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The Danger of Prosperity

8: 1-10

The danger of prosperity DIG: What should the Israelites have learned through receiving manna daily for forty years? What blocked their full learning? What does it mean to be disciplined by God “as a man disciplines his son?” What is the intended effect of God’s actions in the wilderness? What does the phrase “to test you” mean? What stage of life were the Israelites in during the wilderness wanderings for forty years? Why do you think the Israelites needed to experience this discipline before entering the Promised Land?

REFLECT: When, if ever, have you experienced, “God’s wilderness” in your life? How did it reveal who you were? What do you think your life would be like now if God had never tested you? In what ways is life different because of that? How has ADONAI cared for you? How would you like Him to care for you? What is the purpose of Ha’Shem’s discipline? Who and how does God discipline? The wilderness experience either makes, or breaks us? Do you remember how ADONAI led you through a wilderness experience? What did you learn?

ADONAI warns the Israelites to be aware of the danger of prosperity, causing them to forget the LORD their God by not obeying His mitzvot.

A. The danger of prosperity (8:1): You are to take care to do the whole mitzvah that I am commanding you today, so that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the Land that ADONAI swore to your fathers (8:1). This verse serves as an introduction to the entire chapter by calling Isra’el to obedience that will produce tremendous **blessings**, all according to YHVH’s promise to **His people**. But another way of looking at the chapter is to see that **the wilderness**, which was a place of **testing**, produced **blessing in the end (8:16b)**, whereas **the Land**, which should be a place of **blessing**, would also be a place of **testing the people’s** loyalty and humility to ADONAI (to see link click [Cg](#) - Do Not Forget ADONAI).

B. ADONAI tests us (8:2-3): The desolation of **the wilderness** in stark contrast to the richness of **the Promised Land**. YHVH had led **His people** through **the wilderness**,

however, for a particular purpose. **You are to remember all the way that the LORD your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness (8:2a).** The act of **remembering** prompts obedience to **God's** Word, for it brings to the forefront of the mind the reality and faithfulness of **ADONAI**; **forgetfulness**, then, is the same as disobedience, for the self and human concerns have pushed into the background the mind and the reality of the claims of **God**.²³⁸

*Dear Great and Awesome Heavenly **Father**, We love **You**! Prosperity on earth lasts for but a moment, however worshipping **You** will go on for all eternity! Though life is busy, how wonderful to make time to meditate on how awesome **You** are! I love to picture the 10 plagues of Egypt and then you safely bringing **Isra'el** through the Sea of Reeds. I remember with joy **Isra'el's** victory though their enemy was much greater in technical skill - chariots and in man power having men **as numerous as the sand on the seashore (Joshua 11:4)** - yet it is **Your** power that is most important. **Isra'el** was victorious and won because of your Almighty power (**Joshua 11:1-11**).*

He led the Israelites through the wilderness for 40 years in order to humble them, to test them, to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep His mitzvot or not (8:2b). How we respond to **the tests** of life reveals what's really in our hearts, especially when those **tests** involve the everyday experience of life. **The people of Isra'el** were frequently hungry and thirsty and weary from the journey, and it was on those occasions that **they** became worried and critical. The Adversary tempts us to bring out the worst in us, but **YHVH tests** us to bring out the best in us. When **God** allows a difficult circumstance to **test** us, we will either trust **Him** and become more mature, or we will tempt **Him** and become more miserable. The difference? Believing the promises of **God** and relying on **the Lord** to care for us and bring us through for **His** glory and our good.²³⁹

When **the people** were hungry, **YHVH** fed **them manna**; the provision of **manna** was not simply a miracle, because it was designed to **teach the Israelites** a fundamental principle of **their** existence as **the people of God**. The basic source of life was **God**, and the words of **God** to **the Israelites** was more important to **their** existence than was food (**8:3**).²⁴⁰ **He afflicted you and let you hunger, then He fed you manna - which neither you nor your fathers had known - in order to make you understand that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of ADONAI** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Bj - Jesus is Tempted in the Wilderness**). Those who obeyed **Ha'Shem** in the daily responsibility of gathering **manna** would be more inclined to obey the rest of **His mitzvot**. And our relationship to **the Word of God (manna)** reveals our relationship to **the God of the Word**.

C. ADONAI cares for us (8:4): Neither did your clothing wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these 40 years (8:4). A further illustration of the care of YHVH for Isra'el is couched in vivid symbolic language, which simply means that **God** supplied **their** every need. There are three critical questions in life for most people (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Dt - Do Not Worry About Your Life, What Your Will Eat or Drink, or What You Will Wear**), and **ADONAI** met all these needs for forty years. **For your Father in heaven knows that you need all these (Matthew 6:32b).** **God** doesn't miraculously deliver bread, water, and clothing to our front doors today, but **He** does give us jobs and the ability to earn a living **(8:18)**. The same **Lord** who provided **Isra'el's** needs without human means can provide our needs using human means.²⁴¹

C. ADONAI disciplines us (8:5): God saw the children of **Isra'el** as **His** own children whom **He** greatly loved. **Isra'el is My son, My first born" (Exodus 4:22; Hosea 11:1).** **Now you know in your heart that as a man disciplines his son , so ADONAI your God disciplines you (8:5).** After years of slavery in Egypt, **the Jews** had to learn what freedom was and how to use it responsibly. We commonly think of **discipline** only as a punishment for disobedience, but much more is involved. **Discipline** is "child training," the preparation of the child for responsible adulthood. A judge justly punishes a convicted criminal in order to protect society and uphold the law, but a father lovingly **disciplines** a child to help that child mature. **Discipline** is evidence of **God's** love and our membership in **His** family. **My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my mitzvot (Proverbs 4:11-12).**

When you think of **the Lord's discipline** of **His** children, don't envision an angry parent punishing a child. Instead, see a loving **Father** challenging **His** children to exercise their physical and mental muscles so they will mature and be able to live like dependable adults. When we're being disciplined, the secret of growth is to humble ourselves and submit to **God's** will (see the commentary on **Hebrews Cz - God Disciplines His Children**). To resist **ADONAI's discipline** is to harden our hearts and resist the will of **the Father**. Like an athlete in training, we must exercise ourselves and use each trial as an opportunity to grow.²⁴²

B. ADONAI tests us (8:6): The "key" that opened the door to **the Promised Land** was simple: **So, the new generation** was urged to **keep the mitzvot of ADONAI their God - to walk in His ways and to fear Him (8:6).** **The fear of ADONAI is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline (Proverbs 1:7).** **The wilderness** period was therefore a time of **testing**. It was a time of adolescence in **Isra'el's** history, when **the people** learned to understand by experience **the way** in which **the LORD** wanted

them to walk. Adolescence and education in the ways of **God** may involve **testing** and hardship, but there was a goal beyond the growing pains. It was **the good Land** that was promised to **the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**. If **the people** were obedient to **Ha'Shem and feared** to disobey **the One** who is so powerful and holy, then, **they** would mature from adolescence to adulthood, the time anticipated in the following verses.²⁴³



A. The danger of prosperity (8:7-10): Moses' description of **the Land** stands in stark contrast with what **Isra'el** had seen and experienced in **the wilderness**. **When ADONAI your God brings you into a good Land - a Land of wadis with water, of springs and fountains flowing out in the valleys and hills, a Land of wheat and barley, vines, figs and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey, a Land where you will eat bread with no poverty, where you will lack nothing** (Hebrew: *chaser*). The verb is the same that **David** used when he said: **ADONAI is my Shepherd: I shall not want** (Hebrew: *chaser*). **The Land** contained additional mineral deposits. It was a **Land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills south of the Dead Sea you can dig copper. So, you will eat and be full, and afterwards you will bless ADONAI your God for the good Land He has given you (8:7-10)**. There's danger in prosperity and comfort, for we may become so wrapped up in **the blessings** that we **forget the One** who gave us **the blessings**. For this reason, **Moshe** warned **the Jews** to praise **YHVH** *after* they had eaten **their** meals so **they** wouldn't **forget the Giver of every good and perfect gift (Deuteronomy 8:10; James 1:17)**.²⁴⁴