

FLOOD WATERS IN THE DESERT

The desert series (2 of 3)

by Dr. Abri Brancken, 5 Nov 2017

INTRODUCTION

The authors of the Bible were desert people and they felt comfortable in the desert. There are several lessons that we can learn from the desert.

FLOOD WATERS IN THE WADI'S

The desert can mean certain death without access to some important resources. Many times, God led His people through the desert, where they learned that they would have to depend on His provision for all of their needs.

What do you think is the biggest killer in the desert: heat exhaustion, starvation, lack of water, scorpions?

You might find it difficult to believe, but one of the greatest causes of death in the desert is not lack of water, starvation, or even heat exhaustion, but flash floods!

While the desert areas rarely see rain, the surrounding mountains can experience heavy water accumulation in the rainy season. In Israel the rainy season is November-March. The limestone mountains cannot absorb rainwater and therefore the water runs down into the desert. It creates sudden and violent floods as the water fills the wadis. A wadi is a dry river bed that has been carved out by past floods. Anyone standing in the wadi when a flood comes will be swept away, including the sheep.

The sky might be clear in the desert, the sun might be shining, and suddenly a deep wall of water roars through the narrow wadi (canyon). Anyone unfortunate enough to be in the wadi is washed away, especially the sheep.

THE SCOUT

The desert-dwelling Bedouins will post a scout equipped with a hanging barrel and an iron rod to loudly alert the shepherds and their grazing herds of any oncoming floods. The scout would sit a couple of hundred meters towards the higher point of the wadi. The child would watch the wadi and if flood waters suddenly came down from the mountains he would be able to warn the shepherd to immediately get out of the way. If the shepherds waited to hear the roar of the water before scrambling for higher ground they would be trapped and surely drown.

The Psalmist wrote:

[Psa 69:15](#) *Do not let the flood of waters overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut its mouth on me.*

STICKY MUD

The wadi water often leaves behind a deadly, sticky, topsoil mud which can entrap anything that treads upon it. Sheep can easily get stuck in the mud.

"He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along."

DANGEROUS POOLS IN THE DRY WADI BED

Shortly after the flood, a wadi becomes dry again. Sometimes a bit of water from a previous flood will remain on the wadi floor, and these waters are attractive to the thirsty wilderness flocks. These water, although attractive to drink, is dangerous water because a sudden flood can come down again and kill the flock while they are drinking. These stormy waters can quench your thirst, but it can also kill you.

These are not the "quiet waters" of Psalm 23. A wise shepherd knows that walking through a wadi can be dangerous. They know where to find springs, fountains and pools that came from gentle rain, water that are not in dangerous places, "quiet waters" that will safely quench the flock's thirst.

What are the difficult places in your life, the moments of loss and pain that can seem impossible to survive? Whether seeking solitude, safety, or pastures for their flocks, the extremes of desert life reminded the Israelites of their need for God.

STILL WATER VS. DANGEROUS WATER

If the flock want to go to a water pool, they normally travel downhill, or to a lower part where water can accumulate. If they have been without water for some time, they might want to drink from the first water pool they find. They take the first opportunity out of the difficulty, but what they don't know is that it can lead to destruction. If they are standing in a Wadi and it is rainy season in the mountains they can be swept away while they are quenching their thirst. The same principle applies to us in our everyday lives. We must trust the Lord to lead us to the right pool of water. When you have been in a dry and difficult place in your life, you might want to drink from the first pool you find.

As people today, we also thirst for various "waters" like careers, lifestyles, friends, activities. Sometimes those waters are safe, but sometimes they are dangerous. Only our Shepherd knows which waters are safe for us to drink. Trust in the LORD to lead you on a daily basis.

From the "still waters" you can drink it safely. The word "Still" here in Hebrew means "A settled spot, a home, to *rest*, that is, *settle* down; to *dwell*, *stay*, *give comfort*". Where Jehovah leads me, I need not drink and fear the floods at the same time. Stormy waters (dangerous Wadi water) might look the same as the still waters, but when you drink from the stormy waters you can die any time if there are more flood waters coming down the Wadi from the mountains.

CONCLUSION

Only the shepherd of the sheep knows which water is which. It's the shepherd's job to find "still water," that is, water that doesn't risk death. If you are finding yourself in a "desert" time of your life, take heart. God not only speaks to you in the desert, but He will also lead you to calm and peaceful waters where you can drink without fearing sudden destruction from dangerous water. Are you trying to lead yourself in life or are you allowing the Good Shepherd to lead you?

King David illustrates this in Psalm 23 "He (the Shepherd, Yeshua) leads me by still waters."

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul: he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Psalm 23 (MSG)

23 1-3 God, my shepherd! I don't need a thing. You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from. True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction.