

## Miserable Union: Makheloth

*And they removed from Haradah, and pitched in Makheloth, Numbers 33:25.*

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t *Haradah*, the wayward congregation experienced the fear of *Yahweh*. Now they moved on from the “fearful place of terror,” to the camp of peaceful “assemblies,” meaning the “community.”<sup>72</sup> Similar to the experience of the eighteenth encampment, this twenty-first campsite found the Children of Israel gathering in unity, after the terror had passed. There was not a great difference between these two “gatherings.” The number eighteen reflects a negative assembly of bitterness, fueling discontent and conspiracy. This twenty-first “gathering,” by its numerical value, escalated the negative attitudes infecting the trouble-makers. There was tension all around.

Following that eighteenth camp experience of agitation, the next two campsites revealed lessons in fear, faith, and forgiveness. It seems that many of us today need those lessons, as well. But, the twenty-first encampment at *Makheloth*, by its ordinal number, denotes “unity in sin,” thereby revealing the miserable impact of few upon the many. In fact, the number tells of “extreme sinfulness.”<sup>73</sup> We have only the name and the number from which to piece together the development of submission, or rebellion, to divine authority. There is no way to know how long the Children of Israel remained in the previous campsites mourning their dead, nor how long it took at *Kehelathah* to bury close to fifteen-hundred bodies. Think of it! It was an enormous task and a memorable lesson, which was humbling for some, but embittering for others.

Israel had left the comfort of their lives in Egypt, however unrewarding it was, to go to a Utopia of prosperity! Yet after years in the desert, many were disillusioned, their dreams of Utopia fading like the

morning mist under the heat of the desert sun. Was this experience what *Yahweh* had promised? These had been years of misery, uncertainty, and death! It was this dying dream that caused some of the more militant to threaten to kill Moses.

At the end of the forty years of desert wandering in Arabia, three to six million people were decomposing in the sand. Additionally, there were animal remains by the tens of millions. Truly passing through this desert region seemed more like a death-march than a trip to glory.

What impact did all this death have upon the geology of the region? Did millions die without a trace? We now know that organic material decomposes, under heat and pressure, rather rapidly. The petrified trees and coal deposits found after Mount Saint Helens erupted in the State of Washington (1980), have baffled some evolutionists. But the geologic findings have verified the Creationist's belief, which has included "Noah's flood." Geologist Steve Austin, Ph.D., has written a book in which he shared the exciting results of his explorations on Mount St. Helens and its adjacent Spirit Lake.<sup>74</sup> One thing we have learned from Mt. St. Helens is that it doesn't require millions of years to make an oil field! Notably, the Arabian desert, through which the Children of Israel passed, is now rich in oil.

To get a scope for the number of people which comprised Israel in the wilderness, consider the picture on the right. This is a photo of two-plus million people who gathered for the first Macy's Thanksgiving Parade. The region through which ancient Israel passed is an area approximately the size of



California, Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico. It is easier to imagine the environmental impact on the region when we better grasp the tremendous amount of people present in ancient Israel; not to mention the remains of livestock numbering into the tens of millions. These sank into the desert sands with only the silent oil deposits to mark their journey's end.

*"... For those who fail to reach ultimate Canaan... it will be as if they never were."*

Similarly, for those who fail to reach ultimate Canaan, their passing will be trackless in the shifting sands of Time. It will be as if they never were. Scripture tells us that those who fail to pass through all forty-two encampments, never attaining Canaan, will not even be remembered.

*For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten, Eccl. 9:5.*

What a sad and sobering end for those who should have been the people of *Yahweh*. The promise of Utopia had not been a cruel trick. Moses had not cheated nor lied to them. *Yahweh* had certainly not tricked them into a nightmare. But, some stubbornly clung to that self-defeating deception.

May each of us keep *Yahweh* and His promises as our reality, no matter the circumstances! May we pray to pass through the *tikkun* (tests and lessons) of the 42 encampments, so that we not fail to reach the Promised Blessing! Thankfully, it is the Heavenly Father's Will for us to succeed

*[Yahweh] is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, 2 Peter 3:9.*

He will not leave His people in despair! We may trust Him! With His promise in mind, let us see what lessons He would have us learn from *Makheloth*.

### DEEPENING MISERY

By following along camp-by-camp on a regional map, we can see that Israel was out of the mountains when the cloud settled in this 21<sup>st</sup> camp-station.



As there were dangers in the mountains, so were there dangers in the valleys. The next verse of our chapter says, “And they removed from *Haradah*, and encamped in *Makheloth*.” This name means, literally, “religious assemblies.”<sup>75</sup> That meaning, in itself, does not shed much light on the lesson of *Makheloth*. According to Hebrew scholars, the word *Makheloth* means “deep misery.” What could cause them to assemble in great “misery”? Perhaps the answer is found in the direction they were heading after two years of unfulfilled expectations. At this point in their journey, Israel was still being led farther and farther away from the borders of Canaan and deeper and deeper into the wilderness. May we remember the purpose of this journey when we are feeling so miserable.

Our interest in ancient Israel's journeys is not to perfectly identify their route and know "who," "what," "when," and "where" of every experience. Rather the purpose is to find and explore the meanings and insights which may strengthen saints in the last generation.

As Paul admonished the Gentiles in his day, so his message also echoes down through time. May final Israel not be careless where ancient Israel failed.

*Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea; all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them, YAH was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters, as were some of them... Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did... nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them... nor murmur, as some of them... Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall, 1 Corinthians 10:1-10, 12, NKJV. (Emphasis supplied.)*

*"Makheloth means 'religious assemblies,' united in sin and 'deep misery'."*

## MINDLESS UNITY

It is puzzling that *Makheloth* is a camp with so little detail given, other than its name and ordinal number. Yet, it is present in the Numbers 33 list. Why was this encampment not consigned to unmentioned oblivion like the places the Children of Israel stayed during the three days it took to reach *Marah* after leaving *Etham*. In several instances the Bible record is silent about where Israel camped

mentioning only the number of days it took to reach the next named encampment.

It is clear that every one of the 42-named encampments lends vital detail to the sealing process. Yet, what could *Yahweh* expect us to gain from a camp experience with no record other than a name and number by which to gain insight? Could it be that the meaning of the name and ordinal number is in itself so significant that they alone are enough to comprise the twenty-first camp warning? Scripture warns that there will be unity of the assembled masses in the last days. Truly the sinful and miserable union experienced at *Makehloth* is a warning for the final generation.

In the Last Days, the Bible foretells that everyone will be unified into one of two companies. There will be the small company of believers who are unified under the Headship of Messiah, and grounded in Scripture. And there will be a great company, a massive “religious assembly” which will be united tolerance for all except Bible-believers. So great will be this unified assembly, that the Bible says, “all the world” will wonder after this Beast and worship it (Revelation 13:3-4). For this countless majority, the unity they have achieved will be a one World Order. The world will be united in one religion (they all worship the beast and dragon) and one government under the global leadership of the final Antichrist. But, they have achieved “unity,” for a short time. And it truly will be a unity in misery.

In philosophy and thought, most of the world is prepared to welcome this unity. For example, in the Baha’i writings we find global unity extolled.

We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem Us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment... That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled -- what harm is there in this?... Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the “Most Great Peace” shall come... Yet do We see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures

more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind... These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind...<sup>76</sup>



It all sounds so good, at first. Don't we all desire the unity to ensure "happiness among the nations"? Isn't it admirable that this unification will make "ruinous wars and bloodshed pass away"? But for students of Bible prophecy, there are a few concerns. For example, when the

"diversity of religion" ceases, all will be worshipping the same. And the reference to the "Most Great Peace" who "shall come" is scripturally foretold to be the global beast power of the final Antichrist!

Actually, under the auspices of global unity and peace, freedom and righteousness are being drained from society like the life-blood from a sacrificial sheep. The fruit of global unity will be exactly what is described in *Makheleth*: the world will be united in sin and misery!

### SAFETY IN ISOLATION?

Many Christians, fearful of becoming unified under the beast, reject all association, refusing to assemble with any body of believers to worship *Yahweh*. They have come out of their organized churches and now worship *Yahweh* unaccompanied in lonely homes scattered over

the Earth. As a result, individuals and families are becoming increasingly isolated, spiritually undernourished, and bereft of godly fellowship or encouragement. Is isolation Heaven's answer to false unity? Is avoidance of all assembly *Yahweh's* will for His children in the Last Days? No! The Bible tells us that believers need to be assembling together **even more** in the End than in prior generations.

*Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching, Heb. 10:23-25.*

In fact, far from being a fearful abhorrence, unity is evidence that the body of Messiah is spiritually mature. Yet, Heavenly unity is never achieved by being an end in itself. Rather it is the outgrowth of pursuing Truth, growing up into spiritual fullness after the Pattern of *Yahshua*. Far from being unified in the blindness of deception, such mature concord protects from deceptive doctrinal winds.

*... Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Psalm 133:1.*

*For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of YAH, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to*

*"In a blind desire to unite, men lose sight of their direction... if... (they) are not united on the foundation of Truth, (they will be united in sin and) misery."*

*deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, Ephesians 4:12-15.*

Unity isn't an end itself. We are to become unified in the faith, as it says in the above quoted Scripture. The word "faith," in Ephesians 4:13 means "Truth."<sup>77</sup> In other words, spiritual maturity will be achieved when we have all grown up fully into the Truth. Becoming joined in Truth is godly unity. Like a butterfly which cannot be caught when chased, but will sit unsolicited on the shoulder of the gardener, unity quietly comes to all who ardently seek Truth, instead of pursuing unity.

*"... Unity quietly comes to all who ardently pursue Truth, seeing the Kingdom of Righteousness."*

*But seek ye first the kingdom of [YAH], and His Righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you, Matthew 6:33.*

When we pursue unity as an end in itself, ignoring the necessity of being unified in Truth alone, we enter enchanted ground. In so doing, we are opening ourselves up to great deception. About three years ago, we were given a call to come and share with a small house-church fellowship in Western Canada. When we arrived, we found a delightful group of about twenty-five believers all with serious hearts searching the Torah and desiring to know and do the Will of *Yahweh*. We met with them night after night over a period of several days. At that time they were thriving in the Sabbath Truth, looking for the New Jerusalem and the Heavenly Kingdom while understanding that the animal sacrifices ended at Calvary.

Among them was one personable gentleman with another agenda. He believed that the animal sacrifices should be reinstated, a Temple would be built in Jerusalem, and believers should prepare to celebrate the Messianic Age led by a mighty king coming soon to Earth.

Recognizing that this foretold earthly king who would build a new temple in Jerusalem was really the false messiah – also known as the terrible beast of Revelation – we were concerned. We showed the

gentleman the Scriptural prophecies about the soon-to-be-built Jerusalem temple and the Antichrist who would reign there.

*And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every YAH, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him, Daniel 11: 36 & 48.*

But rather than heeding the Scriptural prophecies we shared, the man opted to stop attending the meetings while we were there. At this decision, our apprehension for the group deepened. We spoke with some, privately expressing concern that this man had come to **teach** rather than **learn**. We believed that dangerous doctrines would infect them all, if they continued to fellowship with him.

“Oh, we know he believes differently than we do. And we know he doesn’t have the Truth on everything. But, we’ve agreed to fellowship together, setting aside our doctrinal differences for the sake of unity,” they explained.

Concerned, we pointed out that his beliefs weren’t just “different;” they were deceptive doctrines, which the man continued to espouse even after being shown from the Scriptures.

“Yes,” they agreed, “but he is a nice man and has taught us many good things. If we continue to fellowship with him, he’ll come to learn the Truth. But, *Yahshua* wants us to be in unity with one another. There aren’t supposed to be divisions in the Body of Christ.”

Seeing that nothing we said could convey the danger of such premature unity, we were sad and silent. But, when it was time to return home, we did so with great concern for their spiritual welfare.

Over the next couple of years, this Bible study group gradually evolved. Soon they were evenly split between people who believed in

a New Heaven and New Earth and those who were waiting for an earthly Messianic Age. As time progressed, the Messianic teachings gained support until all but a few straggling believers were convinced of the need to restart animal sacrifices and herald the soon-coming anti-messiah in Jerusalem.

What caused this tragedy? The pursuit of unity! When doctrinal differences are set aside in order to pre-serve unity, we knowingly or unknow-ingly make the pursuit of unity more important than the pursuit of Truth. Consequently, we are not instructed to seek unification. We are instructed to pursue Truth! Between those who seek Truth and those who espouse deceptions, there can **never** be unity! True unity is only gained when all that is false is cut away from us, along with all people who willfully choose it (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

*"Between those who seek Truth and those who espouse deceptions, there can never be unity!"*

The Bible says that Truth is a Sword (Hebrews 4:12 and Ephesians 6:17) which cuts deeply, even severing the closest family relationships at times.

*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me, Matthew 10:34-37.*

It is only after all that can be cut away by the Word of Truth has been cut, that true unity under the Headship of Messiah can be achieved.

*Makehloth* and the united dead bones, now contributing to the Arabian oil fields, warn the End-Time Canaan-bound believers. It is not unity that we should seek, but rather to follow the Word of

*Yahweh*, worshipping Him in Spirit and in Truth. This is the admonition still shining forth, “lighting” the way to the End.



## SUMMARY OF CHAPTER SEVEN

- The twenty-first encampment of the Children of Israel, listed in Numbers 33, was *Makheloth*. This campsite name means “worship assembly” and “deepening misery.” The ordinal number of 21 lends the meaning of being unified in “sin.”
- Being unified in the Body of Christ is a sign of having attained full spiritual maturity.
- If we pursue unity at the expense of Truth, setting doctrinal differences aside for the purpose of peace, we will be united in sin and misery, ultimately coming under the headship of the final Antichrist.
- Rather than pursuing unity, we should pursue Truth. As we seek Truth, we grow into spiritual maturity and become unified with fellow Truth-seeking believers in the Body of Christ.