



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

Parables Bookshelf - Series 1.2.3

This issue of PARABLES BOOKSHELF continues the book *The Remnant Bride*.

I hope you have noticed that at the bottom of every front page of these newsletters there is a Scripture memory verse. Perhaps you have never attempted to memorize passages from the Bible before. There is very good reason to do so.

There is an old adage that says, "You are what you eat." This is as true regarding what you feed your soul as it is regarding what you feed your body. Our soul feeds upon thoughts, ideas, and imaginations.

It is not possible to cease eating. One may

fast for a short period of time, but if one ceases to eat altogether, their body will die. It is also not possible to quit thinking. Our mind must be occupied with something.

If you want to have a strong and healthy body, you will carefully consider what you eat. You will also consider how much you eat, and when you eat.

The same is true concerning your soul. God has given us His word, the Bible, that we might feed upon that which will build up the soul to become strong and healthy. We must partake of enough of it to be able to sustain this

growth in Christ.

We must also consider when we will eat. It is good to eat the word early, often, and late. We want our days to begin with our minds focused upon God. Throughout the day we want our minds to remain focused upon Him. We also want to end our day with our mind focused on profitable and wholesome things that our sleep might be peaceful.

Memorizing Scripture is one means of insuring that you will always have healthy and wholesome food available that your soul might feed upon it at any time.

Food for Thought

Here, then, is the real problem of our negligence. We fail in our duty to study God's Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, not so much because it is dull and boring, but because it is work. Our problem is not a lack of intelligence or a lack of passion. Our problem is that we are lazy.

R. C. Sproul

Scripture Memory

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

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The Remnant Bride

Embrace the Cross

The Bride's dwelling is in the Most Holy Place. This is the place of habitation and abiding. This is the place where the veil of the flesh is torn apart and communion with God is the order of the day. Even as the literal veil in the temple was torn asunder when our Lord was crucified, our flesh must be crucified to open up the way for communion with the Father and the Son.

Some may ask at this point, "Why must we embrace the cross? Wasn't Yahshua's sacrifice sufficient?" It is certainly true that Yahshua has

"Why must we embrace the cross?"

restored our access to the presence of the Father. The torn veil is proof of this. The veil was torn from the top to the bottom indicating that from God's end of the relationship be-

tween God and man all impediments to access into His presence have been removed. The way has been made open to us.

This is tremendously significant. However, Christ's sacrifice in no way symbolizes that God has made peace with sin, nor that sin has now become acceptable unto Him. Christ's sacrifice was not intended to make a way for man to remain sinful and yet have full and complete access to the presence of a holy God. No, Christ's sacrifice was made so that we also could have the veil of our flesh torn asunder. Whereas we had been slaves to sin, a way was made for us to now become slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:19). Yahshua's death was not for the sake of making sin acceptable to God, it was for the purpose of making mankind holy.

19 Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Yahshua,
20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Hebrews 10:19-22

Yahshua's death was for the purpose of purifying us, to wash us, to make us clean. Before His death we were sold as slaves to sin. We could do nothing but sin. Our most righteous acts were counted as filthiness before God. Through His death, a new and living way has been opened up before us. We can now walk in holiness before God and even have our consciences cleansed from evil, but we must choose to appropriate what God has done for us. This calls for action and response on our part as is shown in the following scriptures.

24 Then Yahshua said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

25 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it.

26 "For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

27 "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds.

Matthew 16:24-27

As was mentioned in the last chapter, all those who are saved are offered an invitation to advance further into the temple or tabernacle, towards the presence of God. In verse 24 of the preceding scripture, we are told that those who

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would come after Christ must deny themselves and take up the cross. Further entrance into the tabernacle requires embracing the cross. Since the Bride's residence is in the Most Holy Place, the Bride consists of those who have embraced the cross.

Again, in verse 27 we are told that reward will be meted out to every man "according to his deeds." This passage links together the three elements of; pursuing Christ, taking up the cross, and reward. These three are inextricably bound up with one another.

What does it mean to take up the cross? Much understanding can be gained from the above passage. Taking up the cross involves denying oneself. It requires refusing to save one's life. The literal meaning of life in this passage is soul life, which includes self-will, personal desires, and ambitions. We can also ascertain from the passage that taking up the cross is the antithesis of trying to gain what the world has to offer.

Going back to the image that we have already used, the new believer in Christ stands at the Outer Court of the tabernacle. At his back is the world with all its allure and its idols. At his front is the tabernacle wherein is the presence of God. These two stand in opposition to one another. They are both beckoning to him. He must choose which way he will go. Reward or loss hangs on his decision.

Satan would like the believer to think that having arrived at the Outer Court, having received salvation, that there is nothing else to be concerned about. The truth, however, is that there is much more. Intimate communion and daily fellowship with the Creator of the Universe is awaiting those who would traverse farther in. Access to all of the most holy things of God and access to God's very presence are being offered to the saint.

It would seem that the world wouldn't stand a chance in gaining the heart of the believer. What

God offers makes the world appear pale in comparison. Paul described the things of the world as mere rubbish.

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Yahshua my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ
Philippians 3:7, 8

The world, however, seems to shout at us while God speaks with a still, small voice. It would appear that among much of the church that the voice of the world is so loud that the voice of God is hardly heard at all. Few seem to understand that they are being beckoned to proceed further into the presence of God.

Those who would proceed into the temple must turn their back on the clamor of the world with its neon glare and seductive attractiveness. An alternate set of senses must be employed, senses that can see beyond the temporal into eternal things. Discipline, rigor, and patience must replace a desire for instant gratification, ease, and comfort.

Above all, one must have seen a glimpse of what awaits him. It was said even of Yahshua, that He endured the cross for the joy which was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). We too, must see the joy which is set before us in order that we may embrace the cross and proceed toward the Most Holy Place.

Those who would proceed into the temple must turn their back on the clamor of the world...

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The Joy Set Before Us

What is it that could convince a person to turn his back on all that the world has to offer? What is it that could keep one steadfast in pursuit of a heavenly goal in the face of the most severe opposition and oppression? What is it that could cause a man to accept with satisfaction that he may never receive reward in this life, while he faithfully looks for reward in the next life?

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

We find an answer in the life of martyred missionary, Jim Elliot. He was a young, gifted man with talent and potential. The world was ripe and ready for his taking, but Jim Elliot turned his back on the world in his pursuit of Christ. He committed to spend his life to advance the kingdom of God among remote tribal peoples. An incredulous world did not understand. His answer to the world’s criticism was, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.” Jim Elliot had an eternal perspective and he had glimpsed that which awaited him.

King David was also a man with an eternal perspective. Although he had a whole kingdom, with all it had to offer, he was focused on a greater possession.

5 Yahweh is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; Thou dost support my lot.

6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.

Psalms 16:5, 6

David, in a beautiful and dramatic poetic form, drew a comparison of his inheritance in God to the inheritance of those who entered the promised land under the leadership of Joshua. When Israel took possession of their promised inheri-

tance, the land was surveyed and divided into portions. The lot was then cast to determine which tribe would receive each portion.

David is stating that when the time came for the lot to be thrown to determine his inheritance that God was with him, supporting him. The survey lines that marked his inheritance fell along pleasant places. He received a beautiful heritage, his inheritance being Yahweh.

David chose the inheritance of a priest. The priestly tribe of Levi did not receive an inheritance of land along with the other tribes. Instead, God gave them something much better. He said that He would be their inheritance (Deuteronomy 18:2). All Christians are priests before God and are called a kingdom of priests (Revelation 1:6). Our inheritance is therefore a priestly inheritance. We can say with David, “Yahweh is the portion of my inheritance and my cup.”

This should excite the faithful saint of God. We have not been given an inheritance that is perishable, rather we have been given an everlasting heritage. The best of the best has been granted to us. Not only are we offered the best of creation, God’s most holy things, but the Creator Himself is our portion.

The Israelites were promised a special land flowing with milk and honey. They sent spies in to look over the land and they brought back some of the produce of the land.

23 Then they came to the valley of Eshcol and from there cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes; and they carried it on a pole between two men, with some of the pomegranates and the figs.

24 That place was called the valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the sons of Israel cut down from there.

Numbers 13:23, 24

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This land of promise was so fruitful that it took two men to carry a single cluster of grapes. It so amazed the men that they named the valley in honor of their find. However, because of the obstacles to be overcome to take possession of the land, only two of the twelve spies were desirous of going in. This percentage is indicative of the number who arrive at the Outer Court of the tabernacle and remain there, compared to the number who are willing to press forward to possess all that is offered them.

Like Israel, many Christians are freed from the heavy burden they were under. Even as the Israelites were freed from the oppression and slavery of the Egyptians, Christians are freed from their slavery to sin. This deliverance only takes them to the wilderness, however. The land of promise still lies ahead. There are obstacles and enemies in the way. It requires courage and faith in God to proceed.

Israel decided that she didn't want to face her fears. Instead she longed to go back to Egypt, signifying going back to the world (Exodus 14:3). Even though there was bondage in Egypt, it seemed better than risking life and limb to obtain the prize God held out to them.

Many Christians have responded in like manner. Having been freed from sin, they would rather go back to what is familiar, bondage and all, than to embrace the cross and throw oneself unreservedly over into the hands of God. There appears to be relatively few with the heart of Joshua and Caleb.

6 And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes;

7 and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land.

8 "If Yahweh is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us-- a land which flows with milk and honey.

9 "Only do not rebel against Yahweh; and do not fear the people of the land, for they shall be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and Yahweh is with us; do not fear them."

Numbers 14:6-9

Multitudes will forfeit the good things God has for them due to their fear and carnality. Among the whole generation of Israel, only Joshua and Caleb received the promised inheritance. When they could have had rivers and valleys, figs, grapes, pomegranates, milk and honey, this unfaithful generation received only wilderness and manna. We looked earlier at those among the Levitical Priesthood who incurred great loss. When they could have had God's most holy things and served in the presence of God Himself, they were relegated to the service of the building. For these unfaithful priests, their loss was similar to the generation that forfeited so much in the wilderness. Wittingly, or unwittingly, many Christians today are making decisions that will lead to a similar tragic loss.

Many saints, having received salvation, have hardly given a thought to getting to know the One who purchased it.

We have a joy that has been set before us. This joy is to become possessors of God Himself. He is our inheritance. Yahshua said that His flesh was true meat and His blood was true drink (John 6:22). We are invited to taste and see that Yahweh is good (Psalm 34:8).

Many saints, having received salvation, have hardly given a thought to getting to know the One who purchased it for them with His own blood. Salvation was meant to restore fellowship between fallen mankind and God. Many having re-

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ceived this gift, however, seem clueless as to why it was given to them in the first place.

God did not redeem fallen mankind so that they could continue on in their idolatry and bondage while receiving a free pass to heaven. He called them to walk in righteousness, to be transformed and conformed to the image of the One who saved them. He called them to fellowship and intimacy with Himself.

As we have read, the Bride consists of those who have received white robes and have kept them clean. The Bridegroom will come back for His Bride as a thief in the night and steal her away. Many of those who fail to make themselves

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ready will be caught off guard. They will be left behind. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. They will have a second opportunity to wash their

robes, but it will come at great price.

Embracing the cross requires faith in God. Faith is the opposite of fear. Those who are walking in fear are not walking in faith. Those who are walking in faith have faced their fears and overcome them. It required faith for the children of Israel to take possession of their inheritance.

When Israel came out of bondage in Egypt she had to cross the Red Sea. God was gracious and He manifested His provision for them before asking them to cross the waters. Moses stretched forth his rod and only after the sea parted did all Israel cross on dry ground. However, when Joshua took the people through the Jordan River to enter their inheritance, God required that they make the first move, demonstrating faith.

"And it shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of Yahweh, Yahweh of all the earth, shall rest in the wa-

ters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above shall stand in one heap."

Joshua 3:13

As we go in to take possession of our inheritance God will require faith from us. We cannot say, "Show me your provision first, then I will follow you." God requires that we constantly step out into that which we do not see. Only then will He manifest His provision. Only then will He take us into our promised inheritance.

To overcome the fears involved in a walk of faith, we must have a tremendous source of courage to draw from. The source of this wellspring of courage is love. "Perfect love casts out all fear" 1 John 4:18. The apostle Paul said that the love of Christ constrained him, holding him to the course (2 Corinthians 5:14). We will need to draw upon this same wellspring if we are to take up the cross and proceed into the temple to the place of the Bride.

Love, the Wellspring of Courage

Many saints have made an earnest attempt to follow Christ, only to fall short and grow weary in the pursuit. The reason for their failure is often that they are relying upon their own human strength to follow Yahshua. Personal resolve and self-discipline are the wells they are drawing from. These are insufficient, however, to take them where they desire to go.

In the lives of Peter and John, we are given a picture of two men drawing strength from two different sources. The outcome for each man is quite different.

Peter, in his early walk with Christ, is a clear example of a man who is following Christ, relying upon his own discipline and resolve to get him through. It took courage to be a disciple of Christ. The 12 disciples were well aware of the

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enmity of the Chief Priest and the Pharisees. They understood that many would like to see Yahshua dead. As Yahshua's closest associates, this put their lives in peril. Courage was required for these men to continue on with Yahshua.

Shortly before His crucifixion, Yahshua explained to the disciples what was about to befall Him. He told them that they would all fall away because of Him. Peter, confident in his resolve and ability to stay the course, told Yahshua that even if all others fell away, he would remain steadfast (Matthew 26:33).

This was a very cocky statement for Peter to make. Peter was sitting at the table with eleven other men who had followed Christ for as long as he had and he was in effect saying, "My faithfulness exceeds all of theirs, for even if they fail you, I never will."

There is no doubt that Peter was a man of a very strong will. He was also a courageous man. He was willing to fight for Christ and put his life on the line for Him. When the mob came to arrest Yahshua, it was Peter who drew the sword and lopped off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. Peter's courage sprang from his own strength, however. His courage was based upon his reason.

Peter believed that Yahshua was the Son of God. However, he failed to grasp what Christ's true mission was. He believed Yahshua would restore the kingdom of David. He did not understand that Yahshua came to destroy the dominion of Satan over mankind, nor did he perceive that this overthrow would require Yahshua to lay down His life.

Peter was courageous as long as he understood what was happening. I don't think that he ever truly understood, before the crucifixion, what would transpire. When Peter saw Yahshua arrested, he was shaken. He still had some courage, however, and followed the mob to the court of the

Chief Priest. He had seen so many miracles that I am sure he expected to see yet another one. When Yahshua submitted to being beaten, spat upon, and mocked, Peter's reason and courage faltered.

This was not something Peter had foreseen. To him, it looked like Yahshua was being overcome by evil men. How could God be overcome by man? He began to doubt Yahshua and consequently he felt vulnerable and helpless. When those with him in the courtyard began to ask him if he was a follower of Yahshua, Peter was in confusion and had no courage left. He denied Christ three times.

74 Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know the man!" And immediately a cock crowed.

75 And Peter remembered the word which Yahshua had said, "Before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Matthew 26:74, 75

Two things occur when we follow Christ out of the strength of our will. When we are successful and perform some accomplishment in our pursuit of Christ, we will become puffed up and full of pride, after all, we were the one who did this thing. However, if we fail to accomplish that which we are resolved to do, we become devastated. The failure, likewise, is ours.

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This is what Peter experienced. He was devastated. When the cock crowed, he remembered Yahshua's word to him. He realized that Yahshua knew what was going to happen all along. He had prophesied it. Peter still didn't fully understand why Yahshua was undergoing suffering, but he realized that it didn't catch Yahshua by surprise.

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He had spoken to the disciples previously about what must transpire.

Peter realized that he had failed to do what he had so fervently resolved. His bold words were just an empty boast. His confidence was shaken. His best effort was not enough to keep him faithful to Christ.

There was another disciple, however, who remained near to Yahshua. This was John. John made no boast about how he would remain by Christ even if all others fled. John wasn't known for his strong will. Rather, he was known for another trait, his love.

John, in his gospel, refers to himself as the disciple whom Yahshua loved. He was part of the three disciples who were most intimate with Yahshua. He was often described as being close by Yahshua's side and even leaned on Yahshua's breast (John 13:23). If one of the other disciples had a question to ask of Yahshua, they would sometimes ask John to present it to Him (John 13:24,25).

Love begets love.

John loved Yahshua passionately and he was aware of Yahshua's love for him. By declaring himself "the disciple whom Yahshua loved", John was in effect saying, "I know Yahshua loves me." It was his understanding of Yahshua's love for him that caused such a deep love to arise within his own heart. John acknowledges this in his first epistle to the church.

We love, because He first loved us.
I John 4:19

This profound truth will be important for us to keep in mind as we go along. As we see how great a source of motivation love is, we will naturally ask how we can be increased in love. The answer is that we must better understand how deeply

Christ loves us. Love begets love. Passion begets passion. As we come to comprehend Christ's great love for us, we will find a reciprocal love arising within our own hearts.

John made no rash vows, but, due to his deep love for Yahshua, he remained as close as possible.

15 And Simon Peter was following Yahshua, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Yahshua into the court of the high priest,

16 but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought in Peter.

John 18:15, 16

John is speaking of himself here as the other disciple known to the High Priest. He and Peter were the only two disciples mentioned as being near Yahshua at his questioning before the High Priest. Unlike Peter, it wasn't discipline and determination that brought John here, it was love. He wanted to remain close to his beloved friend. It was impossible for him to be elsewhere.

At Yahshua's crucifixion a number of the women who followed Him were present, but only one of the twelve disciples. This was John. His heart of love would not allow him to be separated from his loving master, even through a most unbearable time. At his crucifixion, Yahshua committed two of the people who loved Him the most to one another.

26 When Yahshua therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"

27 Then He said to the disciple,

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"Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household.

John 19:26, 27

I am certain that Mary never lacked anything while she was in John's household. John's care for her flowed from the wellspring of his love for Yahshua. In loving and caring for Mary, John was expressing his love for Yahshua. Love can be extravagant, it surpasses all other sources of motivation. Paul spoke to the Corinthian church of the excellence of love.

4 Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,

5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,

6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails...

I Corinthians 13:4-8

When will-power and resoluteness failed Peter, love did not fail John. John was able to remain by Yahshua's side, bearing and enduring all things, due to love. Verse 4 tells us that love does not brag, nor act arrogantly. It was not necessary for John to boast that he would never forsake Yahshua. John was constrained and controlled by love. His actions would merely reflect his love for Christ.

When Yahshua was resurrected and the empty tomb was reported by the women, we are told that Peter and John raced to the tomb to inspect it.

2 And so she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Yahshua loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

3 Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb.

4 And the two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first;

5 and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in.

6 Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there,

7 and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw and believed.

9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.

John 20:2-9

Here again, we see the excellence of love. We are told that when John looked into the tomb and beheld it empty, that he saw and believed. Peter merely marveled. Going back to Corinthians we are told that "love believes all things." It was love that allowed John to believe while others doubted.

In the 21st chapter of John we are told of another encounter between the disciples and Yahshua after His resurrection. Peter decided to go fishing and the other disciples joined him.

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While they were a little ways from shore, Yahshua called to them, the disciples not knowing who He was. In this encounter, John recognized Yahshua and told the other disciples. Only after John told him, did Peter recognize that it was Yahshua.

That disciple therefore whom Yahshua loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." And so when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea.

John 21:7

Again, John's perceptiveness can be attributed to his love. He was always hoping for an encounter with Yahshua and was quick to believe. First Corinthians tells us that "love believes all things, love hopes all things."

Love is certainly an attribute of those who make up the Bride of Christ. It is arguably the greatest attribute. It will be impossible to embrace the cross and walk where Christ would have us to walk without love. We will fail to believe, fail to hope, fail to endure, fail to bear all things, without love.

In the preceding examples it would seem that God is striving to reveal to us a profound truth. Over and over we see Peter and John facing the same tests, but with vastly different results. What Peter was unable to accomplish with human strength, will-power, and resolve, John accomplished with love.

I heard a pastor, who had performed many marriage ceremonies, state that he had never seen an unattractive bride. He said they were all made radiant by the love that was evident upon their faces. Even so, the most attractive feature of the Bride of Christ is her evident love for the Bridegroom. It is this love that allows her to advance where others will not go. It is this love that

leads her from the Outer Court, through the Holy Place, into the Most Holy Place.

Those who are of the Bride have seen the joy that is set before them. This joy is Christ. He is the passion and love of the Bride. He is her possession, her inheritance. Her love will keep her in readiness and in expectation of His appearing. Like John, she will not be able to be anywhere else, but at His side.

Love is therefore essential, for Yahshua will lead His Bride through wilderness places as He prepares her. Even as a butterfly begins as a caterpillar, but is transformed in the cocoon, the Bride will be transformed as she allows her love for Christ to lead her through wilderness paths.

The Wilderness

It was not God's intention for the children of Israel to spend a whole generation in the wilderness. The wilderness was not to be their destination. However, the wilderness was an integral and important part of their journey. Going through the wilderness was not optional. Even so, the Bride must go through the wilderness. She is not to abide there forever, but she is to profit by her wilderness experience.

Having just come out of bondage, Israel needed to acquire a new mindset. No longer slaves to their Egyptian masters, the Israelites had to shed a slave mentality. It was necessary for someone to take charge of their lives. They had two obvious choices. They could rule their own lives, or they could submit to God, receiving Him as their head and their Lord.

The saint of God has the same two choices. Having been delivered from bondage, the saint can choose to rule his own life, attempting to please God in his own strength, being led by his own reason, or he can submit to the Lordship of Christ.

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As we saw with Peter, reliance upon self is inadequate to lead us to the destination God has for us. It also was inadequate to lead the Israelites into the promised land. The ten unfaithful spies and the mass of the people were walking in their own strength. Having spied out the land, they determined whether they were adequate in their own strength to go in and possess it. The answer was a resounding "No!"

32 "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size.

33 "There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Numbers 13:32, 33

It may seem incredible to us that Israel thought that they were going to have to conquer and possess the land of their inheritance by their own strength. After all, they had seen clearly that it was God who had brought them out of Egypt. It was God who visited the ten plagues upon Egypt. It was God who opened up the Red Sea allowing Israel to cross over and who then closed the sea, destroying the armies of Pharaoh.

How could these same Israelites, who could attribute none of their deliverance from so great a bondage to their own strength, believe that they would have to rely upon their own strength to possess the land of promise? Indeed, how can Christians today, who have been freed from the bondage of sin by no merit, deed, or strength of their own, believe that they will enter into their inheritance by their own strength? Yet many do.

Only Joshua and Caleb perceived that the God who had brought them freedom from Egypt would also go before them to destroy the enemies

who were in their land. Consequently, only these two from among their generation entered in.

The wilderness is a place where we learn where our strength lies. It is a place where we abandon our slave mentality and we take God as our Head. It is a place where we demonstrate that we place no confidence in ourselves, but have complete confidence in God.

In the wilderness we learn to lean upon God. Having received the salvation that God provided for us through His Son, we now learn to trust Him with our lives in all other matters. The Song of Solomon holds many truths that relate to Christ and His Bride. It reveals the purpose for the wilderness.

The wilderness is a place where we learn where our strength lies.

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?"

Song of Solomon 8:5

The wilderness is a place where the Bride learns to lean on her beloved. If she does not learn this lesson, she will not come up out of the wilderness, but will remain there. God, having purchased our salvation, does not intend for us to live our lives by our own strength and wisdom. He wants us to continue leaning upon Him, trusting Him and receiving all we require from His hand.

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Romans 8:32

One of God's names is Yahweh Yireh, meaning Yahweh our Provider. Many Christians today

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want to do something for God, but what He wants is for His children to trust Him. This is not in any way a contradiction to what has been said in this book thus far. God wants our lives to be full of obedience and activity, but the activity He desires is that which He leads us to. As we mentioned in a previous chapter, we are being conformed to the image of Yahshua the Messiah and Yahshua stated that He never did anything of His own initiative.

Yahshua's life was far from inactive, but His activities were those the Father led Him to. God is always the initiator of the deeds He would have us to be involved in.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Yahshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
Ephesians 2:10

Pursuing the reward God has set before us is not about doing something for God. It is merely being willing to go where He is beckoning us to go. It is about expressing trust and confidence in God to the extent that we will go wherever He leads.

Adam and Eve's fall was the result of a failure to trust God. They believed that God was withholding something that was beneficial to them. In grasping for themselves the thing that God had withheld, they were saying, "God, I don't believe you have my best interests at heart. I must take control of my interests because I no longer trust you."

Ever since the fall of man God has been looking for those who will say, "God, I do trust you. I do feel that I can confidently place my life in your hands." Unfortunately, even among those who trust God for their eternal salvation, there are few who will trust Him with their lives here on Earth. However, when He does find such a one, God will move heaven and Earth on their behalf.

For the eyes of Yahweh move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.
II Chronicles 16:9

God has an inheritance for His children, but it will require faith on our part to acquire it. The Bride is those who trust God and who willingly place their lives and their welfare in His hands. They do not feel they must protect their own interests. They are confident of God's care for them. With Job, they can say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15).

The children of Israel in the wilderness could not make this good confession. Instead, they confessed just the opposite. They asked God if He had led them into the wilderness just to kill them. They asked Him if it was because there weren't enough graves in Egypt that He had led them to the wilderness to bury them there (Exodus 14:11). Such taunting and lack of trust angered God and because of it He swore that they would not enter into the land of promise.

This matter of trust is of utmost importance and it is in the wilderness that it is proven. God is looking for faith in the hearts of His children. Yahshua asked the question, "when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth" (Luke 18:8)? Likewise, we are told,

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.
Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)

Once salvation is received by an act of faith, this faith being a free gift (Ephesians 2:8), God then expects the saint to begin demonstrating trust in Him. The believer needs no other proof of God's good will toward Him than the cross of Christ.

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For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

John 3:16

The natural response of one who has received salvation should be to assert confidently that he knows God loves Him. He loves him so much that He did not even withhold His own Son, but freely gave Him up on our behalf. All saints should be able to assert with John, "I am the disciple whom Yahshua loves." Having this confidence, the saint will find himself following Christ wherever He leads. For this reason, Satan works tirelessly to undermine the saint's confidence in Christ's love toward him. The saint must remain vigilant against the deceptions of Satan.

Having determined that we will trust Christ, following after Him wherever He leads, we must then learn to discern how He leads us. In the wilderness, God led the Israelites by the pillar of fire and the cloud. When these moved, the whole nation of Israel would immediately strike camp and move with them.

The child of God is likewise to be led by God. Instead of fire and a cloud, we have God's own Holy Spirit to guide and lead us.

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are [mature] sons of God.

Romans 8:14

The articles in the Holy Place of the temple are symbolic of the Spirit of God. The altar of incense and the golden candlestick indicate that if we are to progress further into the temple, we must be led by God's Spirit. The reason for this is that the Bride must have no will or initiative of her own. She lives to do the will of God. In order to do so she must discern the voice and leading of God. Yahshua is our example in this.

As the Christ, the sent one of God, Yahshua willingly became subject to God the Father. He only did the will of the Father, never seeking His own will or acting upon His own initiative. His complete obedience in this was perfectly demonstrated upon Gethsemane when He told the Father, "Not My will, but Thy will be done" (Luke 22:42).

The child of God is likewise to be led by God.

Yahshua repeatedly demonstrated to His disciples the obedience that the Father required. He did not even speak a word on His own initiative, but spoke that which the Father gave Him.

I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 5:30

28 Yahshua therefore said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.

29 "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."

John 8:28, 29

Yahshua said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me."

John 8:42

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49 "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak.

50 "And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

John 12:49, 50

Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.

John 14:10

Embracing the cross means dying to the things of the self-life. The scriptures tell us that God's intention for us is to be conformed to the image of Christ. If this is so, then God would lead us all to the place where we too could confess, *"I do nothing of my own initiative. I always do the will of the Father. I do not even speak a word on my own, but I speak that which the Father gives me."* Does this seem like an unattainable dream? This is the Father's expressed will for us.

The Bride of Christ has no will of her own, even as Christ had no will of His own. He lived for another's pleasure. The Father's satisfaction was Yahshua's satisfaction. The two were one. This same unity is Yahshua's desire for us.

20 "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.

22 "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them;

that they may be one, just as We are one;

23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.

John 17:20-23

Yahshua was perfected in unity with the Father. As we enter this same unity with Christ, we will have no ambition or initiative of our own. We will live to do the will of our Lord. We must therefore discern clearly what His will is for us. We must learn to be directed by the Holy Spirit.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Gal 5:16

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Gal 5:25

God gave the children of Israel the pillar of fire and the cloud to train them how to be led by Him. He was teaching them how He wanted them to relate to Himself. When He moved, He wanted them to move. When He abided, He wanted them to abide. All they had to do was watch and observe what God was doing and follow after Him. This was Yahshua's example, also. He was always beholding the Father and doing what He saw the Father doing. He did this as an example of how we are to walk.

As God takes the Bride through wilderness experiences, He is desiring to find her expressing confidence in Him. Instead of murmuring, words of complaint, and expressions of fear, He is looking to hear her speak confidently of her trust in the One who brought her out of bondage.

In the wilderness God is teaching the Bride to move only at His leading and to go wherever He

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directs. He is teaching the Bride to hear His voice and to respond accordingly.

These are not small lessons. It would seem that few actually perceive the purpose of the wilderness testing in their lives. One of the greatest features of the wilderness is that there is a scarcity of things that appeal to the flesh. There is little water, little greenery, few trees, very little shade, or things that bring comfort. In the wilderness, Israel had manna for food. Manna contained everything necessary to sustain their lives, but it held little appeal to the fleshly appetites.

As God takes us through the wilderness, we will experience the same meagerness of that which appeals to the flesh. God is testing us to see if we will be content with His provision and His will for us. This is part of embracing the cross. We must crucify the flesh with its desires and lusts.

The reward we seek is not the fulfillment of the flesh and its lusts, rather, it is a heavenly reward. We seek the presence of Christ. We seek to lay hold of that for which we were laid hold of by Christ Yahshua (Philippians 3:12).

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Yahshua my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ
Philippians 3:8

This is the heart of the Bride, a desire to know Christ. The wilderness is intended to strip all else away until we are left with one ambition, one goal, to know Christ and to gain Him as our inheritance. When we are leaning completely on Him, we will be ready to come up out of the wilderness. We will be ready to enter into our possession.

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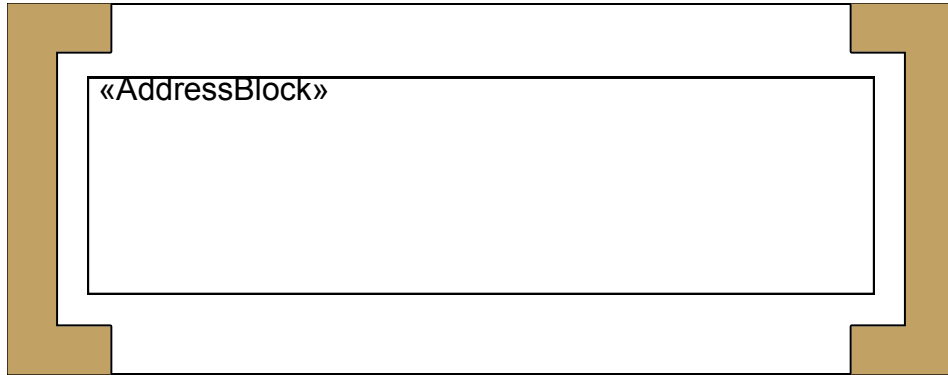
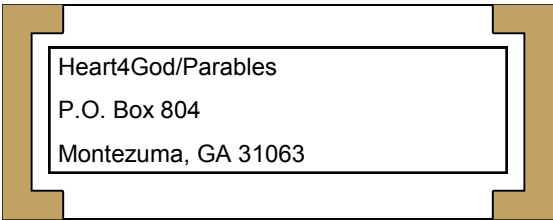
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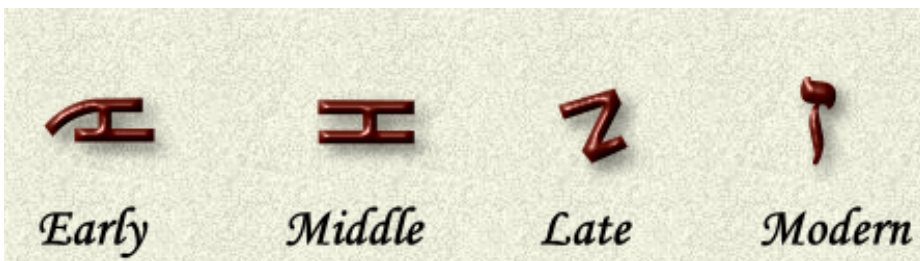
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PARABLES PRECEPT—The Hebrew Alphabet



(Image source: Ancient Hebrew Resource Center's Website)

The Hebrew letter above is Zayin. It is thought by some that this image was of an agricultural implement, as a number of words that use this symbol are related to harvest. It is possible that it was intended as a picture of the sled that was pulled over the grain to separate the grain from the stalk, the chaff, and the husk.

Some indications that it may have been an image of a sled are that

the Hebrew word for *cymbal* and *tambourine* both use this letter. As the sled was pulled over the grain it would have vibrated similarly to one of these musical instruments.

Cymbal - זזזזז

The word for *tremble*, also begins with this symbol, and the threshing sled would have manifested a trembling motion as the grain rolled beneath it.

Tremble - זז

In a very related sense, the Hebrew word for *terror*, also used this letter, for terror causes one to tremble.

Terror - זזזזז

Also, the Hebrew word for *yellow* incorporates this letter. Some grains that have been threshed would be golden, or yellow in color.

Yellow - זזז

It is interesting that we have come to associate the color yellow today with one who is fearful and trembling. It appears that this color had an relationship with those who are fearful back into the days of antiquity, though I know of no instance of the ancient Semites describing a fearful man as yellow.