today the Gulf of *Aqaba* provides a coastland full of resort towns, ports, and wildlife preserves. The northern territory belongs to Jordan. They are proud of their unique coral reef systems, fish, and aquatic plant-life exhibits. "The Gulf of *Aqaba* is an environmental treasure, which Jordan is endeavoring to protect."<sup>77</sup> But when Israel passed through it, this region was characterized by rocky soil, briar patches, and pagans who worshipped the moon.

Upon leaving the marshy regions of *Yam Suph*, the multitude made their way into the Wilderness of *Sin*, exhibiting its rocky canyons and mountain passes. This map (on right) shows the correct Route of the Exodus and the location of the Wilderness of *Sin* just north of *Jebel el Lawz* (Mount Sinai) in the land of Midian.

According to the Bible account, this geographic area lies between *Elim* and Mount Horeb (another name for Mount



Sinai).<sup>78</sup>

## THE SEVENTH CAMPSITE

This encampment, in the Wilderness of *Sin*, was Israel's seventh campsite. The Hebrew letter for seven is the *zayin*. Seven signifies the perfection of Yahweh. It also has to do with His perfect judgment, seven being the number of the "sword of the Word," and the "plan of God."

*"Seven signifies the perfection of Yahweh... (and is) the number of the 'sword of the Word'..."*

Seven is the number that exonerates our Creator, even on a literal level. Consider that from human conception to birth is ideally 40 weeks, or 280 days, but it may be shortened to 266 days, or 38 weeks, when divided by seven. But that is not all.

The incubation time for an egg (a symbol of God's creative and recreative power) often points to seven. The eggs of a potato bug hatch in seven days; those of a canary in fourteen days, while hen eggs hatch in twenty-one days. The eggs of ducks and

geese hatch in twenty-eight days; those of the mallard hatch in thirty-five days, while those of the parrot and ostrich hatch in forty-two days. Notice they are all divisible by seven, as is the number of camp lessons for "Israel" to enter "new life" thereafter!<sup>79</sup>

That which was created on the sixth day - six carrying the meaning of man's inadequacy without God, - is renewed or reborn on the seventh. This is Yahweh's message of "infused life." Thus, the cycle begins again on the eighth day (meaning new life), which is actually the first day again.

While there was nothing recorded about Israel's experiences at their sixth campsite, the Bible account of the seventh campsite offers several verses of information for our enlightenment.

*And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the Children of Israel came unto the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month*

*after their departing out of the land of Egypt. <sup>2</sup>And the whole congregation of the Children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>And the Children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger, Exodus 16:1-3.*

## WHAT'S IN THE NAME?

As we begin to search out the spiritual lessons of this campsite, let us consider the significance of its name. What does the term “Wilderness of *Sin*” mean? Are we talking about the transgression of Yahweh’s Law? Certainly the Children of Israel did sin, by biblical definition, while camped in this place. But “sin” in “Wilderness of *Sin*” is not related to the English word “sin,” which means transgression against God. The *sin* in “Wilderness of *Sin*” is merely a transliteration of the Hebrew word pronounced *seen*, which means “thorn.”<sup>80</sup> Appropriately named, this part of the journey was hampered by thorn bushes and dense thickets,<sup>81</sup> not to mention, a “thorny experience” in yet again failing to trust Yahweh in a trial.

This wilderness region was named by the Mesopotamians who inhabited the area. In the Sumerian language of Mesopotamia, “*Sin*” is a suffix for the months of the year, as it refers to the “moon.” ( *niS rabdiM* , פְּדִיָּה סִין ) Petroglyphs referencing “*sin*” have been found in the Wilderness of *Sin*, or *iah*, (the western Semitic glyph for the moon used to reference the god of the air, or storm, by the people living in the Sinai desert.) Cult sites at oases and wells in the Negev, and sites around the Gulf of Aqaba extend all the way to *Kadesh Barnea*. From this linguistic and archaeological evidence, Bible scholars find that the name *Sin* refers to the moon deity worshipped by the pre-Islamic nations in this region.<sup>82</sup>

*“... The name Sin refers to the moon deity worshipped by the pre-Islamic nations in this region.”*

The Bedouins, of the region, identify *Jabel el Lawz* as the Bible's Mount Sinai.<sup>83</sup> The land around this mountain range was inhabited by both the Edomites and the Midianites, at that time. Worshipped widely among these tribes, this was a heathen region known for its "moon god" celebrations. Cult sites in the desert at *al-Madhbah* near Petra, suggest that the Wilderness of *Sin* included all the mountains of the Seir,<sup>84</sup> especially those along the coast of the Gulf of Aqaba and Central Arabia.

Not only did they worship the "god" of the moon, the Midianites, who occupied this territory in the twelfth through the tenth centuries B.C.E., worshipped many false gods. Their false deities included both *Baal-peor* and even Yahweh, among many others. In fact, the kings of the nations throughout history have tried to give at least "lip-service" to the "gods" of every culture. This polytheistic practice was deemed prudent for political advancement.

### MEET THE MIDIANITES

We first meet the Midianites in Genesis 25:1-6. In the biblical account, the Midianites were descended from Midian, a son of Abraham through his wife, Keturah, whom he married after the death of Sarah.

They are next mentioned as the merchants who bought Joseph<sup>85</sup> for trade in Egypt (Genesis 37:26-28; 39:1). For the most part, Midian, and his descendants, were ever a "thorn" to the Children of Israel. (See 1 Chronicles 1:32-33.)

One of the few exceptions to this rule was even in the family of Moses, by marriage. We are told that a Midianite clan, known as Kenites, settled in the Negeb under Joshua. Moses' wife, a Midianite, was of this clan of Kenites.<sup>86</sup>

*And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father in law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people, Judges 1:16.*

The Kenites were a nomadic tribe, many of whom became affiliated with the Israelites, showing kindness to the Israelites during the Exodus, and later settling among them in the tribal areas of Judah and Naphtali after the conquest of Canaan. They inter-married with the Israelites and are depicted, in the biblical narratives, as supporting Israel in its fight against the Canaanites and Amalekites.<sup>87</sup>



As has already been mentioned, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, was from this friendly Kenite clan. A Midianite prince and priest, Jethro showed mercy to Moses in his flight from Pharaoh's wrath. In the house of Jethro, it appears that Yahweh had a remnant from the land of Midian, with whom Moses spent his forty years in exile after killing an Egyptian.

During those years, Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro. Not only did Jethro come to serve the one true God, he also proved to be a valuable advisor when they again met him in his land.

*"Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro prince of Midian; and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the Mountain of God," Exodus 3:1.*

According to the Koran account (which refers to the Bible's Midian as *Madyan*), a prophet *Shoaib*, was well-known in the land. *Shoaib* is another name for the biblical Jethro, father-in-law of Moses, according to Muslim traditions. We find that Jethro was known by more than one name, for Exodus 2:16 calls him Reuel. A variant spelling (Raguel) occurs in Numbers 10:29. But these are all names clearly referring to Moses' father-in-law, Jethro.<sup>88</sup>



The people of Midian are mentioned again in the time of Deborah, as is recorded in Judges 5. Jael, the wife of a Midianite, drove a nail through the head of Israel's enemy. Having foretold this event through His prophetess Deborah, Yahweh used Jael as His vehicle for Israel's deliverance. Here, in her story, the Midianites surfaced yet again on the pages of Holy Writ.

Gideon led three hundred in war against the Midianites, during which an Israelite slew some Midianite escapees with the ornaments of their moon god around their camels' necks (Judges 8:21). These ornaments were shaped like crescent moons, the same as used today by the people of that land. The crescent moon and star is an internationally recognized symbol of Islam, showing plainly that the moon is still very integral in the religion and thinking of the people in this region.



The Midianites, with their polytheistic moon worship practices, would appear many times in the story of ancient Israel. In fact, their paths would cross for a major test just before the Israelites entered Canaan.

### THE ORIGINS OF MODERN MOON WORSHIP

When they reached this seventh campsite, the Children of Israel had entered the "moon god" territory, in the part of the wilderness named for this false god, paradoxically called *Sin*. The word not only refers to moon worship, but also to the thorns and briars of the area, physically and spiritually. "Sinai" turns the suffix, *sin*, into a noun. In this form, it refers to moon worship while retaining its meaning of "thorns, thistles, weeds, and briars," all prepared for the final fire. We will return to this meaning in Chapter Eleven.

"Although the moon has not had great prominence in the history of religion, the worship of it has been known since earliest recorded time—in the oldest literatures of Egypt, Babylonia, India, and China.

Moon worship is founded on the belief that the phases of the moon are related to the growth and decline of plant, animal, and human life. In some societies food was laid out at night to absorb the rays of the moon, which were thought to have power to cure disease and prolong life. Among the Baganda of central Africa it was customary for a mother to bathe her newborn child by the light of the first full moon. The moon was frequently equated with wisdom and justice, as in the worship of the Egyptian god, *Thoth*, and the Mesopotamian god, *Sin*.<sup>89</sup> In general, however, the moon has been the basis for many amorous legends and some superstitions (madmen were once considered to be moonstruck, hence the term lunatic) and is particularly important in the practice of astrology.<sup>90</sup>

*"...Allah was a pagan deity. In fact, he was the Moon-god... and the stars were his daughters."*

The Islamic religion claims "Allah" as their principle deity. As Lew White, in *Fossilized Customs*, states plainly, "Allah was a pagan deity. In fact, he was the Moon-god... and the stars were his daughters."

In Old Testament times, Nabonidus (555-539 B.C.E.), the last king of Babylon, built Tayma, Arabia as a center of Moon-god worship. (*Nabonidus is pictured on the Babylonian carving on the following page. Notice the crescent moon shape on his staff and in front of him*) ...South Arabia's stellar religion has always been dominated by the Moon-god in various variations.

Many scholars have also noticed that the Moon-god's name "*Sin*" is a part of such Arabic words as "*Sinai*," the "*wilderness of Sin*." When the popularity of the Moon-god waned elsewhere, the Arabs remained true to their conviction that the Moon-god was the greatest of all gods. While they worshipped 360 gods at the *Kabah in Mecca*, the Moon-god was the chief deity.

*Mecca* was in fact built as a shrine for “Allah - the Moon-god.”<sup>91</sup>

Moon worship spread throughout the ancient region of Mesopotamia.



Depending on where this false god was honored, there were a variety of names for him. The moon-god was called: *Nanna*, *Suen* and *Asimbabbar*. “The Assyrians, Babylonians, and the Akkadians took the word *Suen* and transformed it into the word *Sin* as their favorite name for the Moon-god. As Professor Potts pointed out, “*Sin* is a name essentially Sumerian in origin which had been borrowed by the Semites.”<sup>92</sup> But, where ever he was worshipped throughout the pre-

Islamic world, his symbol never changed. Always the moon-god was represented by the crescent moon.

Yahweh was very clear with His people about how He viewed this lunar worship. In the *Torah*, He strongly commanded Israel not to become involved with the worship of any of the heavenly bodies. In fact, He called it a great wickedness, which was punishable by death.

*“And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven,”*  
*Deuteronomy 4:19.*



*If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing His covenant, and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded. . . Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die," Deuteronomy 17:2-5.*

## DOES MOON-WORSHIP TEMPT SPIRITUAL ISRAEL TODAY?

Throughout the Bible record, whenever Israel fell into idolatry, they had usually fallen into the cult of lunar worship. They had most often mixed the practices of the pagans into their worship of Yahweh and their keeping of His holy *Mo'edim* (the Hebrew term for the holy festivals of Yahweh). In the modern Christian realm, this practice of mixing moon worship into the worship of the True God of Heaven has continued.

One of the ways this has occurred is through the days deemed holy. Mesopotamian moon worshippers held sacred assemblies on days associated with the phases of the moon. Under this model, the recognized holy days fell on the First Quarter, Full Moon, Last Quarter, and New Moon. This means that the moon worshippers held the 1<sup>st</sup> (New Moon), 8<sup>th</sup> (First Quarter), 15<sup>th</sup> (Full Moon), 22<sup>nd</sup> (Last Quarter) and 29<sup>th</sup> (Conjunction) day of each lunar month as sacred unto *Sin*.

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To indicate his days of sacred worship, this idol (see next page) of Mesopotamian moon-god, *Sin*, shows the "holy" moon phase carved on its chest. Not-ice the crescent moon, visible on the idol's chest facing the camera (second image from the left). Calculating the

weekly “holy” days based upon the lunar phases is a practice that has crept into some Christian circles as the basis for determining the weekly Sabbaths of Yahweh.

Ironically, one of the main scriptural “supports” for worshipping Yahweh on these moon days is from the biblical record of Israel’s experience at this campsite in the Wilderness of *Sin*.



Camped not far from the oasis of Elim, in the realm of *Sin*, the multitude began to complain over the lack of food. Now fifteen days into the second month of their journey (Exodus 16:1), they had apparently consumed all the corn they had brought with them from Egypt. That means that they had been four weeks on the trail, since they had left Egypt on the eve of the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, or the first Sabbath (*Shabaton*, a day also referred to as a *Mo’ed*) of Unleavened Bread.

At this seventh campsite, in response to Israel’s complaining cry for food, Yahweh rained down manna from Heaven. From the Exodus account, we can determine that Yahweh promised to provide this Heavenly bread on the weekly Sabbath (*Shabbat*), which was on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the second Biblical month that year. How can we be certain this was the Seventh-day Sabbath? Let us look at the account in Exodus Chapter Sixteen. First, we find that the Children of Israel complained about the food crisis on the fifteenth day of the second month, during their stay in the Wilderness of *Sin*.

*And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt, Exodus 16:1.*

Next, we find that this day was a Seventh-day Sabbath from Yahweh’s instructions about the manna. Yahweh told Moses that He would rain bread from heaven for six consecutive days, but that on the sixth day, which was obviously the Preparation Day for the Sabbath, the people were to gather twice as much. No bread would fall on the Sabbath.

*Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily, Exodus 16:4-5.*

Consider the following calendar (for clarity, we will use the modern, pagan terms for the week days):

### Timing Israel’s Journeys From Egypt to the Wilderness of Sin

| SUN                                       | MON                                   | TUE                                   | WED                                   | THU                                   | FRI                    | Sabbath                      |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
|   |                                       |                                       | 14<br>Passover<br>Exodus              | 15<br>U.B.<br>Sabbath                 | 16                     | 17                           |
| 18  | 19                                    | 20                                    | 21<br>U.B.<br>Sabbath                 | 22                                    | 23                     | 24                           |
| 25  | 26                                    | 27                                    | 28                                    | 29                                    | 30                     | 1                            |
| 2   | 3                                     | 4                                     | 5                                     | 6                                     | 7                      | 8                            |
| 9   | 10                                    | 11                                    | 12                                    | 13                                    | 14                     | 15<br>Manna is<br>promised   |
| 16 1 <sup>st</sup><br>day of<br>manna     | 17 2 <sup>nd</sup><br>day of<br>manna | 18 3 <sup>rd</sup><br>day of<br>manna | 19 4 <sup>th</sup><br>day of<br>manna | 20 5 <sup>th</sup><br>day of<br>manna | 21<br>gather<br>double | 22<br>No rain<br>of<br>manna |
| Israel is Camped in the Wilderness of Sin |                                       |                                       |                                       |                                       |                        |                              |

If Yahweh is telling them that bread will fall for six days, and the sixth of these days is clearly the day before the weekly Sabbath, we find that it must have been a Friday. For Friday to be the sixth day in a count of six days, the day on which Yahweh promised them manna must have been the Seventh-day Sabbath.

As the prior calendar shows plainly, the 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> days of this second biblical month were indeed Seventh-day Sabbaths. But, does the fact that these two Seventh-day Sabbaths fell on moon phase dates substantiate the claim that Sabbaths are always aligned with the moon? Are Yahweh's holy days the same as those of *Sin*? No.

For there is a critical factor missing from *Sin*'s days that must be present in Yahweh's weekly Appointments. While *Sin*'s holy days were governed by the moon phases, being on the new moon, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, Yahweh's weekly *Mo'ed* (known as Sabbath or *Shabbat* in Hebrew) was to be determined by a consistent count of seven days. (See Genesis 2:2-3 and Exodus 20:10-11.) How can we know of a certainty that the Seventh-day Sabbath is to be determined by a consistent and fixed count of seven days (not present in the "luni-solar" calendar for the weekly Sabbath)? We know this because of the biblical instructions for calculating Pentecost (also called the Feast of Weeks). Let us take note of the record in Leviticus 23:15-16:

*"And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath (Seventh-day, Strong's #7676), from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete; Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.*"

*"Yahweh's weekly Mo'ed (Sabbath) was to be determined by a consistent count of seven days."*

In order for this late Spring feast to be seven Sabbaths from Wave Sheaf (First Fruits) and yet only 50 days, there can be no time gaps at all (as are present in the luni-solar calculations). In this manner,

we can show conclusively that the Seventh-day Sabbath (*Shabbat*) was an unbroken and continuous seven-day cycle.

Thus, we work six days, rest on the Sabbath, and should come forth "reborn" for new life and another week's work. That cycle was set in motion at Creation.

By continuing a consistent seven-day cycle for determining Yahweh's Sabbaths, one must note (on the previous calendar) that not every Sabbath falls on these lunar phase dates. But there is even greater proof that Yahweh's weekly holy days do not coincide with *Sin*'s. There are Scriptural references to the 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of the Biblical month that clearly show these dates to **not** be Seventh-day Sabbaths. Here is one example:

Every year, the fifteenth day of the first biblical month is the first Sabbath of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:5-6). But, this annual Sabbath date was not also consistently a Seventh-day Sabbath (*Shabbat*, *Strong's* number 7676). We can know this because of the difference between *Torah* commands against food preparation on the Seventh-day versus Yahweh's permission to cook on this annual Sabbath day.

In the *Torah*, we are plainly told that no food is to be cooked on the Seventh-day Sabbath. Thus, all food which will be eaten on the Seventh-day has to be prepared on the prior Friday.

*"... This is that which the LORD hath said, Tomorrow is the Rest of the holy Sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning," Exodus 16:23.*

In Exodus 35:2-3, we find that no manner of work was to be done on the Seventh-day Sabbath. It wasn't even permissible to kindle a cooking fire on the weekly Sabbath. Clearly this was a serious matter with Yahweh, as the penalty for disobedience was death.

But, while cooking on the Seventh-day Sabbath is expressly forbidden, the Bible tells us that it is perfectly acceptable to prepare

food on the 15<sup>th</sup> of *Abib*, which is the first (annual) Sabbath of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:5-6):

*"Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses. . . . And in the first day (which is the 15<sup>th</sup> of Abib) there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you," Exodus 12:15-16.*

It is certainly significant that here, at this seventh campsite, the Children of Israel are given their first real instructions about keeping the Seventh-day Sabbath. Before their coming encounter on Mount Sinai, the Heavenly Father taught them with manna, how to prepare for the Sabbath.

One vital insight into our Heavenly Father's ways, revealed at this campsite, is the importance of Sabbath, with instructions for how to keep it. Yahweh leaves out no detail. This camp is the seventh station in the journey to Canaan. The test and teaching in the seventh campsite message is about the Seventh Day, and its observance. Yes, even the ordinal numbers of these camping places, in sequence, reveal a divine message for us, as it did for those on the path before us.

To "know Him" is to "love Him," and to love Him is to "obey Him." The Sabbath is a "sign" to Him and about Him to others (See Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12, 20). It was given as a "sign" that we might know Him, the One who sanctifies us.

Sabbath-keeping sets us apart from the surrounding heathen. Thus, as the Children of Israel passed through the Wilderness of *Sin*, they were to be different from the moon-observant Midianites. They were



unique not only in worshipping the One True God of Heaven, but also in how and when they calculated His holy days.

### THE BATTLE OF THE BELLY

Having failed to stand with faith in the face of Pharaoh's rage, and having fallen to doubt and contention in the test of thirst, Israel now failed the test of hunger. Not only did the people complain, they also provoked Yahweh by actually wishing to return to the flesh pots of Egypt.

*"The Battle of the Belly is the test over whether we will love and obey Yahweh even when it effects our cherished food supply."*

As we have already noted, according to the account in Exodus Sixteen, Yahweh heard their murmurings, and promptly provided them abundantly with manna.

*And the whole congregation of the people of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness,<sup>3</sup> and said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of The Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."<sup>4</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My Law or not.<sup>5</sup> On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily" (Exodus 16:2-5 RSV).*

What warning should we glean from Israel's failure? May we not identify our own weaknesses? Are we not as prone to discontentment, as they, especially when it comes to the "Battle of the Belly?"

What is the "Battle of the Belly?" And why is it called a battle? It is a well-known fact that eating brings people pleasure. But how greatly our choices are influenced by this gratification may only be fully revealed in a trial. For many, food is nothing short of an idol. The

“Battle of the Belly” is the test over whether we will love and obey Yahweh even when it effects our cherished food cravings.

Even when threatened with impaired health and potential death, many choose to continue eating the same rich, processed foods that destroy them. “Don’t mess with my diet,” many a patient has instructed his physician. “Just give me the right pill and make me feel better. But, don’t tell me I have to change how I eat!”

When Israel faced the belly battle, they had come to place such a high priority on their “flesh pots,” that they actually preferred to go back to their bondage in Egypt than to part with their rich foods! Their fellowship with Yahweh and joy in following His Leadership was completely dissolved in their lust for their loved foods. Thus, they began to murmur.

Apostasy begins with "murmuring"! This was the third time the children of Israel had run out of provisions (Exodus 15:27; 16:1-36; 17:1-7). Each time, instead of turning **to** God in faith and prayer, they

had turned **on** Moses, with criticism and accusations of misconduct. Three times they had failed to demonstrate faith in a crisis. First, by reacting in fear of the pursuing Egyptians, then by complaining over the lack of drinkable water, and now they had grumbled over the lack of sufficient food, even wishing for the old tastes from their realm of bondage.

*"... Yahweh uses tests to reveal the true condition of our hearts."*

But, before we are tempted to look down our hypocritical noses and pass judgment on the folly of ancient Israel, we must prayerfully ask ourselves: Would we have done better?

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it, 1 Corinthians 10:13*



This is a vital question which must be addressed by each of us. The Battle of the Belly will come to us all, if we will pass through to the Canaan land. But, how can we be certain that we do not idolatrously enshrine food in our own lives? Because we tend to deceive ourselves into thinking we're spiritually better off than we really are, Yahweh uses tests to reveal the true condition of our hearts.

God had moved the multitude from a place of rest to a place of difficulty: Elim (palms) to the desert of *Sin* (thorns). This is how our Heavenly Father often works with us, because we need the testing to expose unknown strongholds of spiritual Egypt (worldliness) that are still in our hearts. If He had asked them at Elim, "What keeps you from worshipping Me with all your heart, soul, and mind?" They would have said, "Well, nothing, I guess. Aren't we doing O.K.?" "What do you think, Jeb?" "Oh yeah, I'm there; my heart is fully God's."

We are, as they were, pretty clueless as to our real spiritual condition, until we are facing trials. Then reality is revealed. But, knowing the test is coming should help us to spiritually prepare for it. When our dietary pleasures are exposed and we find ourselves in want, we must quickly surrender to Yahweh's will yet again. When our belts need to be tightened and our stomachs grumble with desire, we need to reconfirm our choice to serve God. Rather than complaining and setting our feet upon the path of apostasy, we should stop and pray, "Father, You know our need. We surrender it to You. Whether You choose to send us food now or not, we will faithfully praise You with every breath. May we honor and glorify Your Name with or without physical nourishment." How dramatically different will be our response to the belly test if we will just remember to surrender this completely and pray this faithfully.

### THE CYCLE OF APOSTASY

Should we fail to remain loyal to God, and grumble while lusting after our forsaken "flesh pots," we will be taking the first steps into apostasy against Heaven.

One of the vital lessons Israel was to learn in the Wilderness of *Sin* was the real Receiver of their whining. Criticism and complaints we

aim at His appointed leaders are really attacks on the Yahweh, God of Heaven.

*And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that He heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us?<sup>8</sup> And Moses said, this shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against Him: and what are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD.<sup>9</sup> And Moses spake unto Aaron,<sup>9</sup> Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the LORD: for He hath heard your murmurings. Exodus 16:7-9.*

Most have fallen into some form of spiritual apostasy in response to the “provings” of God. The past human responses to trial and difficulty are almost predictable. There is an observable cyclic pattern, which the past offers as a warning for the future.

The book of Judges shows the oft-repeated cycle. Ponder the following excerpt from *America's Spiritual Slide* identifying the steps of spiritual apostasy:



**1. Peace and prosperity:** God's gifts to His people

**2. Apathy and compromise:** They took His gifts for granted and forgot to thank Him.

**3. Rebellion (humanism) and paganism:** They traded God for other sources of “strength,” including witchcraft. (1 Samuel 15:23)

4. **Famine, war, plagues and slavery:** Showing the people the inadequacy of their own resources, God would discipline the people in an attempt to bring them back to Himself.
5. **Confession and repentance:** The people recognized their need for God.
6. **God hears, saves and restores:** He blesses His people with peace -- as long as they follow Him. When they turn to other gods, He stands back and waits.

This cycle explains the relationship between fallen Israel (literal and spiritual) and God, in every age of the past. It is a warning to spiritual Israel today, lest we repeat the pattern and receive the plagues at last.<sup>93</sup>

*"... The very test which seems so difficult and unnecessary... is Yahweh's means for developing 'Canaan-quality' characters (in us)."*

*"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come," 1 Corinthians 10:11.*

Actually, the very test which seems so difficult and unnecessary to the human heart, is Yahweh's means for developing "Canaan-quality" characters. The grace of God tests us, revealing any impurities within. This process often alerts us to new depths of dross which previously escaped our notice.

*...Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, Romans 5:3-5.*

John Bunyon was fifty years old when *The Pilgrim's Progress* first appeared in 1678. We would not have its rich and insightful passages, had John Bunyon not spent twelve years in the Bedford jail. Nor

would we have the insight of Helen Keller (1880-1968), an inspiring American writer/lecturer, had she not been blind from childhood. Ms. Keller once said, "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved."<sup>94</sup>

We will even rejoice in the conflict when we realize that the process is building in us much needed faith and hope. This is a blessed hope that does not disappoint, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by His Spirit. Suffering not only exposes our weaknesses and negative attitudes; it also precipitates the character change we need to mirror the loveliness of Yahshua. When you are tested in your spiritual Wilderness of *Sin*, you are to stand faithfully and rejoice.

*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.<sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing, James 1:2, 4 (NIV).*

In so doing, Heaven's Strength will sustain you through the trial. You will be enabled to stand faithful where those who have gone before have fallen into apostasy.

## OUTWORKINGS OF PROVIDENCE

One beautiful realization we can always cling to in moments of difficulty is the assurance of the continual leading and protection of Yahweh. Like Israel of old, His Presence is with us. For this reason, we may know at any time that we are where we are, as children of God, because Yahweh has brought us there. When you belong to God, you must not call your trials "circumstances." Circumstances are just the outworking of the Providence of God. We are to recognize Who it is that holds us where we are; He promises:

*"I will never leave you nor forsake you," Hebrews 13:5.*

*"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," Psalms 37:25.*

In spite of ancient Israel's failure in this test, Yahweh responded quickly to Moses' plea for the people:

*Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My Law, or no. <sup>5</sup>And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. <sup>6</sup>And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt, Exodus 16:4-6.*

*"As we 'taste and see' that Yahweh is 'good'... we are to grow to trust Him more deeply for the next 'proving'."*

Not only did Yahweh quickly provide for His failing Children, He also provided just enough to meet their immediate needs. Each day they were to gather for that day alone. Heaven had promised to supply "their daily bread." This caused the people to be tested yet again. "I have demonstrated My abundant provisions for you, today. Will you trust Me to supply your need tomorrow."

We are to prayerfully strengthen our faith in Him with every outworking of Providence. As we "taste and see" that Yahweh is "good" (Psalm 34:8), we are to grow to trust Him more deeply for the next "proving."

As Israel amply demonstrated, we are slow to learn to "trust and obey." But, there truly is "no other way..."<sup>95</sup> Sometimes we think we are going into a financial crisis, and just then there is an extra job available. We have all seen countless times when we didn't know where we could find money for basic bills and needs. But, as we prayed and trusted, our needs were met; rarely in advance and without any extra; but just enough was provided just when we needed it most.

This is Yahweh's Pattern – His oft-demonstrated cycle of Provident care. And it is no less than He has promised to do for us in every situation.

*"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by (Yahshua HaMashiach)," Philippians 4:19.*

*"Just when I need Him, (Yahshua) is near,  
Just when I falter; just when I fear,  
Ready to help me, ready to cheer,  
Just when I need Him most.*

*"Just when I need Him, (Yahshua) is strong,  
Bearing my burdens all the day long;  
For all my sorrow giving a song,  
Just when I need Him most."<sup>96</sup>*

#### TYOLOGY OF THE HEAVENLY BREAD

The manna, which Yahweh rained from Heaven, not only provided for the people's physical need, it also pointed to a far richer provision: that of Yahshua, the Living Bread.

Israel in the wilderness had received Bread from Heaven, but they had no understanding. And when the Bread of Heaven came in person, Israel still knew Him not. "Who art Thou?" asked the leaders of the synagogue (John 8:25).

*They said therefore unto Him, What sign showest Thou then, that we may see, and believe Thee? What dost Thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat, John 6:30,31.*

Israel, in Yahshua's day, failed to see the Truth just as their forefathers had. They still did not know His ways! The religious leaders had accredited Moses with the instruction, wisdom, and direction to them. He had been responsible for getting the bread, but the Saviour clearly set the record straight, revealing to them what the manna foreshadowed.

*"Then (Yahshua) said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true Bread from heaven. For the Bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And (Yahshua) said unto them, I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst," John 6:32-35.*

Yahshua, Himself, was the antitype of the Heavenly Bread which sustains our lives. He was the "Word" that "became flesh and dwelt among us," as it says in John 1:14. In a spiritual sense, we "eat" of His Word by partaking of the Holy Bible. As Jeremiah explained, "Thy Words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart..." (Jeremiah 15:16).

Just as Israel partook of the manna each day, we also are to partake of this prefigured Living Bread, gathering it faithfully each morning.

In the typology of the manna, we see that our past spiritual riches are not enough to feed us for the new day. In fact, the manna saved over from one day to the next (other than on the Sabbath) became putrid, vile, and disgusting. In the same way, while we are to remember yesterday's "bread," to strengthen our faith, we are not to rely on our past "feedings" to sustain us for today. Rather we are to partake of His sustaining Word, fresh for each new day. And like the fresh manna falling with the dew, Yahweh's Word and our sustainment by it are renewed to us morning-by-morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).

*"... We are not to  
rely on our past  
closeness with God to  
sustain us for  
today... Partake of  
His sustaining  
Word, fresh for  
each new day."*

As we draw closer to the end of time, the number of people who actually eat of this Heavenly Bread on a daily basis will grow fewer

and fewer. As a result, there is a spiritual hunger that is prophesied to come upon mankind near the end of time, when it is too late!

*"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the Words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the LORD, and shall not find it,"*

*Amos 8:11-12.*

There is a time coming when the Heavenly manna will no longer be in ready supply. Thus, we are to seek the food of His Word now, praying diligently, "Give us this day our daily (spiritual) bread." Only those who have been gathering this "daily bread," will continue to be well-nourished in the spiritual famine coming upon our world.

To these faithful ones, the promise for bread takes on even richer and deeper dimension:

*"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread," Psalm 37:25.*



#### SUMMARY OF CHAPTER SEVEN:

- *Sin* is one of the names of the pre-Islamic moon god. He was worshipped widely throughout Midian. The Wilderness of *Sin* was named after him and was largely peopled by worshippers of this false deity.
- The Children of Israel often fell by mixing moon-worship practices into their worship of Yahweh. This is still happening in the days and ways many professed Sabbath-keepers use for worship.
- One of the main tests in this seventh campsite is the Battle of the Belly. The choice of how and what to eat is still a source of idolatry in Christianity today. Those who enter ultimate Canaan will have learned to be submitted and obedient in how



they eat. Yahweh's end-time saints will also praise and trust Him equally in times of plenty or periods of deprivation.

- The lack of bread in the end-times will not only be a physical one. The spiritual lack of bread is far more serious. Those who are not daily eating of the Word will be spiritually starving and without strength in the coming tests.
- The Children of Israel failed this *tikkun* (lesson/test). Instead of praise, prayer and trust; they rendered complaints unto God. In so doing, they entered the age-old and oft-repeated Cycle of Apostasy. In the last days, we are to take warning in this, and not fall into apostasy ourselves.
- The manna, which the Father sent to Israel at this campsite, was not only the antidote to their physical hunger, it is spiritually the prevention and cure for the disease of unsubmitted grumbling. Manna, a symbol of the Living Bread of the Word, gives us the strength to keep from sinning against God (Psalm 119:11).
- Final Israel will be prepared and enabled to have victory over the Battle of the Belly and will be spiritually fed with the richness of the Word, by surrendering to Yahweh's will daily and eating of the Living Manna (the Word).