

Keep the Fire Burning

A number of years ago, my husband and I packed up our children and headed off to the mountains to do some camping. We drove for a few hours, well past any large towns, to a state park with nice facilities, including a swimming pool. It was our family vacation, and we were planning on making the most of our week. Swimming, hiking down a mountain and sightseeing were among our plans. As we began getting our camp set up, we discovered that we had left something very important at home. We had left without the camp stove.

"No problem," my husband assured me, "I've cooked over an open fire many times." This was true; he had lived in the wilderness of Canada for three months, all alone, at one point in his teenage years. So, we decided that we would simply cook over the fire, just like they used to do it before the advent of the camp stove. It made us feel good to do it the old fashioned way.

Having grown up with Smoky the Bear and his message of putting fires out, I insisted we put our fire out each night before crawling into our tent. Every morning came the chore of having to get the fire going again to make coffee and cook breakfast. By the time we had everything done and cleaned up, it seemed like half the day was already gone and we didn't get to do nearly as much as we would have liked. We had lots of fun, but we had learned our lesson: never leave home without the camp stove if you want to have any time for fun while camping.

A few years later we went camping again and had borrowed a stove from a neighbor. The stove was very old and it continually gave us problems, so it wasn't very easy to use. Fortunately, we had learned another valuable lesson between the two camping trips, and that enabled us to cook our meals over the fire quite easily without taking half the day to do it. Well, that's not completely accurate; my husband already understood this long before I caught on and I would have learned the lesson earlier had I simply trusted my husband to know what was best.

During the time that he was living in Canada he never let his camp fire go out. It didn't matter how much rain he got, how much wind, or how hot it got; he never allowed the fire to be fully extinguished. As a result, he was able to get it going much faster and didn't have to spend as much time creating hot coals because they were already there. He would get a good base and then at the end of the night put one big log on top of them and go to bed. In the morning, the log would be almost gone, but underneath the remnants were hot coals that could be stirred and made into a hot fire in no time.

When we discovered the Hebraic roots of our faith and began to keep the feasts of Adonai, it didn't take long for us to fully embrace Sukkot because we had always had a love of camping. We have camped with large groups, small groups, and

on our own as a family. Each year we have learned something different, but these lessons have always been ones that can only be learned by celebrating the festival with camping. And after all, isn't that what Adonai intended?

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the LORD. On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work.

'These are the appointed times of the LORD which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, to present offerings by fire to the LORD--burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, *each* day's matter on its own day-- besides *those of* the sabbaths of the LORD, and besides your gifts and besides all your votive and freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.

'On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day. Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.

'You shall thus celebrate it *as* a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It *shall be* a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.'" So Moses declared to the sons of Israel the appointed times of the LORD. ([Leviticus 23:33-44](#))

Notice in the above verses that Adonai gives us the reason He wants us to live in these temporary shelters: so that all of our generations may know that Adonai had the sons of Israel live in booths when He brought us out from the land of Egypt. From the time of the Exodus Adonai has commanded us to teach our children about the event. In doing as they did by living in some sort of temporary shelter, we can better understand the lessons that Adonai wants our children to learn. This is why we camp each fall; to show our children what it is like to live in a temporary shelter and truly depend on Adonai to protect us from the world around us. It is an object lesson, if you will, that can only be learned through experience.

Our experience has taught us not to let the camp fire go out. It is much easier to get the coffee going in the morning when all you have to do is stir the coals and add more wood. A coal base takes a while to build, and that is what you need for cooking purposes. Yes, we are extremely careful with the fire, getting up during the night to check on it and keeping it protected during times of high winds so that we don't cause a forest fire (God forbid!) We even protect the coals during downpours by adding more logs so that they absorb the water, keeping the coals underneath hot and dry.

One day as I was thinking about all of this, it occurred to me that our walk of faith is very much like the camp fire. We are to be a light for those walking in darkness (Romans 2:19) just as the camp fire provides light for those both within and outside of the camp. If we want to shine brightly, without a lot of smoke that chokes others around, then we must make sure to keep our fire hot by adding more fuel (the Word). We also have to make sure that the fuel that we burn is pure wood, without any fillers or trash that will also harm, just as we make sure that we read the Word for our self (pure wood) and not just something about the Word. Sure, commentaries like this one have a place in our lives, but they are not what will keep our fire burning bright. Only His word, straight from His mouth, will suffice.

When we first get to our campsite, before we begin building our fire, we clean out the fire pit, removing the ashes of those who came before us. We then carefully construct the fire starter using leaves, twigs and maybe some newspaper. As we bring the match (flint) to the wood, we are careful to protect the flame from the wind so that it won't be blown out. As the fire begins to consume the leaves and twigs, we slowly add larger sticks of kindling until at last we can begin to add a few small logs. If we try to put big logs on the fire too soon, it will suffocate and die.

So it is for new believers. The sinner's prayer asks Yeshua to come into our lives and clean house. As our High Priest, Yeshua goes into our heart (fire pit) and cleans out the debris we left behind. He then builds the beginnings of a fire using the milk of the Word (leaves and twigs), to which He adds the fire of the Holy Spirit (match/flint). He then slowly adds more kindling (order upon order, precept upon precept) until the fire is burning brightly. Only then will He add the real meat (larger pieces of wood) of the Word, showing us the deeper teachings. He understands that if these deeper teachings are brought out too soon the fire can actually be smothered and go out.

Which brought another point... if we add wet wood (watered-down Word of God) not only does it take longer for the fire to burn bright again, it also produces a lot of smoke. So many preachers today water-down the Gospel to make it more "seeker-friendly," not realizing that what they are actually doing is dousing the

flames of faith in the true believer. Those flames are what will draw those who are truly seeking, not any watered-down message that produces a lot of smoke, but no positive results.

Only the pure Word, studied for ourselves, can produce the kind of fire that draws others out of the darkness and into the warmth of God's love. Watered-down wood produces a lot of smoke, but not a lot of heat for warmth or cooking. In fact, it can choke us so badly that we won't want to get anywhere near the fire. Is this the image we want to relate to the world? To be truly "seeker-friendly," we would have to guarantee that no wet wood is ever put onto the fire.

The worst part of all, when the fire is allowed to die down due to bad or wet wood, it takes much longer to get the fire roaring once again. The same is also true with our walk of faith. When we allow watered-down teachings to feed us, or we stop feeding on the wood of the Word, our fire can be extinguished and then we need help to get it started. Another way of saying this is:

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

Naturally, this all led me back to Yeshua, whose flame shone bright, for He is the light of the World. He is also the Rock that produced living water for the children of Israel. And you know what they say about *that* rock...

Tremble, O earth, before the Lord, before the God of Jacob, who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a fountain of water. (Psalms 114:7-8)

According to verse eight, this rock was flint. And we all know what flint is used for: making fire. I find that very interesting, as did my mother when she stumbled across this same thought, the very same day as I. We both saw it as a confirmation that this is something we needed to meditate upon. The Rock gives both light and water, to guide and sustain us, and we should strive to be both light and water. This is not an easy thing to do, because water often puts out fire. Could this be what is meant by "squelching the spirit" within another?

It seems that the key is timing, and you know what they say, "Timing is everything!" We need discernment to know when to fan the flames and when to water the garden. This type of discernment can only come from above.

When cooking with an open flame we also learn that too much heat can ruin everything; once food gets a burnt taste, you just can't get it out. Those who have cooked over an open fire understand that hot flames burn before they cook, so

they wait until the fire has died down before they begin to cook. By that time the coals are hot and provide a steady supply of heat, at just the right temperature so that the food cooks properly.

Like a burned meal, religion has put a bad taste in the mouths of so many because the heat was turned up too quickly. New believers, their flames burning brightly, want to go right out and teach others what they have learned, hoping that these people will see the truth just like they did. Not only is this harmful to the person they are trying to save, but it is harmful to the new believer as well. When a new fire burns hot and the logs get spread apart, the fire can go out easily. So too new believers can easily burn out because they have not taken the time to lay the foundation found in a coal base, and with all of their running around, the logs get pushed apart and are unable to draw from what coal base there is.

An untended fire can quickly be extinguished. Too many ashes will prevent oxygen from fanning the flames just as too many sins will prevent the Spirit of God from working through us. We need to repent of our sins and ask for His forgiveness as often as we would clean out the ashes in a fire pit. Our Heavenly Father, in His infinite wisdom, has scheduled times of introspection into the festival schedule for just this reason. Yeshua also gives gentle reminders when it is time for us to go and stir the coals, removing ashes and adding more wood if we are paying attention. Oft times we get distracted and before we know it, our fire is going out.

"Indeed, the light of the wicked goes out, and the flame of his fire gives no light." (Job 18:5)

For a time in our lives we burn hot and bright shedding light but often making it difficult for others to come near, then we mellow down a bit, providing a steady light and warmth to all around. The wood then needs to be moved around so that the parts that were farther away from the heat can now be used. These are the gifts that Adonai bestows upon us; sometimes we use one gift, and then later He calls upon us to use a different gift. He might later call us to perform some service that we didn't even know we were able to do, yet if we let Him stoke the fire (meditating upon the Word) we will discover wonderful gifts that we never thought we'd have.

This will only last while we pay attention to the fire. We must constantly work towards keeping the fire burning bright, hot and clean so that we can be useful and not detrimental to God's work. We must be careful to have good wood for the fire, free of fillers and not wet, and be sure to keep the fire hot so we don't produce a lot of smoke. Prayer is the key.

Just like a regularly tended fire, prayer time should be regular as well. We must spend time meditating upon the Word of God, not simply reading our Bibles, but really thinking about what He is saying to us, personally, and scheduling in times of worship so that we can focus our hearts on Him. A good prayer time

combines worship, study and meditation on the Word, as well as intercession, both for ourselves and for others. It is also very important to schedule some quiet time when we can listen for His still, small voice.

We must also be alert and aware so that we can make changes to the fire as needed. Should a heavy wind arise or a storm approach (troubles of life) we need to have the fire ready before they hit. This is not something that should be done at the last minute, but instead should be like a planned fire escape route that is so well known as to be a natural reaction to the alarm. I guess you could say that daily prayer is like a fire drill; the more we do it, the more natural it becomes.

There is another thought that occurred to me while tending the fire in the middle of the night during Sukkot. Throughout the Bible God is described as a consuming fire. Here Isaiah says it twice:

Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place; burning is His anger and dense is *His* smoke; His lips are filled with indignation and His tongue is like a **consuming fire**; His breath is like an overflowing torrent, which reaches to the neck, to shake the nations back and forth in a sieve, and to *put* in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads to ruin.

You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival, and gladness of heart as when one marches to *the sound of* the flute, to go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. And the LORD will cause His voice of authority to be heard, and the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger, and *in* the flame of a **consuming fire** in cloudburst, downpour and hailstones. (Isaiah 30:27-30)

Although Adonai will be like an all-consuming fire when He comes, His coming will cause songs of praise to well up within us. The thought transported me back to a campfire long ago, when the guitars came out and the songs of praise began, and I was comforted. When we gather together around the campfire at Sukkot, we are given a vision of what it will be like when the war between good and evil is over and we are rejoicing in the warmth of the love of God.

When all of these needs are met, when we have a clean heart, plenty of the Word of God, prayer, worship, and works (the stirring of the wood), we find that our fire will continue to burn hot and clean and attract others to His warmth. When any one of these elements are lacking, the fire will start to smoke, or simply go out. If we want to be the light unto the world that we were called to be, then we must make sure that we keep the fire burning.

“The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it. It shall not go out, but the priest shall burn wood on it every morning; and he shall lay out the burnt offering on it, and offer up in smoke the fat portions of the peace offerings on it. Fire shall be kept burning continually on

the altar; it is not to go out." ([Leviticus 6:12-13](#))

This is so important that Adonai repeated it twice; the fire on the altar of God was never permitted to be extinguished. The Levite priests tended to the fire day and night, adding wood when needed and cleaning away the ashes daily so that the fire would burn clean and bright. We need to take the same care of the fire within our hearts. If the fire is smoke-filled, then our prayers will not be a soothing aroma to our Maker and King. If the fire goes out, then we will not be ready for His return.

And again I am reminded of something that Yeshua said. He was telling of the parables of the ten virgins and how only five had enough oil to last and keep their lamps lit. I believe the same lesson applies here; if we don't tend to our fire, it may be out when He returns and we won't have the time to kindle it anew, just as five virgins missed the banquet because the doors closed before their return.

The fall festivals are the time to renew our fire. When the trumpet blows on Yom Teruah, we are reminded that we need to clean the ashes out, confessing our sins and receiving His forgiveness. By the time the sun sets beginning Yom Kippur we should have a good fire going once again so that our sacrifices (prayers and worship) won't be smoky or have an odor, but instead will be a pleasing aroma to Adonai our Elohim. As we study the precepts, statutes and ordinances surrounding these holy days, we are reminded of the reason for the fire as well: as a vehicle for our prayers to reach the highest heaven. Our prayers are often likened to incense that rises before our God as a pleasing aroma, but only if the fire is hot.

Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. ([Revelation 8:3-4](#))

If we have nothing else, if we have no Temple or fellowship or even no Bible, we do still have one thing: our prayers. Why is it that we only turn to God when all else fails? He can and will provide for all of our needs if we will continue to keep our focus on Him; His word promises this. We should awaken with His praise on our lips and not return to bed until we have spent some quality time with Him. Only a constantly attended fire will burn hot and bright and bring warmth to all around it.

Instead of building a fire only when we need it, allowing it to go out and then rebuilding it for each meal, why not allow the fire to continue burning so that it is ready for food at a moment's notice? Through times of daily prayer and Bible study, through putting into actions those things learned, and by a life of constant repentance that cleans up the debris of our life, we can keep the fire burning brightly within, creating light and a warmth that will draw others to Him. Isn't that what a true witness is all about?