

## The Hebrew Corner

There are found within the pages of the Tanach many encounters with the nation of Egypt, whose name in Hebrew is Mizraim (מצריים, mihts-RAH-ihm). Within this name, the root mazar (מצר, mah-TSAHR), which means in English, trouble, distress, or anxiety. The form of the name Mizraim is the dual, which is a form that usually indicates two of something or a pair. So, in one sense, the name Mizraim can be rendered as “double trouble,” which we will see is very descriptive of what this nation was to the nation of Israel over the centuries.

In Genesis, the history of the family of Jacob, and their migration to Egypt to escape the famine in the land of Canaan is described. Then in Exodus, the story of how the family grew and became the tribes of Israel, and then became enslaved under a new Pharaoh is presented. The story of how Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, with God parting the sea to let them pass through is described. From this point on, we see several instances throughout the Tanach of the people of Israel looking back to Egypt or associating with Egypt, against the will of God.

In Exodus 14:11-12, when the Israelites were encamped at the sea, and 600 chariots of Pharaoh’s army were marching after them, the spoke the following to Moses:

“And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians. For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.”

In Exodus 16:2-3 we see the Israelites complaining to Moses about hunger:

“And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

The Hebrew word for hunger used here is ra'av (רעב, rah-AHV). In each case so far we have seen the theme of looking back to Egypt recurring, which has spiritual significance that will be discussed later. Again in Numbers 11:4-6, the Israelites are described as complaining about food:

“And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick.

But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing beside this manna, before our eyes.”

The Hebrew word that is translated flesh in the passage is the word basar (בָּשָׂר, bah-SAHR), and also can be translated as meat. So we see the continuation of the Israelites longing for a return of the days when they were slaves in Egypt. In Numbers 14:2-4, after ten spies had returned an unfavorable report concerning the land of Canaan, the people were in the process of selecting a captain to go back to Egypt:

“And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.”

Here it is of interest that the Hebrew word for wilderness, midbar (מִדְבָּר, mihd-BAHR) is found within the Hebrew name for the book of Numbers, bamidbar (בַּמִּדְבָּר, bah-MIHD-bahr), or in English, In the Wilderness. The Hebrew names of the books of the Tanach that are part of the Torah are taken from a word or phrase at the beginning of the book. After this rebellion, God gave the edict that the Israelites from 20 years old and up would not see the land of Canaan, except Caleb and Joshua, and would die in the wilderness.

In the book of 1 Kings we are told that Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh, in marrying his daughter, then building her a house, as described in 1 Kings 9:24:

“But Pharaoh’s daughter came up out of the city of David unto her house which Solomon had built for her: then did he build Millo.”

This in turn led to Solomon marrying other foreign women, including from Moab and Ammon, who turned Solomon toward following after their false gods.

In the book of Jeremiah, during the time after the Babylonian invasion and takeover of Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah warns a band of the remnant left in Judah that they should not go to Egypt to escape the Babylonians. They refused to listen to Jeremiah and went to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them. Jeremiah continued to prophesy to them in Egypt, described in the following passage, Jeremiah 44:26-28:

“Therefore hear ye the word of the Lord, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the Lord, that my name will no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God liveth. Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them. Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of

Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or their's."

There is an underlying deeper meaning represented by Egypt in these passages, and the need to stay out of Egypt, not to return to Egypt, and not to associate with Egypt. Egypt can be seen to represent the bondage of sin. Coming out of Egypt typifies the breaking free from sin that we experience when we come to know Jesus. The looking back to Egypt, or associating with Egypt is typical of the bondage that Peter warns against in 2 Peter 2:20:

"For after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse than the beginning."

Instead we should be looking forward to our life with Jesus, our Yeshua, as stated in Romans 6:22-23:

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

May you all be blessed, stay free from the bondage of sin, and look forward to everlasting shalom with the Prince of Shalom.