

When we commemorate the Passover as Messianic Believers today, the message that we are to communicate is that the Lord is blessing us for remembering an event *that portrays what Yeshua has done for us*. We have a dual blessing that Jews who only celebrate Passover for what it represents for Israel, or Christians who only remember the Messiah's resurrection at Easter, miss out on.²⁴

When you read the critical passages within our Torah portion, and apply them to your daily walk of faith, do you realize that you are to be a witness *or sign* of the work the Lord has done for us? We are to testify of His transforming power in our lives by obeying Him and by being blessed for our obedience. This includes being faithful to God among our family members, within our neighborhood, or in our work environment. All people need to see the Holy Spirit emanating from us when we keep a holiday such as Passover, so that they too can learn about the saving grace of Yeshua! **The challenge with this is that some of us may have to face some criticism or rejection from our peers.**

My prayer for you is that you can be a “sign” via a consistent walk of faith by following the Scriptures diligently, and representing Yeshua faithfully in a world that desperately needs Him. Yeshua the Messiah is **The Sign** who was crucified for our sins. As we choose to follow Him, let us in return be **a sign** for those many others perishing without a knowledge of His saving grace. Let us remember that Yeshua Himself was like the bronze serpent raised centuries earlier by Moses to bring salvation and deliverance for all who would believe upon Him in faith:

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-16; cf. Numbers 21:9).

Are you going to be **a sign** to others of the good news of salvation in Yeshua, the One who has provided us with final atonement for sin? What will you be doing the next time you celebrate Passover? Will you remember not only the Exodus of Ancient Israel from Egypt—but your own exodus from sin to new life in Him? Consider these things as you reflect on what Passover means to you.

B'shalach בְּשַׁלַּח **After he had let go** **“An Ancient and Current Foe”**

Exodus 13:17-17:16

Judges 4:4-5:31 (A); 5:1-31 (S)

This week's Torah portion, *B'shalach*, is another excellent example of how important it is for us as Believers to really take the messages of Moses' Teaching quite seriously. *God lets the enemies of Israel harass His people in any generation*. Whether it be the Ancient Amalekites who attacked Israel in the early days of the Exodus sojourn, or various evil forces that try to

²⁴ Consult the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper* for a review of useful teaching articles and information on the significance of Passover.

attack moves of the Spirit of God as we approach Yeshua's return: **the imperative is for one and all to fight!**

There must be a Divine purpose in allowing promulgators of evil to persist in their desire to destroy Israel. As *B'shalach* concludes, we are all reminded that "The LORD will be at war with Amalek throughout the ages²⁵" (Exodus 17:16, NJPS). In spite of the various human efforts for Israel to overcome its historical enemies, Amalek and his allies will presumably war against God's chosen people until the consummation of the age. As Messianic Believers who all consider ourselves a part of Israel, recognizing this reality, we must be able to equip ourselves for the inevitable conflicts that we will encounter. Both individually and corporately, through time and circumstances, the Holy One will use challenging situations and circumstances to accomplish His sovereign will for the Creation. And so, **let us all turn to Him as we face the challenges!**

Knowing about the inevitability of war with Amalek comes after the Ancient Israelites have departed from Goshen, and they have witnessed the devastation of Egypt's military in the waters of the parted sea. The power of God to defeat Israel's enemies was such a traumatic event that to this day, the nations of the world know the story of the Hebrews' deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The Song of the Sea in Exodus 15 conveys a message not only to Ancient Israel and Ancient Egypt, but also to the people of Ancient Canaan, as God's chosen prepare to enter into their inheritance and the mission He has for them.

The Testing Patterns Begin

Within three days of the celebration of the victory over Pharaoh, the problems of life arise and the testing of Israel begins (Exodus 15:22). As we see throughout the Holy Scriptures, *testing* is a critical component of God implementing His plans for His people. We are reminded of the first major *test* recorded in the Torah, when the Lord appears before Abraham:

"Now it came about after these things, **that God tested Abraham**, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am'" (Genesis 22:1).

Centuries before the Exodus, a personal test of faith challenged Abraham, when he was commanded to take his son Isaac up to Mount Moriah and offer him as a sacrifice before God. Here at this critical juncture, after the sacrificial ram was caught in the thicket, Abraham called the place "The LORD Will Provide" (Genesis 22:14). In this seminal test, Abraham obeyed the direction of God, and the results were His provision and great blessings upon Abraham and his descendants.

The tests of life now came upon the Israelites, as they began their sojourn in freedom to the Promised Land. They had the example of Abraham's obedience as a guide, knowing that God would provide. Now as they encountered new tests, they learned that He was also the Great Physician, most willing and able to heal. In the first test of their wilderness journey, when the waters at Marah were bitter, the people of Israel began a repetitive pattern of murmuring for sustenance. As they cried out to Moses, he turned to God for the provision and He gave him the solution:

"So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?' Then he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw *it* into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them.

²⁵ Heb. *m'dor dor* (דֹר דֹר).

And He said, ‘If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; **for I, the LORD, am your healer**’” (Exodus 15:24-26).

The Holy One said, “for I am the LORD, who heals you” (NIV). Here in the opening days of Israel’s freedom from the bondage of Egypt, the God of Israel expressed His willingness and desire to offer Divine deliverance from the evil challenges of life: *ki ani ADONAI rofekha* (כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה רֹפֵאֲךָ). In exemplary fashion, He told His people, “**If you will heed the LORD your God diligently, doing what is upright in His sight, giving ear to His commandments and keeping all His laws, then I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians**” (NJPS). In other words, by demonstrating loyalty to God by obedience, He in turn would be Israel’s Healer.

From the initial stages of the journey in the wilderness, the Lord expressed Himself to be *the solution* to the trials of life that Ancient Israel—and eventually all of His people throughout time—will encounter. **When we are tested, if we hear His voice and obey Him, then He will respond with whatever is required to remedy the situation.**

Within our Torah portion, you should recognize that the pattern of murmuring became more commonplace for the Israelites, than a desire to seek God for His provision and protection from disease. Before long, as the people moved from Elim into the wilderness on the way to Mount Sinai, another test generated complaints about the lack of food from the ranks:

“Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The sons of Israel said to them, ‘Would that we had died by the LORD’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.’ Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction’” (Exodus 16:1-4).

Here the Lord’s intention is clear: “By this I will test whether they will observe my *Torah* or not” (CJB).

Testing and Training

The lack of bread was another test to see whether the Ancient Israelites would walk in God’s ways and obey Him. Even though the people departed Egypt with various herds of cattle and sheep that could have easily been slaughtered and eaten, they continued to murmur and complain. They also had a desire for meat, so in His role as the Great Provider the Lord decided to answer their complaints (Exodus 16:8-21) by using His provisions to instruct them about the elementary issues of the Sabbath rest and obedience to Him. Using the daily appearance of manna and the need to gather on a daily basis just what one needed, He graphically showed His people the need to observe the Sabbath:

“Now on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, then he said to them, ‘This

is what the LORD meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.’ So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm in it. Moses said, ‘Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, *the sabbath*, there will be none.’ It came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions? See, the LORD has given you the sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.’ So the people rested on the seventh day” (Exodus 16:22-30).

As the Israelites ventured out into their wilderness march, we witnessed that the experiences they encountered both tested and trained them. The tests and trials of life that *we likewise experience* should be regarded as times **to be trained in remembering that our Heavenly Father is not only the Provider, but also the Healer**. Adherence to His instructions is critical, because it is noted that those who tried to hold onto manna beyond the specified time limit not only made Moses angry, but had to see their food spoil:

“But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul; and Moses was angry with them. They gathered it morning by morning, every man as much as he should eat; but when the sun grew hot, it would melt” (Exodus 16:20-21).

Continuing, we see a third test delivered by the Lord as He provided for Israel’s vital need for water. The Israelites required water for themselves and their livestock, but they apparently had not learned from the first two tests. Instead, they now bitterly complained and murmured:

“Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, ‘Give us water that we may drink.’ And Moses said to them, ‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?’” (Exodus 17:1-2).

As the murmuring and quarreling increased, Moses asked the people of Israel, “Why do you try the LORD?” (NJPS). He asked them why they had not learned from the earlier tests they experienced, and simply turn to God for His provision. Eventually, the Lord gave Moses the solution to the demand for water, but from the reading you can discern that He was not very pleased with the Israelites:

“Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.’ And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. **He named the place Massah and Meribah** because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, ‘Is the LORD among us, or not?’” (Exodus 17:6-7).

The Hebrew terms *Masah* (מַסָּה) and *Merivah* (מִרְיָבָה) respectively mean “proving and strife” (*ISBE*).²⁶ Both of these meanings are borne out in negative connotations regarding

²⁶ M.A. MacLeod, “Massah and Meribah,” in *ISBE*, 3:277.

The Greek Septuagint actually renders *Massah u’Merivah* (מַסָּה וּמִרְיָבָה) as *peirasmos kai loidorēsis* (πειρασμός καὶ λοιδορήσις), meaning “Temptation, and Reviling” (LXE).

the failure of the Israelites to trust in God. In many respects, the people set themselves up to experience the biggest test that concludes this portion.

The Test of Amalek

As the Israelites dealt with the issues of water and testing God Himself, situated within striking distance of the camp was an archenemy of Israel: the Amalekites (cf. Exodus 17:8ff). The Amalekites, the descendants of the grandson of Esau (Genesis 36:12), were apparently—based on what we glean from additional Scripture passages²⁷—in some way going to be a proverbial “thorn” in the side of Israel until the end. So now, in a weakened moment, with the water issue creating problems between Israel and the Lord, the Amalekites engaged Israel in battle. This test was most serious, perhaps even being a matter of life and death for the Israelites:

“So Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.’ Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. **So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other.** Thus his hands were steady until the sun set. So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.’ Moses built an altar and named it The LORD is My Banner; and he said, ‘The LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation’” (Exodus 17:9-16).

Moses knew that the attack was coming from the Amalekites, and so he commanded Joshua to assemble a force to go out and fight the enemy. Moses did not back down from the fight, but sent faithful warriors into battle. Moses also knew the absolute necessity to call upon the power of the Most High. Having personally witnessed the effects of the staff of God (*matteih ha'Elohim*, מַטֵּה הָאֱלֹהִים) on the Egyptians (serpents eaten, the Nile turned to blood, the Red Sea parted, and water ushering forth from the rock at Horeb), he declared that he will station himself on a hill overlooking the battlefield, and call upon the Lord for victory.

Moses knew the power of intercession, and called upon the providing and healing power of the Holy One. But he also knew the critical need to have others involved in the fight. His faithful brother Aaron and Hur were present at his side to help bear the burden (Exodus 17:10, 12). In a very symbolic fashion, Moses raised up the staff of God to promote Israel's prevalence on the battlefield. As long as the staff of God, representing intense intercession, was raised up high overhead, the Israelites prevailed. But when Moses weakened, due to his age and the weight of the staff, the Amalekites prevailed (Exodus 17:11-12).

As the battle waged on, the assistance of Aaron and Hur helped him to persevere until sunset. With Moses' arms steadied, Israel achieved a victory. But we also see that the Amalekites were *only defeated*; Joshua only weakened Amalek. At this great test, even with

²⁷ Deuteronomy 25:19; 1 Samuel 15:2; Psalm 83:7.

the intercessory work of Moses, Aaron, and Hur focused on Joshua and the warriors of Israel, Amalek survived to become a perpetual enemy of Israel (Exodus 17:16).

Our Ancient Foe

In many respects, the Amalekites have become **the ancient foe**, which even until our time continues to harass and harm unsuspecting members of God's people, who failed to apply—in their personal and spiritual battles—the many godly principles established in the wilderness on the journey to Mount Sinai. Somewhat later in the Torah, as Moses came to the end of his life, he issued the following admonition regarding the Amalekites:

“Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, **you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget**” (Deuteronomy 25:17-19).

This description of Amalek gives us a much clearer picture of just how wicked and evil the Amalekites truly were. Here, we read that Amalek liked to attack the faint and weakened stragglers along the way. Moses gave the instruction, “you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven” (ATS), or to not forget to utterly defeat them. Interestingly, when you look at the wider context of where this was stated, we find that it was linked to the admonition about maintaining equal weights and measures:

“You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. You shall have a full and just weight; you shall have a full and just measure, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. For everyone who does these things, everyone who acts unjustly is an abomination to the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 25:13-16).

Is it possible that the Holy One was trying to warn His people then, and also future generations, that when they discovered someone employing unequal weights and measures in human affairs, that perhaps one is stumbling across a “spirit of Amalek”? Regardless of the possible linkage, consider these two facts: (1) Israel will be at war with the Amalekites from generation to generation, and (2) the instruction to destroy the Amalekites has never been rescinded. Obviously, **people who are physically descended from the Amalekites can be redeemed from their sins, and experience the salvation of Messiah Yeshua**. The real conflict is with the force that empowered the Ancient Amalekites.

Throughout the Scriptures we witness an ongoing spiritual battle between the children of light and the children of darkness. The war against God's people is not over, and the evil Satanic presence that once empowered the Ancient Amalekites to attack the Ancient Israelites has not disappeared. Amalek was sent to stop Israel on its way to Mount Sinai, and as the people of God were being prepared to accomplish His purposes.

How many times does the enemy come along when God starts to move? *I have lost count of how many times, just in my own life, when the enemy has tried to stop the Lord's hand.* The continual conflict we face must be waged through the power of strategic, corporate intercessory prayer, *just as* Moses had his arms raised up. So, if we would take the account of *B'shalach* to more serious heart, we would be able to be far more effectively in spiritual warfare.

King Saul's Failed Attempt

Moving forward in the history of Israel, when the people were established in the Promised Land and they received a human king, the war with Amalek was catapulted to center stage. The Israelites had cried out for a mortal king like the other nations, but it presented some serious problems. The Prophet Samuel had anointed Saul and he became the first king of Israel. But as humans have a tendency to fall short in their assignments, we can turn to the circumstances articulated in 1 Samuel 15 and learn from the mistakes made:

“Then Samuel said to Saul, ‘The LORD sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel; now therefore, listen to the words of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, “I will punish Amalek *for* what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”’ Then Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah. Saul came to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the valley. Saul said to the Kenites, ‘Go, depart, go down from among the Amalekites, so that I do not destroy you with them; for you showed kindness to all the sons of Israel when they came up from Egypt.’ So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. So Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as you go to Shur, which is east of Egypt. He captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed. Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, ‘I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands.’ And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night. Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul; and it was told Samuel, saying, ‘Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself, then turned and proceeded on down to Gilgal.’ Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, ‘Blessed are you of the LORD! I have carried out the command of the LORD.’ But Samuel said, ‘What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?’ Saul said, ‘They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed.’ Then Samuel said to Saul, ‘Wait, and let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.’ And he said to him, ‘Speak!’ Samuel said, ‘Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were *made* the head of the tribes of Israel? And the LORD anointed you king over Israel, and the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, “Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are exterminated.” Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD?’ Then Saul said to Samuel, ‘I did obey the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took *some* of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal.’ Samuel said, ‘Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *and* to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from *being* king.’ Then Saul said to Samuel, ‘I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin and

return with me, that I may worship the LORD.’ But Samuel said to Saul, ‘I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.’ As Samuel turned to go, *Saul* seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, ‘The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you. Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind.’ Then he said, ‘I have sinned; *but* please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and go back with me, that I may worship the LORD your God.’ So Samuel went back following Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD. Then Samuel said, ‘Bring me Agag, the king of the Amalekites.’ And Agag came to him cheerfully. And Agag said, ‘Surely the bitterness of death is past.’ But Samuel said, ‘As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.’ And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal. Then Samuel went to Ramah, but Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul. Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death; for Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel” (1 Samuel 15:1-35).

This entire chapter is a lengthy account, but it describes in great detail how God desires to deal with **Amalek and the spirit of Amalek**. Just like in the case of Moses, Aaron, Hur, Joshua, and the warriors of Israel, as they worked together to fight the Amalekites in the wilderness journey, 1 Samuel 15 elaborates how God wanted the Amalekites eliminated. The Prophet Samuel informed King Saul that he was to obliterate Amalek. The Holy One allowed Saul to marshal the forces to accomplish the task.

As we read the account, King Saul, in spite of his great victory, did not fully follow the instructions of the Lord. Consequently, he lost his anointing as king, and ultimately the throne itself. This often-taught passage of Scripture brings to light the imperative that “to obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Samuel 15:22). All generations which read this passage should learn that disobedience to the Word of God often has serious consequences. Here are the specific words that Samuel rebukes Saul with as God’s judgment comes forth, and Saul’s responds:

“But Samuel said: ‘Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As much as in obedience to the LORD’s command? Surely, obedience is better than sacrifice, compliance than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, defiance, like the iniquity of teraphim. Because you rejected the LORD’s command, He has rejected you as king.’ Saul said to Samuel, ‘I did wrong to transgress the LORD’s command and your instructions; but I was afraid of the troops and I yielded to them’” (1 Samuel 15:22-24).

We should be able to discern that Saul was simply a reflection of who his ancestors had largely been in the wilderness centuries before. In spite of the clear instruction, Saul decided to take matters into his own hands and do what he wanted to do with Agag, the king of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:8-9). Saul’s failure to follow the direction of Samuel was interpreted as the sin of rebellion and witchcraft, and his insubordination was considered iniquity and idolatry. These were serious charges against the king of Israel, and as a result he lost his position and dynasty.

Ultimately, the Prophet Samuel exemplified how God expected His people to deal with His enemies. Samuel fulfilled His command, and faithfully hewed him to pieces (1 Samuel 15:33). This gruesome example should encourage Believers today to take spiritual warfare very seriously. When we are battling the spirit of the Amalekites today—that demonic force which attempts to root out God’s people as they prepare to enter into their

destiny, similar to how the Israelites were attacked early on as they left Egypt—the **example is to show no mercy**. We are to take on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-20), and unreservedly fight the spirit of evil in our midst.

Let Us Remember

In *B'shalach* we are given some excellent instruction about how God's people can handle the inevitable attacks of those operating in the "spirit of the Amalekites." When the Lord starts to move, and His people are being directed according to His plan and purpose, there will typically be outside forces that almost immediately enter in and attempt to deter or stop it. Will men and women, who diligently strive to serve Him, have the fortitude and the integrity to stand up—or will they complain, be weary and tire, and give up?

In many respects, the patterns that we see in this Torah portion have plagued God's people ever since the desert wanderings of Ancient Israel. Regardless of the tests delivered by Ancient Amalek or the spirit of Amalek or any other evil influence—it seems that the common fleshly proclivity to not obey the Lord is endemic to most. Even when we know that we have the anointing and blessings of God Himself, too many people act without possessing faith and confidence in Him.

Although attacks from the enemies of God will be with us until Yeshua returns, we have been given patterns on how to achieve positive results. Like Joshua, we can weaken or damage the perpetrators of wickedness. If we can remember that Moses declared how God is our Banner, then we can never lose:

"Moses built an altar and named it **The LORD is My Banner** [*ADONAI nissi*, יְהוָה אִשִּׁי] (Exodus 17:15).

It would be my prayer that as we each move through our own particular and inevitable challenges with the Adversary, we would hopefully understand the blessings of God inherent with intercessory prayer and unified direction of purpose to handle various tests. **We will see that those "tests," for whatever purposes, are indeed a sign to us that God Himself must always be our Provider, Healer, and Deliverer.** Even though battles are inevitable, our ability to endure until the end is assured. For as we all know, the ultimate victory over the power of death has already been secured (2 Timothy 1:10).

We need to also remember that as we die daily to the inclinations of our flesh (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:31), God's Spirit will guide us and instruct us in the diverse battles and incidents we wage. Today's Messianic movement, simply in bringing together Jewish and non-Jewish Believers as one in Yeshua, possesses a great deal of spiritual potential as we approach His Second Coming. It is a definite vehicle to bring about the restoration of all Israel, and of the good news of the Kingdom fully reaching out to the world (Matthew 24:14). It should be no surprise why the testimony, of many people who have been involved in the Messianic community, is that it is somewhat "messy."

There are worthy battles that need to be fought, as ungodly and insidious influences that can deter the Father's objectives are present. But, the things we may encounter are nothing new to our faith. At the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther compiled his hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," words that many Believers have taken great encouragement from. Its first stanza declares,

*A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing;
Our helper he amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing:
For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe; His craft and power are great,
And, armed with cruel hate, On earth is not his equal.²⁸*

The battles against the ancient foe have been known and have been described throughout the centuries by many who have walked in the light they were given, and in the tasks they performed for the Holy One. But how much more light have we been given in these days of restoration? Should we not be that much more aware of how to battle our spiritual enemies, and of the tactics that will be employed against God's people?

There are many ways that the enemy can deter or decelerate the restoration that our Heavenly Father has promised in His Word. The faith of many people is not in "the words of the Prophets" (Acts 15:15), but rather in various organizations, ministries, congregations, or even personalities. Would your total trust and confidence have been in King Saul, who failed Ancient Israel by not completely wiping out Amalek? Is your total trust and confidence in limited mortals today who may be leading the Messianic movement down some inappropriate paths? Many you encounter are simply limited people and will accomplish many good things for the Lord, who will surely be pleased by what they have done, even though they could have done more. Others, though, think they are working for the Lord when they clearly are not.

I thank God daily that *I can turn to Him*, knowing that He will never fail! I hope we all strive to stand firm in our convictions, confronting the enemy with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and guided by the love we are to have for one another. Let us always be on guard against the spirit of Amalek, as it will surely attempt to stop Israel from entering into its final stage of restoration in this hour.

Yitro יתרו

Jethro

"Divine Service Toward Others"

Exodus 18:1-20:23[26]

Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6[6-7] (A); 6:1-13 (S)

This week we continue our examination of the Book of Exodus, coming to a Torah portion that includes one of the most significant sections in the entire Bible, as we witness God **giving His people the Ten Commandments**. After some of the initial trials of the journey into the wilderness as considered last week in *B'shalach* (Exodus 13:17-17:16), with a lack of water and food, and a battle with the Amalekites—in *Yitro* the people of Israel come to the base of Mount Sinai and receive instruction from God. Most readers understandably focus their attention upon the reception of the Ten Commandments, transcribed by the very finger of the Most High onto stone tablets (Exodus 20:1-17).

Without any doubt, the Ten Commandments are very important, because it is upon such *aseret ha'davarim* (עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים) or Ten Words that the remainder of the Torah's

²⁸ *The Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1966), 20.