

Borders of Brick: Libnah

*M*any years ago, on a beautiful South Pacific Island, a

And they departed from Rimmon Perez, and pitched in Libnah, Numbers 33:20.

prideful queen reigned. The queen believed herself to be lovely in every way. She considered herself important and of higher value than the “common” folk dominated by her monarchy. One day a ship reached her island bringing many never-before-seen commodities to trade with the natives. Among the most amazing items brought to the island by the traders was a crate of mirrors. The natives had never seen themselves and bought the mirrors eagerly.



One mirror was brought to the tropical queen. When the haughty ruler first beheld her own reflection, she was stunned. She was ugly! She could see for herself that the mirror accurately reflected the image of her servants. Thus, the monarch had no recourse but to believe the repugnant reflection in the glass was her own. Unable to alter her image and unwilling to accept that her subjects were more lovely than she, the queen decided that all mirrors should be confiscated and destroyed. In this

manner, she felt justified in continuing to promote herself as the most “beautiful” person on the island.

The story of this prideful queen may seem incredulous. We might respond with amazement that anyone could be so foolish! For,

certainly, even if this silly sovereign managed to break all the mirrors in the world, still she could not alter reality. Yet, perhaps, instead of merely scoffing at such monumental idiocy, we should take heed for ourselves. Many professed followers of *Yahweh* are guilty of similar hypocritical foolishness. Refusing to see our own true condition doesn't make us acceptable in *YAH's* sight any more than breaking the mirrors improved the face of the maniacal monarch.

Following their rebellion at *Rimmon Par-ez*, the place of the breach, the Children of Israel encamped at *Libnah*, the place of “whitening,” or “purifying.” It was here that the “crushing” began. The experience of being “crushed” may not sound appealing. Yet, it is only by crushing that we are humbled; and it is only by surrendering to *Yahweh's* pressing experiences that we are “whitened” or “purified.”¹⁶ If we reject *Yahweh's* humbling pressure, like the queen rejecting the mirror, the process which would have truly whitened and purified us only white-washes the sepulcher of our unsundered hearts. This is the lesson of *Libnah*.

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Libnah is called “Laban” in Deuteronomy 1:1. According to the *Strong's Concordance*, this camp name is the same as Rebekah's brother's name (Genesis 24:29; see also the margin of Numbers 33:20). Most likely, this was the ancient land of Abraham's kin; possibly the place to which he sent his servant, seeking a wife for Isaac.

Libnah, or *Laban*, was ancient Israel's sixteenth campsite since leaving Egypt. Not only do the names for this encampment refer to “whitening” and “purifying,” but also the names suggest “building brick borders.”¹⁷ As was mentioned in Volume 1, the leaders of Israel named each encampment based upon the experiences Israel passed through during their stay at these sites.

We have no information about a physical reference to “building brick borders.” Perhaps *Libnah* was the site of an ancient ruins from the long ago days of Laban. But, certainly, Israel experienced a spiritual dividing of the multitude, a spiritual dividing “wall.”

WHITE-WASHED, YET FILTHY

“*Libnah*,” or “*Livnah*” comes from the Hebrew root meaning “white,” which is often associated with purity.¹⁸ In this encampment of spiritual separation, where the true sons of the living *El* were divided out from the nominalists, all appeared white. But, not all were pure. Like the “piety” of the Pharisees, which *Yahshua* described as “white-washed sepulchers,”¹⁹ the “whitening” of many was only a surface coat.

The leaders of Israel in the time of *Yahshua* had an intellectual comprehension of *Yahweh's* actions and power; but, they had no humility, no repentance for sin, and no shame for their arrogance. This blindness persisted in the time of the Early Christian Church, as well. For this reason, Paul called the high priest, who had commanded him to be smitten, a “whited wall,” in Acts 23:3.

Sadly, such hypocrisy, like that which characterized the professed people of Israel all the way back to their wilderness ancestors, is dominate today. Blind pride caused Israel to reject the Messiah. Many believe that if He were to come to this generation, most religious leaders would reject Him still. This same blindness which had typified the unrepentant hearts of ancient Israel, is acceptable Christianity today.

As for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms [straying away], until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know My breach of promise, Numbers 14:32-34.

Beaten, angry, and querulous, the Children of Israel trudged back into the Wilderness of *Sin*. Their rebellious attempt to defeat their enemies without *Yahweh* had failed. Yet, the majority still were unwilling to submit to Him. They only returned to the wilderness because they could find no alternative. All the while, insurgence fomented deeply in their hearts. Their defiance more determined with every step. Leaders, scouts, and sympathizers plotted to find a means to have “their way.”

With such a sickened heart condition, these professed Israelites still wore the label as the “chosen people of *Yahweh*.” But, the moniker, to which they haughtily clung, purified their hearts no more than white paint applied to a molding mausoleum.

Death is what the rebels deserved, and death is exactly what the rebel leaders received. Precisely when and how they died is ambiguous in Scripture. Numbers 14:37 says that these scouts died of a “plague.” Furthermore, it is likely that this plague fell after the revolt against *Yahweh* and Moses, recorded in Numbers 14:40-45. Had a Divine plague fallen immediately upon the faithless spies, the rebellion, recorded in the later verses of Numbers 14, would have been halted out of fear.



In spite of the unspecified details of this sad account at *Libnah*, ample information is provided for us to gain insights and warnings needed for spiritual Israel in the last days. In fact, the messages to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, seem, in places, to address the same rebellious, self-righteous attitude which drove the masses toward their destruction. The rebel leaders in ancient Israel were punished by a

plague; but, according to the Scriptures, a similar plague will also punish the rebellious, “white-washed” leaders in the last days.

SUBMITTED IN THE CRUSHING



While the mutinous Children of Israel with the faithless spies were murmuring and fomenting against their well-deserved retribution, there were some among the masses that suffered by association rather than guilt. Caleb and Joshua had faithfully obeyed *Yahweh*. They had surveyed the land of Canaan along with the ten faithless scouts, but they had stood out against the doubting counsel of the other spies. Caleb and Joshua had encouraged the Children of Israel to trust in *Yahweh*.

Surely they were heartsick when their words of godly exhortation were rejected.

It was difficult enough for faithless men to be sent back into the Wilderness from the very borders of the Promised Land. But, how would it have been for the guiltless and faithful? These obedient ones had stood among the nominal masses. Their eyes beheld the glory of *Yahweh*'s promise. It must have been absolutely crushing to these faithful ones that now, through no fault of their own, they were backtracking from the borders of Canaan, leaving behind the land “flowing with milk and honey.” Indeed, the judgment of *Yahweh* fell upon all in the corporate body.

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It is ironic to note the difference between the two types of people who comprised ancient Israel. On the one hand, were the prideful doubters

by whose sins the Promise had been denied. On the other hand, there were the obedient faithful, who were delayed in attaining the promise only because of their association. Yet, the faithful were submitted, silently accepting this crushing judgment from *Yahweh*; while the prideful were even more rebellious, bitterly planning a mutiny. At *Libnah* the “wall” over submission divided these groups as completely as any barrier of brick.

At first, it was more difficult to discern the difference between the professing people of *YAH* and true spiritual Israel. There was a subtle separation in speech and lifestyle. Like the final wheat who will grow together with the tares until the time of the harvest, the nominal and the authentic “Seed of Abraham” would journey together as one great company. Nonetheless, each test would bring another separation. Each trial would widen the heart-distance between those who would fully love, trust and obey “every word that proceeded from the mouth of *YAH*” (See Matthew 4:4).

Now the wall of difference between the two factions became starkly apparent, as the plagues of the Almighty began to fall. *Yahweh* slew the ten faithless scouts who had spearheaded the mutiny. But, He protected and blessed His faithful two witnesses, keeping them from harm.

“... Within a corporate 'body'... the sins of the many are mitigated by the righteousness of the few...”

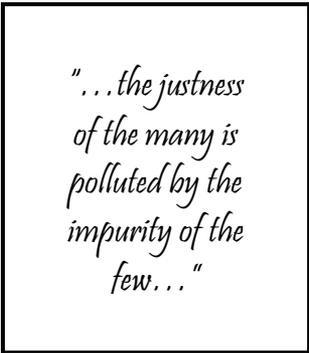
*And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against Him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before [*Yahweh*]. But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still, Numbers 14:36-38.*

It is encouraging to note that the faithful Caleb and Joshua were only temporarily “detoured” from ultimately attaining the Promise. They had to wander in the Wilderness with the corporate body of Israel, but after all the mutinous multitude had died, the faithful were still preserved and pressing onward. Ultimately, Caleb and Joshua will inherit the Land of Promise, the Ultimate Land just ahead!

The attainment of Canaan was made possible for the faithful because they humbly submitted to the crushing test of being turned back from its borders. They had surrendered their "rights;" their expectations rested upon *Yahweh's* mercy. Others might murmur or grow bitter against the Most High, but not so with the true spiritual “seed.” They patiently bore the Divine judgment with the multitude, and worked to curb the rebellion of the people, endeavoring to lead them, by word and example, into a life of humble submission to the Almighty.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CORPORATE JUDGMENT

Some will ask, Why did the righteous have to return to the Wilderness along with the wicked? Why did Caleb and Joshua, and any other “faithful few,” have to go through the crushing experience of seeing Canaan slip from sight, when they had remained faithful to *Yahweh*? Herein lies an important spiritual principle. *Yahweh* deals with people corporately. Within a corporate body, -whether a family, church, or nation, -the sins of the many are mitigated by the righteousness of the few, while the justness of the many is polluted by the impurity of the few.



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This principle is magnified in the salvation of sinners, as Paul explained in the fifth chapter of Romans:

But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of [YAH], and the gift by

grace, which is by one Man, [Yahshua], hath abounded unto many, Romans 5:15.

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous, Romans 5:19.

The concept of corporate judgment is portrayed by several illustrations in Scripture. Let us consider two such examples: the destruction of Sodom and the judgment of Achan.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah affords us an example of how the evil of a multitude is mitigated by the righteousness of the few. Abraham was fully aware of Sodom's wickedness. Yet, considering the family of Lot who dwelt there, Abraham pled with *Yahweh* to preserve the city of Sodom, if a few righteous were found there.



...Be far from Thee to do after this man-ner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And [Yahweh] said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes... And he said, Oh let not [Yahweh] be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake, Genesis 18:25-26 & 32.

The fire that fell upon Sodom and the cities of the plain was mute testimony to the fact that not even ten righteous could be found within. Thus, their iniquity reached unto Heaven, and they were purged from the Earth.

Conversely, to demonstrate how the justness of the many is polluted by the impurity of the few, consider the Biblical account of Achan. During the overthrow of Jericho, the Children of Israel were warned not to take any profit or spoils of war. To *Yahweh*, the wealth of this evil city was an “accursed thing,” (Joshua 6:18-19). All the Children of Israel obeyed *Yahweh’s* command, except one man. Achan disobeyed this injunction and took gold, silver, and a rich suit of clothing from Jericho. These forbidden items he hid in his tent (Joshua 7:20-21).



With praises to *Yahweh* for the overwhelming victory at Jericho, the Children of Israel turned their sights on the Amorite city of Ai. So confident were they in the deliverance of *Yahweh*, that Israel decided to only send a small band of about three thousand warriors to take Ai. But, the men of this small city smote the Israelite warriors, felling thirty-six of them and routing the rest.

Joshua, who was the leader of Israel at this time, tore his clothes and fell on his face in mourning before *Yahweh*. He cried out to *YAH* to know why the Israelite warriors had been vanquished, rightly assuming this would have been impossible unless *Yahweh* were, for some cause, displeased with His people. Through a process of casting lots, *Yahweh* revealed to the leaders of Israel that Achan had sinned, bringing this judgment upon the whole assembly. The corporate body of Israel became guilty together, in the sin committed by Achan, as the Bible records in Joshua, Chapter seven.

But the Children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing; for Achan, the son of Carmi...of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing; and the anger of [Yahweh] was kindled against the Children of Israel...Therefore the Children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you, Joshua 7:1 & 12.

It is because Heaven judges us corporately, based upon the attributes of the “bodies” to which we become joined, that we are warned to choose our corporate fellowships with great care.

Forming a marriage and family is one way to create such a corporate “body.” In acknowledgement of the seriousness of such a bond, prospective couples are counseled:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath [Yahshua] with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of [Yahweh] with idols? For ye are the temple of the living [El]; as [YAH] hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their [El], and they shall be My people.,
2 Corinthians 6:14-16.

Similarly, spiritual Israel in the last days is commanded to sever all bonds with Babylonish, corporate affiliations. We are warned that such associations, if allowed to continue, will ultimately bring the judgment of Yahweh upon us.

And I heard another voice from Heaven, saying, Come out of her (Babylon), My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues, Revelation 18:4.

Within the corporate body of Israel at *Libnah*, a separation and coming out of *YAH*'s true people from fellowship with the nominal rebels is pictured. *Yahweh*'s true followers were instructed to separate from the rest.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,
2 Corinthians 6:17.

Thus, they were spared from the Divine plagues which fell upon the rebels. This story affords us a shadow-picture of the separating process going on now.

BREAKING THE SABBATH



When people's hearts are in a state of rebellion, it becomes impossible to worship *Yahweh* "in Spirit and in Truth," (John 4:24). Thus, the ability to keep the Sabbath holy is beyond reach for an unrepentant heart. Only holy people can truly keep *Yahweh*'s Sabbaths holy. Considering the prevalent attitude within the multitude, it is no great surprise to discover that Sabbath-breaking may have been a fruit of this *Libnah* rebellion.

The Bible clearly indicates that part of the wilderness experience of the Children of Israel included a rebellion against *Yahweh*'s Appointed Times. Amid thunder and smoke upon Sinai, *YAH* had instructed His people to "remember the Sabbath and keep it holy," Exodus 20:8. We can find this detail in Hebrews, Chapter 4.

For He spake in a certain place of the Seventh Day on this wise, And

[YAH] did rest the Seventh Day from all His works... If they shall enter into My Rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief, Hebrews 4:4-6.

Some Bible scholars think that ancient Israel disregarded the Sabbath at *Libnah*. This is because the Hebrews 4 account explains that Israel had failed to enter *Yahweh's* "Rest," a term referenced in the Numbers 15 record.



The meaning of "rest" reaches much farther and deeper than merely setting aside a day to attend religious services. To rest from one's labors and join *Yahweh's* assemblies is more about spiritual connectedness than about church attendance. The Sabbath is a "sign" (Ex. 33:13) of being set apart for holy use. Yet, simply going through the motions of Sabbath-keeping doesn't sanctify one any more than merely wearing a Girl Scout pin makes one a member!

Perhaps the incident of Sabbath-breaking did take place at, or near, Israel's encampment at *Libnah*, as is demonstrated in the biblical order of events. The Numbers' account says that this event followed the prediction that the rebels would wander and fall in the wilderness (Numbers 14:33).

And while the Children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward [custody, or jail], because it was not declared what should be done to him. And [Yahweh] said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp, Numbers 15:32-35.

Disregarding *Yahweh's* Holy Days has never been a trivial thing. We are not to do our own will on *YAH's* set-apart time, any more today than were the Children of Israel then. The judgment against the man caught picking up sticks on the Sabbath certainly highlights *Yahweh's* estimation of this crime. He, Who is the same, yesterday, today, and forever (Malachi 3:6) considered Sabbath-breaking a capital offense.

Thankfully, we see that not all the multitude stiffened in rebellion. Some sought *Yahweh* with contrition from a broken hearts. This class was never in the majority. Nonetheless, their presence in this sobering story is an encouraging shadow picture for final Israel.

The sacrifices of Yahweh are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O YAH, thou wilt not despise, Psalms 51:17.

How is it today? Do the people who claim to be Spiritual Israel guard the Sabbath time with their Master and Saviour? Or, do they carelessly, thinking perhaps that it is a little thing; travel long distances, shop, eat in restaurants, read secular magazines, watch television, or sleep the day away? Those who do not “guard” and “keep” and “delight” in communion with the Almighty on His Holy Day are building “brick borders” of rebellion, pride, and unbelief. Such walls are typical of that which will, one day, bar these professed Christians from attaining the ultimate Promised Land.

Out from the self-willed masses lost in doubt and disobedience, *Yahweh* calls His own. Humility, obedience, and loving submission to the Most High will always characterize the true "sons of the living *El*." They are the ones, though few in number, who submit even under the most crushing of tests. These faithful ones, who will comprise final spiritual Israel, will obey *Yahweh* no matter the cost. Whatever pleases their King is their highest joy. Thus, they will consider the Sabbath a delight, a precious appointment with the King of Kings.

If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy Day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of [Yahweh], honorable, and shalt honor Him; not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure; nor speaking thine own words: then shalt

thou delight thyself in [Yahweh], and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the Mouth of [Yahweh] hath spoken it, Isaiah 58:13-14.



SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWO

- *Libnah*, also called *Laban*, was the sixteenth encampment of Israel, since they left Egypt. It's name means "whitened" and "purified;" but, it also means "building brick borders."
- At *Libnah*, the multitude of Israel came to be more starkly separated, divided by their humble submission to *Yahweh* or by their prideful mutiny against Him. If we reject *Yahweh's* humbling, the process which would have truly whitened and purified us, will only whitewash our unsundered hearts.
- Those who were humble and faithful to *Yahweh* were turned back from Canaan along with the murmuring multitude. The just suffered with the rebellious.
- Heaven always judges people by the corporate "bodies" with which they are enjoined. This is why *Yahweh* warns us to choose our spouses, friends, and affiliations carefully. We must not be a part of Babylon, or we will partake of her sins and receive of her plagues by mere association.
- Sabbath-breaking often characterizes a heart hardened by pride. The longer rebellion persists, the less able we are to appreciate what Heaven finds important.