

13 Shevat, 5779 (19/01/19) **Second Winter Series: Asking for the Old Paths** J. M. Terrett

**Can't Get No Satisfaction: Proverbs 27:4-7; 27:20; 20:17 (I Timothy. 6:6-10)**

Beshalach      When He let Go      Shabbat Shireh (Sabbath of the Song)

Torah:      Exodus 13:17-17:16

Haftarah:      Judges 4:4-5:31

Brit Chadashah:      Revelation 19:1-20:6

Reading: Hanna p. 171, 173 & Ps. 19. Jewish Hero: Ithamar. Carrier: Alan

This is one of the most exciting portions in the Torah. The rabble which stumbled out of Egypt in the middle of the night is going to be transformed into the hosts of the L-rd. They walked for at least seven days and nights, likely with brief periods of rest and times to hurriedly prepare food. There was not enough time for the yeast to rise, so they ate unleavened bread for seven days, until they arrived at a camping site where they could rest long enough to let their dough rise.

They were close to the royal road which lead through the Philistine territory and into Canaan, but the L-rd knew they were not ready for warfare, so He had them turn south, towards the Red Sea. Now here is one of the controversies surrounding the account. Historically there were two seas, one was a salt water marsh called the sea of reeds and the other, was called the Red Sea, because of a type of algae called *trichodesmium erythraeum* which turns the waters of this sea to a reddish-brown colour.

The word for reed in Egyptian is also the same word for red, hence the confusion. The salt water marsh, which is now dried up, used to extend from the shores of the Red Sea, almost to the Mediterranean coast. It was an effective natural barrier because no army could pass through its swamps without becoming mired and taking the risk of drowning.

When Moses turned south, they headed towards this marsh, because going around it would have left them open to attacks from the Philistines, who were Egyptian subjects. Moses was following orders and may have wondered why he was to lead the people to a place where they were trapped against the salt water marsh.

If they had crossed the Gulf of Suez at any place, the depth varied from several hundred feet to much deeper and it was wide enough that the journey would have taken more than a day or two. Instead, they came up against the Sea of Reeds and Pharaoh thought they had gotten lost in the wilderness and had nowhere to go. He personally led his entire army against these former slaves and intended to kill any of them who resisted and take the rest back into captivity.

The people were terrified and wanted to surrender, but the L-rd opened up the swamp and dried the muddy ground so that they could walk through it to the other side. The Egyptians followed them, but the cloud and the fire kept the two groups from contacting each other.

G-d created confusion among the Egyptians, doing such things as causing the wheels of their chariots to fall off. Once the people of Israel were out of the other side of the Sea of Reeds, the wall of water which was on either side of their path, collapsed and covered the fleeing Egyptians. Pharaoh and his army drowned and Egypt would have been thrown into so much confusion that it would be a long time before they become a threat to Israel. Pharaoh's regime may have been overthrown or at the very least, there would have been uprisings and social disorder that it would take consider time to quell.

The startled Hebrews saw the corpses of the drowned Egyptians (and their horses) and they sang a song of deliverance which they all committed to memory and it is remembered on this shabbat, which is called the Sabbath of the Song. They saw the mighty power of the Egyptians utterly destroyed by the L-rd without the people having to lift a hand. If the greatest military power of the region was no match for the L-rd, the people had nothing to worry about as they headed towards the Holy Land.

When they arrived at the bitter waters of Mara, they could not drink and complained to Moses. He indicated a shrub which rendered the waters sweet (drinkable) and it is here the people were put to the test. Until the Torah was given and the Ten Words were articulated, anything which the L-rd said and anything which was required of the people, were called laws and ordinances. They were being put to the test to see if they would obey His voice, which was eventually enshrined in His Word.

One account of what happened at the waters of Mara said that the sweetened waters acted as a purgative which flushed the people's systems from all the parasites and germs of Egypt. The L-rd did say that if they paid heed to His voice and did that which was right in His eyes, none of the diseases of Egypt with which He struck Egypt, would strike them. It makes sense that He was purging their bodies from the Egyptian parasites and germs, so that neither the negative spirituality of Egypt, nor the diseases of Egypt would have any more impact on the people who had just been liberated.

It is likely that it was at Mara that they began to bake their bread, while the purgative did its job. If not at Mara, then they would have resumed baking their bread at Elim, where they camped near the 12 springs of water

On the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from Egypt, the people began to complain, because the supplies of grain they had brought from Egypt had run out, along with any preserved meat or fish they had been able to bring with them. If they began to cannibalize their flocks, they would arrive in the Holy Land without the flocks they needed to sustain themselves once they set up shop.

They were told not to murmur against Moses and the leadership and they were granted manna in the morning and quail at night. Just before the spies enter the land of Canaan, the people murmured again against the lack of meat, so it is likely that the quail they were granted this first time, lasted for the weeks it took them to travel to the staging point. Without refrigeration, they would have made a considerable quantity of quail jerky.

They were also given a kind of seed which resembled coriander, also called cilantro. It was white like frost and they gathered enough to prepare for their daily meals. They were to gather it only for six days and on the sixth day, they would be given enough for two days, so that they could rest on the Sabbath. They called it manna (meaning what is this? in Hebrew) and later, it melted away in the heat of the sun.

They were not to keep any of it over night, except on Friday, when they would boil it in advance of the Sabbath and it would not spoil. It is likely that from this point on, they did not travel on the Sabbath and that they received a daily supply of manna until they crossed over in the Promised Land, where they could eat the grains of the land.

When they arrived at Rephidim, the people found no water to drink and they complained again that Moses had brought them out of Egypt so that they could die in the wilderness. Be careful what you wish for. Moses was told to strike the rock of Horeb and the people had enough water for themselves and for their flocks.

While they were there, a group of desert bushwhackers, the Amalekites, attacked and were defeated as long as Moses lifted up his hands to the L-rd. This was to be a generational battle between G-d and any bushwhackers, because we shall always have victory as long as our hands are lifted up to G-d in prayer, no matter who it is who comes against us. G-d will always meet our needs and give us victory over our foes, as long as we listen to His voice and have faith in His promises. In our Messiah, we will always have something to sing about.

### Sermon: Can't Get No Satisfaction

**Passage: "Wrath is cruel and anger is overwhelming, but who is able to stand before jealousy? Open rebuke is better than hidden love. The wounds of a friend prove his faithfulness, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. The full soul loathes a honeycomb, but to the hungry soul, every bitter thing tastes sweet... hell and the abyss are never satisfied, so the eyes of a man are never satisfied... the bread of deceit is sweet to a man, but later his mouth is filled with gravel... of course there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment, for we brought nothing into this world, and it is evident that we can take nothing out of it. If we have food and clothing, we should be content with these, but those who wish to be rich, will fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil and in their eagerness to be rich, some have wondered far from the faith and have thrown themselves into many torments."** (Prov. 27:4-7, 20; 20:17; I Tim.6:6-10)

My title is taken from that popular song by Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones, who, despite all the immorality and riotous living, could get no satisfaction. You will either control your urges (crucify them) and turn them into a horse you will ride home to glory, or you will give into them and they will become the donkey which drags you to destruction.

These passages are life passages which form a solid spiritual foundation which I have endeavoured to build my life upon, both in what they recommend and what they warn against. The Proverbs are really a collection of various sayings where comparisons are often made between opposites, with the goal to teach us spiritual wisdom and equip us to see the world from a spiritual perspective. They are often sharp reminders which want us to contemplate how to live our lives with courage and conviction. The passage from First Timothy is an extension of what the passages from the Proverbs are trying to say.

The verses from the Proverbs, fall into two categories: true and false friendship and the folly of carnal unsatisfaction. Wrath and anger are damaging, but jealousy is the most destructive, because if you lust after what someone else has, you will stop at nothing to get your hands on it. It can happen between believers where someone's talents or blessings make us jealous, instead of rejoicing in what the L-rd has granted to our brother or sister.

Solomon is saying that an open expression of our love in a rebuke is better than secretly keeping our affection and concern to ourselves. This is not an invitation to run around and openly rebuke people all the time, it is a call to express our love openly and fully. In this same vein, the faithful wounds of a friend who hurts us when we need to be confronted, are better than the deceitful kisses of those who just flatter us for their own self interest.

I recently reconnected with a good friend who is not interested in going into ministry because he rightly observed that religious congregations are often the most politically volatile organizations on earth. Leaders are loved and hated in secret and all kinds of gossip and character assassination seem to be the way people love to communicate instead of working out their problems and learning to live in love and harmony.

Sometimes, it would seem that strong personalities learn just enough biblical jargon to sound spiritual, even when they are purposely being hurtfully carnal and they do it with a straight face. However, the community of believers is like Noah's ark, it stinks on board and is full of animals, but it is the only ship afloat. Learning to live together in love, with peace and joy, is both our most difficult task and also our most urgent mandate. May our Messiah deliver us all from any form of character assassination, whether we are on the receiving end or whether we have anyone in our sites.

You know, it is so easy to be misunderstood, even when we have the best of intentions. But rather than giving up and lurking in the shadows of our own little corner, we need to take risks and learn how to share and receive love until we are understood. We need to not let other people's misunderstandings isolate us and prevent us from being graciously involved in each other's lives according to the teachings of His Word.

The next collection of verses deal with the sadness of carnal unsatisfaction. Sometimes, people can be overfed and despise good food and at other times, spiritually famished people can get caught up with the most bitter and ugly things.

Satisfaction is not found in what we acquire and is never found in what we strongly desire to acquire, because our flesh will always want more than what we currently have. In our Messiah, we need to reach a place where enough is enough and not spend our lives relentlessly pursuing more and more. Truly spiritual ambition seeks for godliness with contentment and is not driven by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes or the pride of life. It is not wrong to aspire to get ahead and want to improve our situation, but unless we find our true satisfaction in the things of the world to come, we will wear ourselves out on the treadmill of carnal desire, where the more we get, the less we find it satisfying.

Carnal pleasures have a limited shelf life with a strong degree of diminishing returns, as many drug addicts and substance abusers find out. Many end up taking lethal doses in the pursuit of stimulation, because their system develops a resistance to the effect which they crave. Our eyes and our flesh can never be satisfied, but, in the Messiah, our hearts and lives can learn to be.

Sometimes the pursuit of happiness and fun can even lead us into deceitfulness to get our own way, but afterwards our mouths end up filled with gravel and that which we tried to do, ends up causing our own destruction. The end does not always justify the means, if the means violate our values and cause us to act in ways that we would never want to have coming in our direction. If we have to win or get ahead by trickery, we have actually deceived ourselves and will be left with an incredibly bad taste in our hearts and lives.

The passage in Timothy speaks to the same desire for satisfaction that too many people are seeking for in all the wrong places. Materialism and hedonism and the quest for power and influence trap people into thinking that getting what they desire is the key to happiness. This is so wrong and it leaves people struggling to get more and more and getting less and less satisfaction, because they are seeking for it in the wrong place.

Coming to faith in the Messiah and learning to live according to the teachings of His Word is the key to ultimate happiness, because we are not addicted to things which cannot satisfy. Temporary pleasure may stimulate, but it can never satisfy and in our modern world where personal and international wealth is exploding exponentially, more and more people have what they need, but they will never have what they want, if it is only in the carnal realm. There is no lasting satisfaction in things we acquire.

Some want to be the smartest in their discipline. Some want to be the richest with the biggest bank account. Others want to have all the power and influence they need to control and dominate everyone and everything in their world. At the end of the day, none of the effort wasted in these kinds of endeavours will end up giving them any long lasting satisfaction. They will end up drained and exhausted, but never truly satisfied or fulfilled.

It is only in the Lord and according to His Word that we will find the long-lasting satisfaction which we crave. Any other objective or lesser agenda simply does not have the ability to provide us with enduring satisfaction or any kind of real fulfilment. The law of diminishing returns does not apply in the Lord, and only applies in the world.

Where are you trying to get your satisfaction from? What kind of friendships are we building in our shul? Are we being inoculated against jealousy or are the works of the flesh ravaging our lives and scattering our shul?

Are we scavenging in all the wrong places and finding so many bitter things sweet or are we learning to feed on the sweet treasures of His Word? Are we learning to live satisfied lives or are we always wanting more and more, even though we are getting less and less satisfaction?

Is what we are feeding on going to fill our mouths with gravel? Is the root of all evil destroying the enduring spiritual quality of our lives and filling them with all kinds of evil? What would it take to make you really happy? Somebody recently asked me how I would live if I suddenly acquired a billion dollars and I answered that I am living the kind of life I want to live and do not need what I can never have, in order to be happy and satisfied.

If I suddenly came into wealth, I would spend it on my kids and grandkids and give most of the rest of it away to those in need. People who live in enormous palaces and who feast on gourmet food, dressed in their fancy silks and who drive the most luxurious cars, are not really any happier than those who work for them. In fact, the cares and worries of great wealth rob people from the basic pleasures of life, just like a drug addiction prevents its victims from finding any true, lasting satisfaction.

I have heard it said that the American dream (nightmare) is to get all you can, and can all you get and then to sit on the lid. Life is too short to give our hearts to the things which do not satisfy. Poor people can be just as happy as rich people, just like uneducated people can be just as happy as the smart alecs. Powerful people actually have less potential to find happiness and satisfaction than those who mind their own business and live quiet lives.

We live in the most materialistic era of human history, where personal and national wealth continue to skyrocket and where personal and national debt is also getting out of control because we have not learned the secret of contentment. Fancy things and expensive gadgets are robbing too many people and preventing them from learning the satisfaction which is found in simple things. Where do you find your pleasure?

As we grow in the L-rd and learn to focus on the world which is to come, instead of struggling to get the satisfaction which eludes those who seek after it through carnal means, we are taught how to be happy with what we have and to make this a better world for all of its citizens. There are people in this world who naturally do great things and whose accomplishments fill volumes, but true satisfaction for everyone and anyone is only found in the things of the L-rd and not in the things of the world.

The world and all it contains breeds desires which are insatiable and eventually leave people exhausted, with their mouths filled with gravel. Walking with the L-rd according to His Word is the only way to find enduring satisfaction in our fading, darkening world. If we can't get no satisfaction, we are looking for it in the wrong place. Shalom.