

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1138

Engedi Signifies Life

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I have one more thought about the word *Engedi*, and it has to do with life, specifically the river of the water of life that comes from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

On one level, *Engedi* means that the battle is the Lord's; therefore, stand and see the salvation of the Lord. It is a good word, and one that should encourage our hearts in this day of great uncertainty and a multitude of enemies that are set against God's people and His kingdom.

On yet a higher level, *Engedi* signifies life.

Engedi or *Hazazon-tamar* is mentioned seven times in scripture (Genesis 14:7; Joshua 15:62; 1 Samuel 23:29; 24:1; 2 Chronicles 20:2; Song of Solomon 1:14; Ezekiel 47:10). It could be argued that all references have some connection to life, but it is Ezekiel that most definitely links *Engedi* to life.

Engedi was an important oasis town and fresh-water spring west of the Dead Sea and on the eastern border of the Judean Desert. The elevation of the surrounding land goes from the level of the Dead Sea at 423 meters below sea level to the heights of the Judean Desert at 200 meters above sea level. It was known for its rugged terrain, including many caves carved into limestone, and fertility, all of which made it an ideal place for refuge. For example, David hid from Saul in the terrain of *Engedi*.

The name means "spring of a kid (goat)" or "fountain of the goat," which recognizes the spring-fed streams that flow year round and the goats that roam the surrounding rugged terrain. Today, it is a nature reserve that is a sanctuary for many types of birds, animals, and plants. Its natural springs are used for agriculture and water for human consumption.

So, on the natural level, *Engedi* is a source of life for man, along with many of God's creatures. But, on the spiritual level, there is an even greater meaning to the word, as revealed through Ezekiel and explained through John.

Much like John, Ezekiel was caught up in spirit and given a vision of a city. This is easily seen by comparing the two visions.

In the visions of God He brought me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, and on it to the south there was a structure like a city. ... And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house. (Ezekiel 40:2; 43:5 NASB)

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. ... I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. (Revelation 21:10-11a, 22 NASB)

Without any doubt, John saw New Jerusalem, but there is disagreement among commentators as to what city Ezekiel saw. Did he see New Jerusalem, or did he see an earthly Jerusalem that will rise up in the Middle East during the Kingdom Age? Since this is beyond the scope of the word *Engedi*, I must leave this question unanswered. Besides, I am not sure I have an answer for it at this point in time. I simply want to highlight the similarities of the two visions and their connection to life.

One thing for sure; the visions of both Ezekiel and John touch upon life and convey a mighty important spiritual lesson.

Starting in chapter 47, Ezekiel describes a river of water flowing out of the house of the Lord toward the east, which means it was flowing in the direction of the Jordan River and the Dead (Salt) Sea. I read an interesting article by a geologist-pastor who described how this could occur based on the movement of tectonic plates. In light of Ezekiel's vision and Zechariah's prophecy of the Mount of Olives splitting in two due to a major earthquake (Zechariah 14:4), the Sinai plate would move south and the Gaza plate would move north, thus splitting the Mount in two, with one portion moving north and the other moving south. At the same time, the Arabian plate would move east, thus shifting the Jordan River toward the west, and Ezekiel's river would then flow into the Jordan and south into the Dead Sea.

In Ezekiel's vision, the command was given to measure the depth of the stream every 1,000 cubits until it was 4,000 cubits east of the gate of the city. Each measurement revealed that, as the stream moved east, it grew deeper and deeper until the river could not be forded; one could only swim in it (see Ezekiel 47:1-6). Ezekiel was brought back to the bank of the river to see some trees.

(7) Now when I had returned, behold, on the bank of the river there were very many trees on the one side and on the other. (8) Then he said to me, "These waters go out toward the eastern region and go down into the Arabah; then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea, and the waters of the sea become fresh. (9) It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there and the others become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. (10) And it will come about that fishermen will stand beside it; from Engedi to Eneglaim there will be a place for the spreading of nets. Their fish will be according to their kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea, very many." ... (12) "By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing." (Ezekiel 47:1-10, 12 NASB)

These verses speak of life that comes forth from the river that flows out of the house of the Lord. Wherever this river flows and whatever touches it is given life. The Dead Sea will no longer be a sea that cannot sustain life. The geologist-pastor states that the Dead Sea is a dead end, so to speak, due to a risen fault at its southern edge. When the great earthquake hits, this fault or plate will move and open up the Dead Sea so the river of life will flow through it and out to the Gulf of Aqaba. Trees will bear fruit for food and healing, and fish will thrive in the water from Engedi (to the south) to Eneglaim (to the north).

Thus, Engedi is associated with *life*, and, on a spiritual level, fish signify *humanity* that needs to be saved and given the life of God through His Son (see Matthew 4:19; 13:47-50). When the river of life reaches an area that once was dead, abundant life springs up, and Engedi is the first place identified with this life.

Now, whether this is a picture of something natural that will occur in the next age, I do not know. But what I do know is that this is clearly a spiritual picture of New Jerusalem as seen by John. For more on this topic, please see my book *New Jerusalem* (2009).

(1) Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, (2) in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:1-2 NASB)

New Jerusalem is all about life; life in the oncoming eon (eonian life) and beyond. Engedi is a recipient of this life. So, as the crisis comes upon the world, remember Engedi!