

Raining Spirit

By Mark E. Benjamin

Know Pain – No Water

Have you ever been thirsty? I mean really thirsty. So thirsty you are to the point of genuine loss of physical abilities. I personally had that unpleasant experience in the form of heat cramps. It was in the middle of summer and during a Marine Corps exercise. Intense heat, hard training, and no sleep made for the perfect combination. But mostly the main contributing factor was from a lack of water.

I knew to drink lots of water, and thought I was doing a sufficient job at it. Apparently, it wasn't enough. We ended our three days of war games with a twenty-mile hike. I wasn't the only one overtaken by heat related issues. Every so often, someone dropped to the side in some sort of extreme pain. They were all from the same problem – a lack of water.

My particular dilemma didn't come until shortly after we arrived back at our base. Both of my hands curled up into tight, disfigured claws. Looking very much as if I had withered crows feet at the end of my arms. The only way I could straighten my fingers was forcefully to pry them open. If I didn't keep flexing them backwards they would once again curl up.

I was only one of a couple dozen men out of a few hundred that succumbed to this most uncomfortable predicament. And honestly, it was all my own fault. I had two canteens on me, and whenever they were empty, I could have filled them up. They had tanks of water wherever we went. Water was in great supply. But yet, I didn't have enough, because I didn't take the steps to drink what was available.

A Dry And Thirsty Land

Have you even been where water was not in abundance? With my time in the Marines, I spent some time in the desert. It was easy to realize what would happen if I didn't have the never ending supply of water that was once again provided. Being in that parched and desolate environment, you quickly learn to appreciate the simple and important things in life; like water. If it wasn't for the tanks of water, I'm sure I would have had far worse than heat cramps.

My time in the desert was short, but there are those that live in that dry climate. To them water is not only important, but it becomes part of the culture as well. Many civilizations develop ceremonies that focus around water and rain. The value of rain for health, livestock, and crops becomes paramount to those that wonder when, if at all, the next rain will come.

The nation of Israel, in the celebration of the holiday Sukkot, brings the focus on water in both a physical and spiritual level. With the current year's crops harvested, thoughts turn toward the needed rain to have a bountiful supply next year. During ceremonial events within Sukkot, we can witness this physical need of the Hebrews. The pouring of gold pitchers of water over the Altar acted as a reminder of that need. It also reminded the people of Israel of the One that will provide for their need; the LORD and maker of all things, including rain.

Israel just made it through a Summer of little or no rain. If this annual cycle were not followed by the rains of Fall and Winter, famine and thirst would strike the land in the coming year. God warns us of just such times. **Amos 8:11a (NIV) “The days are coming,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “when I will send a famine through the land...** But of course this is a warning not of a physical famine, but one of spirituality.

A Tall Green Tree I Shall Be

The rest of that verse states **...not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.** A spiritual thirst. Just as real and as deadly as a physical thirst. In fact even more so. Continue reading in **Amos. 8:12 Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.” 13 In that day “the lovely young women and strong young men will faint because of thirst.”**

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Men and women will wander around with the spiritual equivalent of heat cramps. Sukkot is not just a harvest festival; the acknowledgement of the thirst of the Soul is present as well. The pouring out of water onto the Altar is also symbolic of the pouring out of the Spirit of the Lord. The understanding that we all thirst for the one true God and that it is from Him that we receive the quenching of our souls. Without His spiritual water, we will continue to agonize within ourselves. We will wander and grow faint.

As it is written in **Jeremiah 17 (KJV) 7 Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. 8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.** If we plant ourselves in His hope, we will never go thirsty – wither in the face of adversity. In addition, we will never stop doing His work – that is, “yielding fruit”.

Jeremiah shows us that just as a tree by a river never shows signs of thirsting, so shall the children of God never weaken from lack of spiritual renewal. The secret to this is that the tree doesn't just send its roots into the riverbank, but it continuously draws nourishment from the flowing waters. I could have avoided my struggle with heat cramps if I would have just followed the wisdom of Jeremiah. I had more gallons of water than I could have ever drunk. The fault lied in that I didn't take the steps to get the water from the surplus and into my body.

The outpouring of God and His Spirit is always present. All we need to do is to drink it in. We don't need to walk around with agonizing pains in our souls. **Isaiah 12:2 (KJV) Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. 3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.**

We simple need to drink from His deep wells and receive salvation.

Living Water

During one particular celebration of Sukkot – while the reading of verses from Isaiah and others pertaining to water – God reveals an even deeper meaning to these scriptures. **John 7:37 (NIV) On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”**

Y'shua (Jesus) directly and unquestionable compares himself to **Isaiah 12:3**. The priests have just gone to the Pool of Siloam to draw out pitchers of water. Envision the procession of the Jewish leaders carrying golden pitchers from the pool to the Temple, about a half mile away. The festive sounds of the crowds fill the air. A solemn but joyful ceremony of the priest pouring the water over the Altar is performed. In the midst of all this, but perhaps somewhat hidden in the shadows, Jesus is observing. He steps out and punctuates the event with the words from **John 7:37 & 38**.

Jesus identifies not the Pool of Siloam, but himself as “the wells of salvation”. The Hebrew word for salvation is Y'shua – the name of Jesus in His native tongue. Therefore, Isaiah could be interpreted as saying **to draw the water out of Jesus**. He claims before the crowds of Jerusalem that they have missed the Living Water before them. Although the holiday of Sukkot is an important celebration, it is still just a ceremony using normal water. They needed to reach out and drink in from the true well of salvation. The thirst for spiritual fulfillment could only be obtained in consuming Heaven sent water.

During my training, if I had only taken advantage of the water that was available, I would have never had to experience the cramps in my hands. In the same way if we would only take from the **living water** – Y'shua ha-Mashiach – Jesus the Messiah, we would never feel the pains of spiritual drought. He is there before us; all we need to do is take Him in and be quenched. We then will not only be fulfilled but we **shall be green and yielding fruit**.