

Biblical Teaching Course – First level



“Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord your God, who teaches you for your own good, who leads you in the way you should go.” (Isa. 48:17)

Purpose of this course

This course started with the intention of being for the 1st or basic level, but much knowledge was added later, being useful for all believers, even for those who already know a little more about the Word. The subjects address the personality of the main biblical characters, as well as the aspects of their lives that we can draw for our practical learning. As great part of this work is focused on emotional release, the knowledge approached here is basically directed to the learning with the daily situations, which bring great growth to the soul. I hope you enjoy the reading, be ministered by the Holy Spirit and healed.

May God bless you.



Ministério Seara Ágape
Ensino Bíblico Evangélico

Tânia Cristina Giachetti
São Paulo – SP – Brazil – 2011

<https://www.searaagape.com.br/livrosevangelicosonline.html>

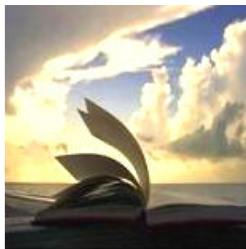
INDEX

1) Presentation of the bible	3
2) Creation, 1 st lesson	27
3) The fall of man, 2 nd lesson	31
4) Noah, 3 rd lesson	34
5) Abraham, 4 th lesson	38
6) Isaac, 5 th lesson	44
7) Jacob, 6 th lesson	47
8) Joseph, 7 th lesson	52
9) Moses, 8 th lesson	58
10) Joshua, 9 th lesson	73
11) Deborah, 10 th lesson	82
12) Gideon, 11 th lesson	89
13) Samson, 12 th lesson	94
14) Ruth, 13 th lesson	98
15) Hannah and Samuel, 14 th lesson	104
16) King David, 15 th lesson	108
17) Kings, 16 th lesson	120
18) Elijah and the prophets of Baal, 17 th lesson	145
19) Elisha, 18 th lesson	150
20) Esther, 19 th lesson	159
21) Job, 20 th lesson	165
22) Paul, 21 st lesson	169
Tables and genealogies	179

Notes:

- Words or phrases enclosed in brackets [/] or parenthesis (), in italics, were placed by me, in most cases, to explain the biblical text, although some verses already contain them [not in italics].
- The version used here is the New Revised Standard Version, NRSV – 1989 (1995)
- NIV = New International Version (it will be used in brackets in some verses to facilitate the readers' understanding).
- In the last pages of the book you'll find tables relating to weights and measures, besides information on the biblical calendar. You will also find the genealogy of some major characters.

Presentation of the bible



Canon:

The Greek word *Kanôn*, which is of Semitic origin (Hebrew *qāneh*, Ezek. 40: 3, a reed, instrument to measure), was used in a metaphorical sense to ‘rule of action.’ In the mid-4th century AD the term seems to have been applied to the bible, a collection of writings inspired by the Holy Spirit, considered as the rule for our faith and life. God used men as His instruments, along with human actions and reflections that interacted with Him to give us His teaching. *Kanôn* also means rule or standard; hence, the list of books that the Church recognizes as the standard of faith and practice.

Bible:

Bible comes from a Latin word (*biblia*), probably derived from the Greek, *biblia* (*books*: plural of *biblion*, *book*, which is diminutive of *biblos*, a word that in the practice denotes small species of written document, but that originally meant a document written on papyrus, Greek, *Byblos*). The bible is therefore a set of books recognized as canonical by the Christian Church.

The Scriptures:

Another synonymous term for the bible is ‘*The Scriptures*’ (Greek, *hai graphai, ta grammata*), often used in the NT to denote documents of the OT in whole or in part.

Testament:

In Hebrew *Bʿrith*, and in Greek: *diatheke*, which means *pact, covenant*. The writings of the Old Testament not only register this revelation about God; at the same time they record the reaction of men to His revelation, a reaction sometimes disobedient and expressed both in action and words. The relationship between the NT to the OT is the revelation of the fulfillment of the promise. If the OT records what God has spoken many times and in many ways through the patriarchs and prophets, the NT records the final word that He spoke through His Son, in whom all previous revelation was centered and confirmed. In other words, the OT was a shadow of the NT (Heb. 10: 1; Col. 2: 17). The central message of the bible is the story of salvation, that is, the covenant of God with men.

In the Hebrew bible (Old Testament, called *Tanakh*) books are arranged in three different divisions:

1) *The Law* given through Moses, and comprises the first five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, called *the Torah* (= *instruction, teaching, law*) or *Pentateuch*. In Greek, the word is *pentateuchos* (*pénte* = five; *teuchos* = case, box, receptacle, meaning roll or volume. Thus, the word *Pentateuch* means five cases or five

receptacles, where the scrolls were kept). A dominant theme in the first five books of the bible is that God will fulfill the promises made to men. The promise made to Abraham (Abraham's blessing) is composed of three main elements: offspring (in him, all families of the earth should be blessed, including the Gentiles), land (prosperity, the possession of the land of Canaan) and relationship with God (intimacy and friendship with God, for the Lord called him 'my friend' – Jam. 2: 23; Isa. 41: 8; 2 Chr. 20: 7). In Genesis we see the reaffirmation of this promise of offspring to the children and grandchildren of Abraham. Exodus and Leviticus show the preservation of the relationship with God. Numbers and Deuteronomy are concentrated in the Promised Land, and in Joshua the promise is fulfilled.

2) *Prophets* (Hebrew: Nevi'im נביאים נֶאֱמָר, 'Prophets', literally 'spokesmen').

a) Former (Hebrew: Nevi'im Rishonim נביאים ראשונים): Joshua (Yehoshua), Judges (Shofetim), Samuel (Shemuel) and Kings (Melakhim). It narrates the period of Israel's history from the entry into the Promised Land to the Babylonian exile.

b) Latter (Hebrew: Nevi'im Akharonim נביאים אחרונים): Isaiah (Yeshayahu), Jeremiah (Yirmeyahu), Ezekiel (Yekhezqel) and the twelve minor prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi). Daniel is considered historical book in the Kethūvīm (writings).

3) *Writings*: 'Writings', in Hebrew, Ketuvim כְּתוּבִים Kethūvīm; in Greek, 'Hagiographa'. They are divided into three groups:

a) *Books of truth* (*Sifrei Emet*): Psalms (Tehillim), Proverbs (Mishlei), Job (Iyov).

b) *The Five Scrolls or The Five Megillot* (Hebrew: חמשה מגילות, Hamesh Megillot or Chomeish Megillos) are parts of the Ketuvim ('Writings'): The Song of Songs, the Book of Ruth, the Book of Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and the Book of Esther. They are associated with five important Jewish dates in the rabbinical liturgy and are read on the occasion of them, starting with the Jewish Passover (Pesach). The feminine noun 'megillah' (מגילת – Strong #4039) means roll, volume, scroll, and comes from the Hebrew word 'galal', meaning a roll (that is, a book of parchment). The word Megillah is written in some verses of the OT such as, Ps. 40: 7; Jer. 36: 2; 4; 6; 14; 20; 21; 23; 25; 27; 28; 29; 32; Ezek. 2: 9 (rolo = megillah; livro = sepher – סֵפֶר – Strong #5612); Ezek. 3: 1; 2; 3; Zc 5: 1; 2.

- The Song of Songs (Hebrew: Shir ha-Shirim; שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים) is read publicly in some communities, especially by Ashkenazim, on the Sabbath of Passover [in the month of Nisan or Aviv – March-April]. Italian Jews read it at the Maariv (Evening Prayer) of the first and second day of Passover. In most Mizrahi Jewish communities (Jews in the Islamic world) it is read publicly each week at the onset of the Shabbat (Sabbath) and at Passover. It is read on the occasion of Passover, for it celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people from Egypt and symbolizes the love between God and Israel, taking them to Sinai to meet Him, hear His voice and 'marry' Him (in the same way that the book of songs describes the love between a couple).

- The Book of Ruth (Hebrew: Rut; רוּת) is read in some communities, especially by Ashkenazim, before the reading of the Torah on the morning of Shavuot (May-June, the month of Sivan). Others read it in the Tikkun at night, or not at all. For Jews, Shavuot celebrates the giving of the Torah and its voluntary acceptance by Israel in the desert. This book shows: 1) how a non-Jew becomes part of the Jewish community, voluntarily accepting God's Covenant with His people through the Torah; 2) the partially non-Jewish ancestry of David's dynasty because of Ruth, his great-grandmother, who changed from a Moabite to a Jew. 3) Leave the concrete example of the social legislation of the Torah being applied in Israel, through the levirate law, the social

security system for the poorest (we can say this, in relation to ‘gleaning the ears’ left by the reapers) and the treatment towards the foreigners.

- The Book of Lamentations (Hebrew: Eikhah or Kinnot; אֵיכָה) is read on the 9th day of Av (July-August), the fast day of the 5th month, in all Jewish communities. This fast instituted after the Babylonian exile referred to the month when the temple was burned (2 Kin. 25: 8). This book, which was a song of lamentation for the destruction of the First Temple, also became a book of lamentation for the destruction of the Second Temple, and the rabbinical date set for mourning that destruction was called Tisha B’Av (the 9th day of Av). For them, the destruction of the Temple involves the abandonment of the divine presence with them. ‘Lamentations’ reflects this feeling of abandonment for the loss of the security of their homeland and the approval of God.

- The Book of Ecclesiastes (Hebrew: Kohelet; קֹהֵלֶת) is read publicly in some communities, especially by Ashkenazim, on the Sabbath of Sukkot, the Feast of the Tabernacles (Sept-Oct; month of Tishri). In other communities it is not read at all. Ecclesiastes is almost an inversion of the books of wisdom, with a somewhat skeptical and pessimistic view of human existence in the world, when Solomon, already old, sees the futility and vanity of the life of pleasures he had. The apparently ironic choice of this book to be read on the Feast of the Tabernacles, in which God asks for a special and intense joy, helps to value and enjoy life in this world with great joy.

- The Book of Esther (Hebrew: Ester; אֶסְתֵּר) is read in all Jewish communities on Purim (Feb-March; month of Adar). The public reading is done twice, on the evening of Purim and once again the next morning. Purim celebrates the salvation of the Jewish people from slaughter by the Persians. The book tells the story of Esther and her uncle Mordecai in the Diaspora, managing to overcome an existential threat aimed at all Jews living far from their land. Although God’s name is not mentioned directly in the book, even under adverse conditions His people must hope for deliverance from all oppression.

c) Historical books: Daniel (Daniyyel), Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles. In Hebrew, 1 and 2 Chronicles (Divre Hayyamim), along with Ezra-Nehemiah (Hebr.: Ezra), form only one book, therefore, they consist in eleven books in all (eleven Kethūvīm).

Daniel lived in the Babylonian Court after the exile, and then in the Persian Court (when Cyrus conquers Babylon), where he begins by interpreting King Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams and then receives his own visions regarding the domination of Israel by great pagan empires, which ‘at the end of time’ would be defeated, giving way to the restoration of the Jewish people. It is the only example of Jewish apocalyptic literature to be part of the Hebrew Bible.

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah (a single book) describes the end of the Babylonian exile and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple, under the favor of the Persian empire. It would be a new phase for the Jewish people, in which the prophecy of the prophets prior to the exile would influence and give rise to a deeper knowledge of the Torah itself through intense study.

The book of 1 and 2 Chronicles recounts the history seen in the Torah and the Neviim (more specifically, in the Former Prophets), recapitulating from Genesis to 1 and 2 Kings, but now ending this historical set with the Edict of Cyrus, favoring the return of the exiled to the Promised Land and fulfilling the prophecy of Jeremiah (one of the Latter Prophets).

With this division of books in the Hebrew Bible (i.e., without considering the coming of Jesus as the fulfiller of God’s First Covenant with men and, in particular with His people), it ‘does not close’, that is, the history of the Jewish people since then remain open, based on the hope of the complete restoration of Israel in a physical way. In other

words, taking into account these last books and the later prophets, the cycle that began with the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile was left open because the complete restoration of Israel to her land under a Davidic king and a Temple containing the Holy Ark did not take place. Ezra and the other men inspired by God would be, so to speak, the ancestors of the rabbis who would write the Mishnah and the Talmud, namely, the Torah scholars, regardless of whether or not they reached the Spirit of Prophecy (Ruwach HaKodesh, literally, the Holy Spirit).

For us Christians, the division is similar to the 39 books of the Old Testament, but separated by themes, no longer by periods of Israel's history:

- 1) *The books of the Law*: the first five books.
- 2) *Poetics and Wisdom*: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Job.
- 3) *Historical*: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Lamentations.
- 4) *Prophetic*: *Major* Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) and *Minor* Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi).

The New Testament contains 27 books:

- 1) *Four Gospels*
- 2) *Acts of the Apostles*
- 3) *21 letters written by Paul and other men of God*
- 4) *Revelation*

While the writing of the books of the Old Testament (in Hebrew) was spread over a period of a thousand or more years, the New Testament books (in Greek) were written within a single century. The full compilation of all the books was probably *before the fourth century AD*. The bible contains then 66 books and about 44 authors.

There are some books called *Apocryphal Books* (The term Apocryphal – apocryphus – was created by Jerome in the 5th century), that is, Jewish documents without proven authenticity, for they are not considered as inspired by the Holy Spirit by the Ecclesiastical Canon, but written by men without divine participation. Most of them were written over a period of 400 years, from Malachi to the birth of the Messiah, the ‘quiet period of God’, because men have moved away too much from His presence and He no longer spoke to them through the prophets. The Apocrypha are: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon (the Book of Wisdom), Ecclesiasticus (or the Book of Sirach), Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees, the additions to the book of Esther, the book of Baruch; The Letter of Jeremiah; additions of Daniel (Prayer of Azariah, the song of the three Hebrew or the three children, the story of Susanna and the story of Bell and the Dragon). The Latin Vulgate decided by the Council of Trent in 1546, published only in 1592, also inserted the books of 1 and 2 Ezra and the Prayer of Manasseh (from the Book of Odes).

Roman Catholics and Orthodox give another name to the ‘apocryphal’ books. They call them ‘deuterocanonical books’, which means ‘belonging to the second canon’, referring to the OT apocryphal books. Another nomenclature for this type of book is ‘Pseudocanonical book’ or ‘pseudepigraphical book’, which includes the OT apocrypha and the books written by NT Christian communities. There are many: 1 and 2 Ezra, the book of Odes (a collection of songs and prayers, among which the Prayer of Manasseh stands out), Psalm 151; 3 and 4 Maccabees; 1, 2 and 3 Meqabyan (also referred to as

Ethiopian Maccabees and Ethiopic Maccabees); the Book of Jubilees (sometimes called Lesser Genesis or Leptogenesis – an ancient Jewish religious work of 50 chapters), Paralipomena of Baruch [from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It contains some addition to the Book of Lamentations: the epistle to the captives (Lamentations 6), distinct from the Letter of Jeremiah (Baruch 6), and the prophecy against Pashhur (Lamentations 7: 1–5, cf. Jeremiah 20: 1-6)] and ‘the Broader Canon’ (with 81 books, used by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Tewahedo is the common name given to the two churches, which before 1959 belonged to the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria), in addition to the apocrypha cited before. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (Coptic Orthodox Church) accepts the ‘First Book of Enoch’ too. Let’s talk about it:

The ‘First Book of Enoch’ (also called 1 Enoch; Ge’ez: mätṣḥäfä henok). Ge’ez, also called Ethiopian, is an ancient Semitic language that developed in present-day Eritrea and northern Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa, as the language of peasants. It later became the official language of the Kingdom of Axum and the imperial court of Ethiopia. The ‘First Book of Enoch’ is largely known for its Ethiopian version and later for the Greek translations. The book would have been written by Enoch, Noah’s ancestor, containing prophecies and revelations. Seven major copies in Ethiopian, though not entirely identical, were found at Qumran, along with copies of the Book of Giants referenced in Chapter IV of the First Book of Enoch. Some archaeologists and historians suggest that the composition of the first chapters took place from the 3rd century BC, more precisely between 200 BC (the oldest sections, such as the Book of the Watchers) and the most recent part (Book of Parables) probably dates from 100 BC. The Ethiopian or Coptic version cites chapters 1–36: The Book of the Watchers (tells the fall of demons and the origins Nephilim or ‘giants’; it enumerates the Aramaic names of the twenty chiefs of the fallen angels and narrates the travels of Enoch in the heavens); 37–71: The Book of Parables (also called ‘The Similitudes of Enoch’) places more emphasis on its speculation about the ‘Son of Man’ in the Qumran version than in the Ethiopian version. The book of parables presents a later development of the idea of final judgment and of eschatology. The Book of Parables uses the expression Son of Man for the eschatological protagonist, who is also called ‘Righteous One’, ‘Chosen One’, and ‘Messiah’, and sits on the throne of glory in the final judgment. But doesn’t make any mention to the biblical book of Daniel; 72–82: The Astronomical Book (also called the Book of the Heavenly Luminaries or Book of Luminaries; some researchers say that this part is more developed in the Ethiopian version than in the Qumran version; others say otherwise). This book contains descriptions of the movement of heavenly bodies and of the firmament, as a kind of knowledge revealed to Enoch in his trips to heaven and it describes a Solar calendar that was later described also in the Book of Jubilees which was used by the Dead Sea sect but incompatible with the Jewish festivals celebrated in the Temple of Jerusalem; 83–90: The book of Dream Visions contains a vision of a history of Israel to the Maccabean Revolt, as the majority interpreted, and the History of the World to the Founding of the Messianic Kingdom; 91–108: The Epistle of Enoch gives a prophetic exposition of the thousand-year reign of the Messiah. In this epistle, the history of the world uses a structure of ten periods (called ‘weeks’), of which seven regard the past and three regard future events (the final judgment). The climax occurs in the seventh part of the tenth week where ‘new heaven shall appear’ and ‘there will be many weeks without number for ever, and all shall be in goodness and righteousness.’ The part of the Birth of Noah appears in Qumran fragments separated from the previous text. It tells of the deluge and of Noah, who is born already with the appearance of an angel.

The 'First Book of Enoch' was not considered canonical by either Jews or OT Christians, nor does it appear in the OT Greek version (Septuagint), nor among the 'deuterocanonical books.' But the Ethiopian (Coptic) bible admits the First Book of Enoch. Its content is really very different from biblical writings, quite mystical, at least written by a fertile or 'ill-inspired' mind by some kind of entity other than God.

Several Aramaic fragments found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as Koine Greek and Latin fragments, are evidence that the Book of Enoch was known to Jews and early Christians in the Near East. The New Testament authors were also familiar with some of the content of the story. A small section of 1 Enoch (1: 9) is quoted in the New Testament Epistle of Jude, Jude 1: 6; 14-15, and is attributed to 'Enoch the seventh from Adam' (1 Enoch 60: 8). It has also been claimed that the First Epistle of Peter (1 Pet. 3: 19-20) and the Second Epistle of Peter (2 Pet. 2:4-5) reference some Enochian material.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) does not consider 1 Enoch to be part of its standard canon, although it believes that a supposed 'original' Book of Enoch was an inspired book, and mentioned in the 'Book of Moses, first published in the 1830s.

On the other hand, the 'Second Book of Enoch' (abbreviated as 2 Enoch and also known as Slavic Enoch or Secrets of Enoch) is a pseudepigraphic text of the apocalyptic genre. Pseudepigraphy (from the Greek ψευδεπιγραφή) is the study of pseudepigrapha or pseudepigrapha, which are texts to which false authorship or a false title is attributed. The 'Second Book of Enoch' describes the ascension of the patriarch Enoch, Noah's ancestor, through ten heavens in a cosmos at the center of the Earth, which closely corresponds to early medieval beliefs about the metaphysical structure of the universe. The text was lost after several centuries and recovered and published in the late 19th century. The full text exists only in Slavonic Church (Russian and Bulgarian), but Coptic fragments have been known since 2009. The Old Bulgarian version itself represents a translation from an original Greek. The authorship of the 'Second Book of Enoch' is discussed. It is not included in the Jewish or Christian canons and is distinguished from the 'First Book of Enoch' and even a 'Third Enoch.'

The most known versions among Christians:

1) *Septuagint or the version of the seventies*: known by the acronym LXX, it is the most important Greek translation of the Old Testament, as well as the oldest influential translation in any language. The origin is uncertain; it was probably written around 250 BC in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus or Ptolemy II (285-247 BC). This king appealed to the High Priest in Jerusalem to have a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures for his royal library. The priest sent him seventy-two elders to Alexandria with an official copy of the *Law*. There, in seventy-two days, they made a translation that was read before the Jewish community presented to the king. Because of the number of translators, this translation became known as Septuagint. That was the original Septuagint. The *remaining books* of the Old Testament were being translated later, little by little: the canonical books some time before 117 BC, while the apocryphal books were translated until the beginning of Christian era.

2) *Vulgate*: the Latin version of the bible. This review was undertaken by Jerome in the fourth century at the request of Pope Damasus in 382 AD. The revision of Jerome was made according to the Septuagint, although some sources of research say otherwise: that Vulgate was translated directly from the Hebrew text. The name comes from the expression 'versio vulgata', that is, 'the version commonly used' or 'popular version',

and it was written in everyday Latin, just as the Septuagint was written in Koine Greek (popular).

In the fourth century AD appeared the *Masorah*, which is the set of grammatical and critical comments about the bible, especially the Old Testament, made by Jewish doctors. The *Masoretes* (literally: *transmitters*) replaced the ancient scribes (*sopherim*) as guardians of the sacred text. They were active since about 500 AD to about 1000 AD. The writing of consonants was only appropriate procedure while the Hebrew remained a spoken language. When there was a word that could be ambiguous, vowel letters were used to make the text clearer. The *Masoretes* created the vowel signs and the punctuation or signs of accent, which were added to the consonantal text.

Summarizing: while the Septuagint was a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible for the Gentile peoples the Masorah was a modern version written in Hebrew for the Jews themselves, using vowels, for the Hebrew spoken in the time of Moses no longer existed.

Next, I put the author, the date of writing and content of each biblical book:

Genesis: covers the beginning of Creation and the fall of man until the day Israel arrived in Egypt and became a nation (around 1800 BC, according to some sources), going through the whole story of the patriarchs. It was probably written by Moses around 1440 BC by divine revelation or by ancient writings and oral reports. In Genesis is shown the relationship between God and mankind, broken in Eden and in several cycles of sin and repentance; this relationship was restored by sacrifices and meetings with Him (the covenants). Genesis, in Hebrew, *Bereshit* means: *at the beginning*.

Exodus: (Hebrew, *Shemot* = *exodus*). The author is Moses and it was composed around 1440 BC. It comprehends the departure from Egypt (1446 BC) and the entry into Canaan (1406 BC). The Exodus took place in 1446 BC (cf. 1 Kin. 6: 1, for Solomon's reign occurred in the period of 970-931 BC).

Leviticus: written by Moses, around 1440 BC. It speaks about the laws, rules and relationships with God and society, laws for social and religious life, for it relates to the Levites and how they should conduct the worship properly. *Leviticus* is called "*The Book of Laws*." In Hebrew, its name is *wayyiqra*, which means "*He called*", because the book precisely starts with the phrase, "*The Lord summoned Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying...*" [NRSV] "*The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting. He said...*" [NIV]

Numbers: who wrote it was Moses, around 1406 BC. It talks about the forty years passed in their pilgrimage through the wilderness from the Sinai to the banks of the Jordan River in front of Jericho: three months from Egypt to Sinai and one year camped at the foot of the mountain, plus thirty-eight years and nine months wandering through the desert after the punishment determined by God for the rebels. It counts the number of the families who left Egypt in search of the Promised Land. It also tells stories that show man's sin and God's wrath, as well as His mercy toward those who turn to Him. In Hebrew, *Bamidbar*, which means "*in the wilderness*", because of Num. 1: 1: "*The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of*

the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: ...”

Deuteronomy: Moses is the author, around 1406 BC. It teaches people how to be free, enjoying the fullness of God’s will in the exercise of faith, which becomes active when it springs up from a living relationship with a God of love. The book records the final words of Moses to the Israelites before they entered the Promised Land, ordering them to obey God and reject all forms of idolatry, not to die as their parents died in the desert. *Deuteronomy (Devarim)* means *repetition of the laws*.

Joshua: Perhaps it was written by Joshua or the priests Eleazar and Phinehas around 1390 BC. It speaks of the entry in the Promised Land and its conquest, the second chance of God, since they had failed the first time and stayed for forty years in the wilderness.

Judges: They began to rule around 1375 BC. This book shows the rise and fall of people in relationship with God in several consecutive cycles. It was probably written by Samuel or any other prophet, around 1050-1000 BC. The book covers more or less three hundred and fifty years where twelve judges judged successively over Israel, among them, a woman, Deborah. More than legal counselors, they were local leaders who have gained prominence in the whole nation because of their military victories.

Ruth: Probably, it was a story occurred in the period of the Judges (1375-1050 BC) and written by Samuel or unknown author, around 1000 BC. It tells the story of Ruth who, despite being a foreigner, widow, childless, poor and abandoned, found her place in a new community.

1 Samuel: Anonymous author. The prophets Samuel, Nathan and Gad kept records (1 Chr. 29: 29) that later, perhaps, have been compiled, thus forming 1 and 2 Samuel. There are some who believe that court officials historians (chroniclers) have recorded these events (2 Sam. 8: 16-17; 1 Kin. 4: 3). The book may have been written around 900 BC, after the division of the Northern kingdom and the Southern kingdom. It shows the story of God’s relationship with His people. It is the transition between the era in which judges ruled in Israel and the period of kings.

2 Samuel: Unknown author, around 925 BC. It traces the story of Israel since the death of Saul until the end of David’s reign (about 1010-970 BC). It also shows the important details of David’s reign and God’s hand on the events.

1 Kings: The Jewish tradition considers the prophet Jeremiah the author of this book or an unknown author who has used preexisting documents, like the book of the story of Solomon (1 Kin. 11: 41), the book of the kings of Israel (1 Kin. 14: 19) and the book of the kings of Judah (1 Kin. 14: 29) or other sources (1 Chr. 29: 29; 2 Chr. 9: 29; 2 Chr. 12: 15). It was probably written during the Babylonian exile of the Jews, around 560 and 550 BC. It comprehends the last days of David, the reign and the fall of Solomon, besides the division of the kingdom into Israel and Judah (971-846 BC).

2 Kings: Probable author, Jeremiah or unknown one. Initially, it was part of *1 Kings* and was probably written after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC but before 550 BC. It deals

with events between 853 and 562 BC. It was written to preserve the story of Judah and Israel to the Jews who were living in the Babylonian exile. The author wanted the readers learned the lessons of History, reminding them of the consequences of the infidelity to God. The Book of Kings was divided into two parts in the second century BC at the time of the Septuagint. One roll would have been enough for the Hebrew (which uses no vowels). But the Greek (which need the vowels) would require twice the space. *2 Kings* shows the consequences of idolatry: the defeat of Israel (722 BC) and its captivity in Assyria and the defeat of Judah (586 BC) and its captivity in Babylon.

1 Chronicles: Traditionally, the authorship is attributed to Ezra, between 450 and 400 BC. It was written for a people who returned from exile, wondering if they still fitted God's plans. The author's intention was that the Israelites acknowledged their holy roots and reencountered their inheritance. It covers the genealogy of the people, the death of Saul, David's rule and the proclamation of Solomon as king of Israel.

2 Chronicles: Who wrote it was Ezra, the priest and the scribe at the end of 400 BC. Although the book covers the period from the reign of Solomon (970 BC) until the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC), it was written for those who were returning from the captivity and rebuilding the society.

Ezra: Ezra perhaps had written it with the book of Nehemiah, around 430 BC. In the original Hebrew bible, Ezra and Nehemiah form only one book. Being a descendant of Aaron, Ezra was priest and scribe (He copied the Law of Moses) – Ezra 7: 1-6; Neh. 12: 26. The events reported in Nehemiah were completed shortly after 440 BC. Ezra speaks of the rebuilding of the temple, the difficulties encountered and the drastic measures required to purge the impurity of the exiles that joined the idolaters in the land.

Nehemiah: Ezra wrote it along with the previous book, around 430 BC. The story of Nehemiah occurred between 445 and 432 BC. Persia conquered Babylon in 539 BC and then allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem (538 BC). The temple had been rebuilt, but the walls remained in ruins. The book speaks of rebuilding the walls and the manner by which Nehemiah balanced spiritually the practical actions.

Esther: Unknown writer but, probably, a devoted Jew as Mordecai, Ezra or Nehemiah around 460-350 BC. Esther became queen in 479 BC. The author tells the story of Esther in Persia, how she came to be queen and how God used her for the sake of His people. It also reports the Feast of Purim and the protection of God upon them.

Job: Unknown author. It's possible to be written by Job (though not Israelite), Elihu, Moses, Solomon, Isaiah, Hezekiah or Baruch (Jeremiah's friend). The cultural and historical backgrounds seem to trace back to the days of Genesis (once it is mentioned the name of Eliphaz the Temanite, one of Job's friends – Job 2: 11 etc.). Teman (têmân) was grandson of Esau (Gen. 36: 11; 1 Chr. 1: 36), and perhaps has given his name to the northern district of Edom (Jer. 49: 20; Ezek. 25: 13; Am. 1: 12). Its inhabitants were well known because of their wisdom (Jer. 49: 7; Obad. 8 and the following verses). It is believed that the story of Job was transmitted orally from generation to generation, and then recorded in writing. The book was written to deal with the question of suffering and injustice; also to warn us against false accusations coming from supposed friends.

Psalms: Most of the psalms were written during the reign of David and Solomon (1010-930 BC). There several authors: David (73 psalms, not necessarily from number 1 to 73, as many think, for there are later psalms assigned to David: 86, 91, 96, 101, 103, 105, 108, 109, 110, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145), Asaph (Ps. 50; 73-83), the descendants of Korah (Grandson of Kohath and great-grandson of Levi; for example: Ps. 42-49; 84; 85; 87), Heman (Ps. 88), Ethan (Ps. 89), Solomon (Ps. 72 and 127), Moses (Ps. 90), Ezra (Ps. 119) and others (Ps. 92; 93; 94; 95; 97; 98; 99; 100; 102; 104; 106; 107; 111; 112; 113; 114; 115; 116; 117; 118; 120; 121; 122; 123; 124; 125; 126; 128; 129; 130; 131; 132; 133; 134; 135; 136; 137; 146; 147; 148; 149; 150).

‘Psalms’, in Hebrew, are called *tʿhillim*, which means ‘songs of praise.’ In the Septuagint, Psalms are called ‘psaltery’ (KJV) – in Greek, *Psaltirio*, *ψαλτήριον*, *ou Psaltiri*, *ψαλτήρι* – the name of a musical instrument well known in Ancient times (Lute – NRSV; Harp – NIV). In Latin is written as ‘salterium.’

Psalms are aids in worship, prayer and teaching about God. They reveal the emotions of their authors before various situations, showing that they are equal to us as to the manifestation of their deepest feelings. Psalm 30 was sung during the Feast of Dedication of the temple (the ‘Feast of Lights’, after the period of the Second Temple) and Psalm 92 was sung on the Sabbath. Psalms 120 to 134 are called ‘Songs of ascents’ or ‘Songs of degrees’, for were usually sung after the return from Babylonian exile by the Jews who went up to Jerusalem to their feasts.

Often, we can see the word *Selah* in the psalms.

Selah (סֶלָה, transliterated as *selāh* or *selâ*) is a word used frequently in the Hebrew Bible, 71 times in 39 of the 150 psalms, in most cases at the end of a verse, and three times in the third chapter of Habakkuk (Hab. 3: 3, 9 and 13). Probably, *Selah* would record a pause in the music, in Greek sometimes translated *aei* (ἀεί), meaning ‘always’, or *eis telos* (Greek: εἰς τέλος, ‘at the end’), seeming to indicate a liturgical blessing similar to ‘Amen and Hallelujah.’ Then the worshipers should raise their voices, crying out “Blessed be Yahweh forever” or “Yahweh lives forever.”

Other sources say that *selah* means ‘elevation’, for it comes from the Hebrew root (*calah*), meaning ‘to suspend, to elevate’ and by implication to measure (weight), indicating moderation in words; then, it can be linked to a liturgical sign of elevation (*salal*, ‘elevate’), so that the hands are raised in an attitude of prayer, or a musical direction given to singers or the orchestra to elevate, that is, to sing or play louder, or a louder accompaniment.

In NIV, for example, in Psalm 140, after vs. 3, 5, 8, the word *selah* (*selah*) is translated as ‘pause’, which would mean a pause for reflection. It would be similar to the Septuagint, where *selah* was translated by *diapsalma* (in Greek: διάψαλμα), which means: interval, interlude, change of tone; a sign for the worshiper to prostrate himself at this point, if we take into account that *selah* is a term derived from an Aramaic root *s-l*, meaning ‘to prostrate himself’. It also appears in Psalm 3 (after vs. 2, 4, 8); Psalm 24 (after vs. 6, 10); Psalm 46 after v.6 (after vs. 3, 7, 11) and in Psalm 143 (after v. 6).

Habakkuk, assessing the calamities that would come upon his country and the subsequent punishments on the Chaldeans, ended his book with a sublime and poetic prayer, in which the word ‘*Selah*’ appears three times (Hab. 3: 3, 9 and 13), probably indicating his meditation on what was to come.

In fact, its etymology and meaning are imprecise.

The term should not be confused with sela', which means 'rock' and was the name of a city in biblical times, today a city in Jordan, called Petra.

Proverbs: Authors: Solomon, Agur, Lemuel (maybe not an Israelite king). Probably were written around 935-930 BC but were compiled more or less in 700 BC. The purpose is to show how God's wisdom is important to real life. The proverb is a condensed truth in few words, being relevant to various situations of life.

Ecclesiastes: Maybe, written by Solomon (Eccl. 1: 1; Eccl. 1: 12; Eccl. 2: 8-9, probably old, after being punished by God because of his idolatry, thus seeing the vanity of life) or by an anonymous preacher (or teacher or leader of the assembly) who simply spoke from the perspective of a king. It offers a philosophy of life, used by Jews as an instruction book, showing how to find spiritual significance in a life that otherwise would be irrelevant. Time it was probably written: around the tenth century BC.

Song of Songs: Solomon or an unknown author. Probably it was written around the tenth century BC. The traditional attribution of the book to Solomon (10th century BC) is based on the references to him (Song 1: 1; Song 3: 7; Song 3: 9; Song 3: 11; Song 8: 11), especially in verse of the title (Song 1: 1). Some believe that Solomon wrote this song in his youth, before acquiring his huge harem. Others think that the book of Songs reflects the love of a young Israelite shepherd and his bride, creating the fantasy of being 'king and queen' for one day. The bible says that Solomon composed three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five (1 Kin. 4: 32), so it would not be strange to think that he was really the author of this book, like most Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. There is great controversy about the interpretation, both by Jews and Christians; some leading to the side of human love, others for God's relationship with a people. Either way, love is God's gift.

Isaiah: Isaiah, son of Amoz, about 700-680 BC. His ministry was in Judah (740-681 BC). He speaks of the dual position of Israel before God, their accommodation and lack of true love to the Lord. Isaiah worked to give people the clarity of this hypocrisy in the hope of changing their attitude. In 722 BC there was the exile of Israel and in 586 BC, the exile of Judah. During his ministry four kings of Judah reigned. Through Isaiah and his prophecy, God showed the people His two sides: mercy and judgment, righteousness and forgiveness, exile and salvation. Isaiah prophesied the coming of the Messiah, so he was called the messianic prophet.

Jeremiah: Jeremiah, during his ministry: 626-585 BC. The last verses were added later, about 25 years after the destruction of Jerusalem. He was priest and prophet (his father, Hilkiah, was a priest of Abiathar's offspring, who officiated in the reign of David, and of the lineage of Ithamar, the brother of Eleazar, son of Aaron). His assistant, Baruch, wrote down the prophecies as Jeremiah dictated them. He received the calling to be a prophet when he was young (around the beginning of his 2nd decade of life) to call people to God, before the destruction came. After the fall of Jerusalem, he was forced to flee to Egypt and it is supposed that he have died there, in the city of Tahpanhes.

Lamentations: Jeremiah, shortly after the fall of Jerusalem before the Babylonians in 586 BC or perhaps an anonymous writer, taking into account some possible contradictions in the literary style between his prophetic book (Book of Jeremiah) and

the book of Lamentations, for example, mentioning the judgment on Zedekiah (Lam. 4: 20 cf. Jer. 24: 8), the hope of help from Egypt (Lam. 4: 17 cf. Jer. 37: 7) and the acceptance of suffering because of sin of the fathers (Lam. 5: 7 cf. Jer. 31: 29-30). But it was certainly written by someone who witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. It is for those who have already suffered a great loss and manifests the great sadness of a nation.

Ezekiel: Ezekiel the priest taken captive to Babylon, where his prophetic visions began, writing the book between 592 and 571 BC. The first return of the exiles to Jerusalem only happened in 538 BC. He wrote to those who were with him in exile, trying to revive them, saying that God would lead them back to their land. Main themes of the book:

- 1) Warnings of judgment coming over the unrepentant Jerusalem.
- 2) Promises of judgment over other nations.
- 3) Words of hope for the future of Israel.
- 4) Vision of the new temple and the restored country.

Daniel: Daniel, member of a royal family of Judah and that was taken to Babylon around 605 BC. It was probably written between 536 and 530 BC, shortly after Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BC. It speaks of God's faithfulness and His power over the leaders and empires, always proving His superiority over all other gods. History tells about three stages of the exile of Judah: 605, 597 and 586 BC.

Hosea: Hosea, a prophet of Israel, the northern kingdom, around 715 BC (his prophetic ministry was 755-715 BC, covering the exile of Israel in 722 BC). The book speaks of Hosea's love for Gomer, his unfaithful wife, which illustrates God's love for us, even when we're unfaithful. Jeroboam II (782-753 BC) was a wicked king whose rule produced a materialistic, immoral and unjust society. The six kings that followed in the next twenty-five years contributed to the fall of Israel in 722 BC.

Joel: Joel, at unknown time. It may have been when King Joash was still a child (835 BC). It prophesies the descent of the Holy Spirit and links the work of God in the OT to the birth of the Church in the NT. It shows the intense desire of God for intimacy with all His people. Joel urged the people to turn to God.

Amos: Amos, between 760 and 750 BC, before the exile of Israel in 722 BC. He was a shepherd from Judah with unknown credentials, unless by the fact that he had a word from God (Am. 7: 14-15). Amos speaks of the divine displeasure against the exploitation of the poor and defenseless, as well as he criticizes the materialism and the low moral level of Israel that had absorbed these characteristics from its pagan neighbors (Am. 2: 8-16).

Obadiah: Obadiah, at unknown time (He prophesied between 605 and 583 BC, during the time of exile). It talks about the quarrel between Israel and Edom (distant relative of Israel through Esau) because when Judah was invaded and conquered by Babylon, Edom not only supported them but helped to loot the southern kingdom, delivering the Israelites to their enemies. The first stage that Judah was taken to Babylon was in 605 BC, more or less. God condemned the Edomites for the arrogance and betrayal.

Jonah: Jonah, between 785 and 750 BC during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel (782-753 BC – 2 Kin. 14: 25). It speaks of God's compassion for all His people and His desire for true repentance, regardless of what the person has done.

Micah: Micah, about 742 to 687 BC, during the reigns of three kings of Judah: Jotham (740-732 BC), Ahaz (732-716 BC) and Hezekiah (716-687 BC). Micah wrote to the inhabitants of Judah in order to warn them that the Divine Judgment was imminent because they had rejected God and His law. He also mentioned that the nation would be restored.

Nahum: Nahum, between 663 BC (when Egypt was already in the hands of Assyria) and 612 BC (when Assyria was conquered by Babylon, and when the fall of Nineveh occurred), more or less one hundred to one hundred and fifty years after Jonah delivered God's message to Nineveh, capital of Assyria. Nahum reminds us that the Lord holds the control of History and will not let evil prevail forever.

Habakkuk: Habakkuk, prophet of Judah, more or less, between 610 and 597 BC, during the reign of King Jehoiakim. He speaks to God as an intercessor of the people asking Him to end the corruption of Judah.

Zephaniah: Zephaniah, during the reign of King Josiah of Judah (640-609 BC) but before the destruction of Nineveh in 612 BC (prophesied by Nahum). He wrote to the people of Judah, warning them of God's judgment for the sins and ensuring that it would open the way for a new society in which justice would prevail and all mankind would worship the Lord.

Haggai: Haggai, more or less in 520 BC. Although Jews had started the rebuilding of the temple sixteen years before this prophecy (around 536 BC), the opposition of neighboring peoples intimidated them and led them to abandon the task of reconstruction. Haggai encourages people to rebuild in 520 AC (Hag. 1: 1; Ezz. 4: 24; Ezz. 5: 1-2). Haggai and Zechariah are the first prophets reported after the return of the first exiles in 538 BC. The order of reconstruction had already been given by Cyrus in 539-538 BC when the Persian Empire began. The temple started to be built in 536 BC, but stopped for sixteen years and that was why Haggai cried out. Its conclusion was in 516 BC (in four years). According to History, the second return of the exiles to Jerusalem (under the command of Ezra) was in 458 BC and the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem in 445 BC (3rd return, Nehemiah). Haggai witnessed the growing apathy during that period, and reaching the appropriate age, the Spirit of God worked on him with the gift of prophecy.

Zechariah: Zechariah, in 520 BC, during the reign of Darius. He was a prophet and priest, born in exile. When young he returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. He motivated the people to restore the temple and made predictions about the Messiah.

Malachi: about 440 BC, after Israel returned from Babylonian captivity and after the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem (516 BC). He goes against the accommodation and indifference among the people and priests. He helps to reassess their relationship with God.

Next, I put the period between Malachi and Christ, which comprises nearly four hundred years, when Israel was dominated by pagans and when the Lord stopped speaking to His people through the prophets:

Persian Period:

539-333 BC.

For about one hundred years after Nehemiah's time (445-332 BC) the Persians dominated Judah, but the Jews were allowed to proceed with the religious observances without facing any opposition. During this period, the land of Judah was ruled by high priests.

The Hellenistic period

333-167 BC.

In 333 BC the Persian armies concentrated in Macedonia were defeated by Alexander the Great. For him, with no doubt, the Greek culture was the only force to congregate the world. He allowed the Jews to keep their laws and even assured them the exemption of taxes and levies in the sabbatical year. Around 250 BC, the Greek conquest enabled the translation of the Old Testament into Greek [the so-called Septuagint or the Version of the Seventies, in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247 BC)]. Kings: Alexander the Great (330-323 BC), Reign of the Ptolemies of Egypt, and the reign of the Seleucids of Syria (323-167 BC).

The Hasmonean period

167-63 AC

Hasmon was the family name of Judas ben Mattathias.

In the beginning of this period of History, Jews were subjected to a very heavy yoke. The Ptolemies had been lenient with the Jews, allowing their religious practices, but the Seleucids struggled to foist them Hellenism (Greek culture). It was instituted as law the destruction of the copies of the Scriptures, and the decree was carried out with extreme ruthlessness. The oppressed Jews revolted under the leadership of Judas Maccabee (Judas ben Mattathias).

The Roman period:

In 63 BC, the Roman general Pompey conquered Jerusalem, and the provinces of Palestine were subjugated to Roman rule. The government of each region was part of the time in charge of princes, and in the rest, under the responsibility of procurators appointed by the emperor. Herod the Great was king of all Palestine at the time of Christ's birth. In 476 AD occurred the fall of the Western Roman Empire.

Matthew: Matthew the tax collector, one of the twelve apostles, probably in the first years of the Christian era (50 AD), addressing basically to the Jewish readers because he cited the evidence of the OT in support to the claims that Christians were doing about Jesus as the awaited Messiah. Thus, he makes the transition of the OT to the NT.

Mark: John Mark, Barnabas' cousin and son of Mary, the widow who offered her home for meetings of the Early Church (Acts 12: 12; 25; Acts 13: 13; Acts 15: 37-39; Acts 19: 29; Acts 27: 2; Col. 4: 10; Phlm. 24). He was a theologian and historian. Mark wrote the book around 50-65 AD, probably to Gentile believers in Rome and to whom he explains Jewish traditions clearly (Mk. 7:1-4; 14: 12; 15: 42).

Luke: Luke, the Gentile physician, companion of Paul. He wrote to Theophilus, probably a Gentile who had just converted, around 59-63 AD. It shows the largest variety of teaching, parables and events of Jesus' life. It shows the interest of Jesus for the non-Jewish world and the poor.

John: John, an apostle of Jesus, more or less between 80 and 85 AD, probably in Ephesus (Turkey), shortly before his exile in Patmos (90-95 AD). Written for non-Jewish followers of Jesus, proving that He was the Son of God living as a man here on earth and therefore, in His humanity, making the wonders and miracles of the Father. John records seven miracles, culminating with the resurrection of the Lord, which he considers the proof that Jesus is the Son of God. The other reports explain the purpose of His life.

Acts of the Apostles: Who wrote it was Luke, about 63 to 70 AD, as a historian, to narrate what happened after the resurrection of Christ. It shows the life of the Early Church, the revival and the growth dependent on the actions of the Holy Spirit.

Romans: Paul, dictated to Tertius (Rom. 16: 22), about 56 AD to the Gentiles in Rome. Main themes: faith, grace, justice, justification, with the purpose of shaping the character of the believer.

1 Corinthians: Paul, probably dictated to Sosthenes (1 Cor. 1: 1), about 54 or 55 AD, for Christians in Corinth, an important commercial city in Greece, where he started a church. Two to three years after leaving it, he heard of conflicts and divisions trying to threaten it because of carnal Christians and spiritually proud. This book gives honest advices about Christian life and the relationships in the church. According to some authors, the city of Corinth had about 650,000 inhabitants, and more than a half were slaves. Their interest was Greek philosophy, wisdom, and religion. There were 12 temples dedicated to Greek gods and was considered a city of great immorality.

2 Corinthians: Paul probably dictated to Timothy (2 Cor. 1: 1), more or less in 55 AD. It gives advice to solve conflicts like, for example, clash of personalities among the church members, theological quarrels about false teachings and cultural conflicts between the church and the world. Paul was calming tempers, restoring the unity of the congregation and reaffirming his position as leader.

Galatians: Paul, about 48-53 AD for Christians of Galatia, the Roman province in the central region of what is now Turkey. It corrects the false teaching that had infiltrated the churches that Paul and Barnabas had founded.

Ephesians: Paul, about 60 to 62 AD, during his imprisonment in Rome. He wrote to the Ephesians, inhabitants of the city of Ephesus, a city of modern Turkey, to think of themselves as new people in Christ, people with identity radically new. It talks about the purpose of life, that is, eternity, peace with God and identification with Christ.

Philippians: Paul and Timothy (Phil. 1: 1), while awaiting the trial through appeal to the Roman emperor Nero, about 60-62 AD (Phil. 4: 22). Paul wrote to believers in Philippi, located northeast of Greece (Macedonia). Philippi was a Roman colony; the first place where Paul founded the first church on European soil around 50 AD (Acts 16: 11-40).

He thanked the Philippians for sending him money to cover his expenses in Rome. He also warned them against false teachers and urged them to have more unity.

Colossians: Paul and Timothy (Col. 1: 1), under house arrest in Rome, awaiting trial of Nero, about 60-62 AD. Colossae was a small town located southwest of Turkey. Paul warned against the subtle arguments and false teaching that threatened the faith of the Colossians.

1 Thessalonians: Paul (Silvanus and Timothy; 1 The. 1: 1), about 50 AD to the believers of the Church of Thessalonica, founded on his 2nd missionary journey. Disturbances and the opposition have forced him to leave them before he desired, but further news of progress of the church encouraged him to write, commending them for growing in the Lord and urging them to correct errors. The book gives practical guidance to Christians to live a holy life in a culture hostile to Christian values.

2 Thessalonians: Paul (Silvanus and Timothy; 2 The. 1: 1), more or less, 51-52 AD. Important themes: the suffering of a Christian, work, the end times.

1 Timothy: Paul, maybe 63 AD. He wrote to Timothy (1 Tim. 1: 2; Acts 16: 1-5), giving advice on how to lead better the Church of Ephesus in the face of false prophets who acted there.

2 Timothy: Paul, maybe, in 62-63 AD. Many had forsaken him in prison. Paul writes to Timothy (2 Tim. 1: 2), putting his wisdom in service to God. He challenged Timothy to have a ministry more efficient.

Titus: Paul, maybe 62-63 DC. Titus was a close friend and protected of Paul and helped him to organize and govern churches in the eastern region of Roman Empire. Paul wrote these instructions to help Titus to lead the troubled church of Crete, close to Greece.

Philemon: Paul, 60-62 AD when he was arrested in Rome. Philemon was a wealthy Christian in the church of Colossae and his fugitive slave named Onesimus was converted to faith by Paul. He wrote to Philemon to forgive his slave and get him back without punishing him.

Hebrews: Paul, Barnabas, Luke or Apollos 60-70 AD. Strong evidence in favor of Paul in Heb. 13: 19; 23 by the similarity of the phrase with other letters. The word 'Hebrew' is used in the OT as the designation of the Semitic people. The son of Noah, Shem, father of the Semites, was an ancestor of Eber (from where originates the word *Hebrew*, Gen. 10: 21; 1 Chr. 1: 18). Applied in a broader sense, the term includes other non-Israelite peoples such as the Aramaeans, the Moabites and the Ammonites. The term seems to refer more to the culture of the people than to their ethnic identity. In the NT, *Hebrew* was the first Jewish believers who, because of persecution and difficulties, felt strongly attracted to return to the lifestyle of the OT. The author draws frequent contrasts between the ceremonial law of the OT and the faith of the NT.

James: James, the half-brother of Jesus, first bishop of Jerusalem, about 40-50 AD, to the twelve tribes [Jam. 1: 1: to convert Jews who lived in other nations or to the Church figuratively (Jews and Gentiles)]. James warned believers about some of the habits they

had acquired and that corroded the essence of their faith: favoritism, hypocrisy, slander, pride, misuse of wealth and lack of patience.

1 Peter: Peter to the scattered believers (Jews and Gentiles – “God’s elect” – NIV; “chosen” – NRSV) scattered (“exiles”) throughout the non-converts in different regions of Asia Minor (Turkey), around 60-64 AD; they were Christians that because of the growing struggle and persecution imagined that God had abandoned them.

2 Peter: Peter, to warn Christians about false teachers who had invaded the Christian community. To believers scattered throughout all regions of Asia Minor (Turkey), between 64 and 68 AD. He guides to develop Christian character, holding fast to the truth, be warned against false teachers and await the coming of the Lord.

1 John: John, Apostle, around 85-90 AD to encourage and strengthen believers in a group of churches near Ephesus (to the west of what now is Turkey). It talks about God’s love.

2 John: John, Apostle, around 85-90, for Christians who felt pressured by false teachers, encouraging them to renew their commitment to the truth.

3 John: John, Apostle, around 85-90, to his friend Gaius, encouraging him to continue to support the legitimate masters faithfully.

Jude: Half-brother of Jesus, brother of James, around 65 AD. He warned believers against the false doctrine and misleading teachers.

Revelation: John the Apostle, 90-95 AD, to the provinces of Asia Minor (now Turkey) in order to warn them not to abandon their faith in Christ, ensuring their victory by staying on God’s side. The Greek word *Apocalypse* (*Apokálypsis*) means: *discovery, revelation*. The Jewish apocalyptic writings used figurative language and symbolism to show that evil will be replaced by kindness and peace of the kingdom of God.

Note:

The bible says that the people were seventy years in captivity, probably calculating from the first stage of the exile of Judah in 605 BC to the first return of the exiles to Jerusalem in 538 BC (2 Chr. 36: 21: “to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had made up for its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years”). Other references are in Jer. 25: 11; Jer. 29: 10; Dan. 9: 2. The explanation for this lies in the word *Sabbath*. The people should honor God, allowing the land to rest every seven years. This period without plantation was considered a Sabbath of rest (Lev.25: 2-4; Ex. 23: 10-11). As, however, they failed to do that over the centuries, God condemned them and removed all Sabbaths of rest at once. The land would be asleep during the Babylonian captivity (Lev. 26: 34-35; 43).

Chronology of the Old Testament

P R E H I S T O R Y	<p>The Creation</p> <p>Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden</p> <p>Cain and Abel</p> <p>Noah and the Flood</p> <p>The Tower of Babel</p>
2200 BC	<p>Abraham – 2166-1991 BC (Gen. 21: 5; Gen. 25: 7)</p> <p>Isaac – 2066-1886 BC (Gen. 25: 26; Gen. 35: 28)</p> <p>Jacob and Esau – 2006-1859 BC (Gen. 47: 28; Gen. 47: 9)</p> <p>Joseph – 1915-1805 BC (Gen. 50: 22; 26) – he came to Egypt in 1898 BC (Gen. 37: 2; 36), probably in the reign of Khakheperre Senusret II – 1897-1878 BC or his father Amenemhat II (1929-1895 BC) – 12th Dynasty.</p>
1900 BC	<p>Migration of the sons of Jacob with their families to Egypt: 1876 BC AC (Ex. 12: 40-41; Gal. 3: 17; Gen. 46: 26-27; Ex. 1: 5; Gen. 41: 46; 53; Gen. 45: 6).</p> <p>The Israelites are enslaved in Egypt: 1580 or 1550 BC – Ex. 1: 8: Ahmose I – 17th Egyptian dynasty</p> <p>Birth of Moses: 1526 BC (Ex. 7: 7)</p> <p>Departure of the Israelites from Egypt: 1446 BC (1 Kin. 6: 1; Ex. 12: 40-41)</p> <p>Wandering in the wilderness: 1446-1406 BC</p>
1400 BC	<p>Entry into Canaan: 1406 BC</p> <p>Conquest of Canaan: 1406-1375 BC</p> <p>Death of Joshua: 1375 BC, 110 years old (Josh. 24: 29; Judg. 2: 8)</p> <p>Beginning of the period of the Judges: 1375 BC</p>

1100 BC	Saul's reign – 1050-1010 BC David's reign – 1010-970 BC Solomon's reign – 970-931 BC
---------	--

The divided kingdom

	Judah (south)	Prophets South	North	Israel (North)
950 BC	Rehoboam (931-914 BC) Abijah (914-911 BC) Asa (911-870 BC)			Jeroboam I (931-910 BC) Nadab (910-909 BC)
900 BC	Jehoshaphat (870-845 BC)		Elijah 875-848 BC	Baasha (909-886 BC) Elah (886-885 BC) Zimri (885 BC) Omri (885-874 BC) Ahab (874-853 BC) Ahaziah (853-852 BC)
850 BC	Jehoram (848-841 BC) Ahaziah (841 BC) Athaliah (841-835 BC) Joash (835-796 BC)	Joel?	Elisha 848-797 BC	Jehoram (852-841 BC) Jehu (841-814 BC) Jehoahaz (814-798 BC)
800 BC	Amaziah (796-781 BC) Uzziah (781-740 BC)	Isaiah 740-681 BC	Jonah 785-750 Amos 760-750 Hosea 755-715	Jehoash (798-782 BC) Jeroboam II (782-753 BC)

750 BC	Jotham (740-732 BC)			Zechariah (753-752 BC) Shallum (752 BC) Menahem (752-742 BC) Pekahiah (742-740 BC) Pekah (740-732 BC) Hoshea (732-723 BC)
	Ahaz (732- 716 BC)	Micah 742-687		
	Hezekiah (716-687 BC)	Joel?		Fall of Samaria 722 BC

Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah

Kings

Prophets

700 BC	Manasseh (687-642 BC)	Nahum (663-612 BC)
650 BC	Ammon (642-640 BC) Josiah (640-609 BC) Jehoahaz (609 BC) Jehoiakim (609-598 BC)	Zephaniah (640-621 BC) Jeremiah (626-585BC) Habakkuk (610-597 BC) Obadiah (605-583 BC) Daniel (605-536 BC)
600 BC	Jehoiachin (598 BC) Zedekiah (598-587 BC) Fall of Jerusalem (July 587 or 586 BC) Inhabitants of Judah taken to Babylon - 587-586 BC	Ezekiel (592-571 BC)
550 BC	Beginning of Persian rule – 539 BC Cyrus the Persian emperor ordered the return of the Jews – 538 BC (1 st return of the exiles). Beginning of the rebuilding of the temple – 520 BC; conclusion 516 BC 2 nd return to Jerusalem (Ezra) 458 BC Rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem 445 BC (3 rd return: Nehemiah)	Haggai and Zechariah (520-480 BC) Malachi (450-400 BC)

Chronology of the Intertestamental Period

400 BC	Alexander the Great rules Palestine; Macedonian dominion – 333-323 BC Dominion of the Ptolemies on Palestine – 323-198 BC
200 BC	Dominion of the Seleucids on Palestine – 198-167 BC. Revolt of Judah Maccabee and dominion of Judas' family and his descendants, the Hasmonean on Palestine – 167-63 BC. Conquest of Jerusalem by Pompey, Roman general, annexing Palestine to the Roman Empire – 63 BC. Reign of Herod the Great, on Palestine, appointed by Rome – 37-4 BC.

Chronology of the New Testament

The chronological references in the New Testament may be given only as approximate, both to the references to the life of Jesus as the period of the apostles. Regarding the birth of Jesus (6 BC), for example, one can only say, based on Matt. 2: 1 (Lk. 1: 5), that it occurred during the reign of Herod the Great, who died in 4 BC, while His crucifixion occurred during a Passover celebration in the government of Pontius Pilate (26-36 AD). Regarding the time of the apostles, one can specify with some certainty the year of the death of Herod Agrippa I as being in 46 AD (Acts 12: 20-23), while the remaining dates are approximated.

The life of Jesus

Date	Roman Emperors	Governors and kings of Judea	Events of the New Testament
1 AD	Augustus (29 BC-14 AD) Tiberius (14-37 AD)	Herod the Great (37 BC-4 BC) Archelaus (4 BC-6 AD) Pontius Pilate (26-36 AD) was governor of Judea and Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee (6-41 AD)	Birth of Jesus (6 BC) Beginning of Jesus' Ministry – 28 AD Death and Resurrection of Jesus – 30 AD

The period of the apostles

30 AD	Caligula (Gaius) – 37-41 AD		Day of Pentecost – 30 AD Conversion of Paul – 35 AD
40 AD	Claudius 41-54 AD	Herod Agrippa I – 41-44 AD (nephew of Herod Antipas and father of Agrippa, Bernice and Drusilla, who married Festus)	Start date of Paul's ministry (45 AD) Death of James son of Zebedee (44 AD) Death of Herod Agrippa I – 44 AD Famine in the days of Claudius – 46 AD First missionary journey of Paul – 46-48 AD Edict of Claudius – 49 or 50 AD*
50 AD	Nero 54-68 AD	Sergius Paulus, proconsul 50 AD Felix – 52-60 AD	Conference in Jerusalem 50-51 AD Paul's second missionary journey – 50-53 AD Paul in Corinth – 50-52 AD Paul's third missionary journey – 53-57 AD Paul in Ephesus – 54-57 AD Paul arrested in Jerusalem – 58 AD Paul in prison in Caesarea – 58-60 AD
60 AD	Galba – 68-69 AD Otto – 69 AD Vitellius – 69 AD	Porcius Festus – 60-62 AD	Paul in prison in Rome – 61-63 AD Death of Paul in Rome – 63 AD Death of Peter in Rome – 65-68 AD?
70 AD	Vespasian – 69-79 AD Titus – 79-81 AD		Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple – 70 AD

	Domitian – 81-96 AD Nerva – 96-98 AD Trajan – 98-117 AD		Death of John – 98 or 100 AD?
--	---	--	----------------------------------

* Edict of Claudius – 49 or 50 AD = Jews were expelled from Rome



THE LAND OF THE TWELVE TRIBES

The Creation – 1st lesson



Reference texts: Gen. 1–2

Summary:

The biblical doctrine of Creation is based on divine resolution and can only be understood from the standpoint of faith (Heb. 11: 3: “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible”).

- The participation of the Trinity (1 Jn. 5: 7-8; Matt. 3: 16-17; Mk. 1: 9-11; Lk. 3: 21-22) in the creative process is clear:

- 1) Gen. 1: 1: “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth” (God the Father).

- 2) Gen. 1: 2: “the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters” (The Holy Spirit).

- 3) Gen. 1: 26: “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth’” (Father, Son and Holy Ghost; this is our Christian interpretation, for the use of the plural in the Hebrew language for ‘God’ – Elohim – literally ‘gods’, is simply a form of respect).

- 4) Gen. 2: 7: “then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being” (God the Father with the participation of the Holy Spirit).

- 5) Gen. 3: 22: “Then the Lord God said, ‘See, the man has become like one of us [The Trinity was implied in this comment; cf. 1 Jn. 5: 7], knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.’”

- 6) Isa. 45: 12: “I made the earth, and created humankind upon it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host” (God the Father).

- 7) Jn. 1: 1-3: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being” (The Father and the Son).

- 8) Jn. 1: 10: “He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him” (The Son).

- 9) Col. 1: 16: “for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him” (The Son).

• God created the world for the manifestation of the glory of His power, wisdom and eternal goodness through His will:

1) Jn. 1: 3: “All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being.”

2) Col. 1: 16: “for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him” (The Son).

3) Rev. 4: 11: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

In the beginning, this is what the bible says, the earth was without form and void and the Spirit of God swept over the face of the waters. God spoke His word and everything came into being. We can see some order in the Creation: First, the light, for all forms of life need light to exist. Then God created the firmament. In the third place He created the seas, the land and vegetation. Until now, we can see that God’s care provided the environment, that is, these first three creations are preparatory to the establishment of inhabitants.

Three Hebrew words are used to vegetable life: Grass or vegetation (*deshe*’ = new vegetation), herb (*eḡebh* = plants) yielding seed of every kind; and trees (*‘eḡ*) that produce fruit whose seed is in it (Gen. 1: 11-13).

In the fourth place, God created the lights (the sun, the moon and the stars); in the fifth, the birds (Gen. 1: 20-22, and the word used here is *‘ôph*, used to describe all varieties of birds). In the sixth place, God created the fish, the living creatures of the earth and the man.

Finally, He blessed the day of rest.

Important lessons:

- 1) *The universe was created under the blessing of God:* In several verses we see that God, after creating something, saw that it was good and blessed what He had created: Gen. 1: 22: “God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth” (in relation to marine animals and birds); Gen. 1: 28: “God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’” (in relation to man and woman); Gen. 2: 3: “So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.” We also notice that the blessing of God on something generated prosperity, multiplication.
- 2) *The creative word:* In Ps. 33: 6; 9 it is written: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth... For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.” In Jn. 1: 1-3 it is written: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being.” And in Jn. 1: 10: “He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.” The bible uses two words in Hebrew for God’s creation: First, *‘āmar* (*He said*), which is the *product of the will of God*. Thus, in Gen. 1: 3, for example, is written: “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” The word *said*

here can be translated literally as: “*God spoke to the core of the situation, God spoke to the heart.*” The second word used is *bārā* (‘to create’), which expresses *divine activity*. Another word that is related to the creative activity is ‘*āçâ*, also used in the verses that speak of the creation of animals, lights, plants etc. Although the bible uses many words to express the divine activity, the essential activity originates in the word of God (“*God said*”), which is a product of His will. For us, the practical learning is that everything we say molds our spiritual world and therefore our lives. Thus, in our mouth is the blessing and the curse. Another important lesson is that it is no use just to talk, but to act according to what we say.

- 3) *God gave authority to man, delegated to him the care and the guardianship of the planet.* He cared about the man giving him supply, but also gave him the task of managing the natural resources and gave him work (Gen. 1: 29-30; Gen. 2: 15): “God said, ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food’. And it was so... The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.” The same way that God gave work and responsibilities to Adam, He gives them to man still today. Man needs work not to be idle, without provision and sustenance. But he also has the responsibility of caring for the planet’s natural resources to cooperate with the creation of God and his fellow men.
- 4) *The two stages of man’s creation:* Gen. 1: 26-27; Gen. 2: 7: “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth’. So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them...then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.” Through these verses we can see that God first created the spiritual portion of man (*‘in our image, according to our likeness’*); then his earthly part, as He had created the other creatures. He created man (*adhām = humanity*); the next word is *bārā* = man, compound form, that is, *man and woman*. Thus, our earthly portion is enlivened by the breath of life from God (His Spirit) as it is written in Gen. 2: 7: “... and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (referring to the Holy Spirit); and the man became a living being.”
- 5) *The woman was created to be man’s helper and walk on equal terms with him:* In Gen. 2: 18 it is written: “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.’” Then He caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, He took a rib from him (*Hebrew: ‘part of the man’s side’*) and transformed it into a woman. The fact that God has taken a man’s rib to form the woman means that He planned *interdependence*, that is, as the first woman depended on the man to exist, the man depends on the woman to be born on earth. The Greek word for woman is *gyne* or *gynai* and in Hebrew, *‘ishstā* = *woman*, for out of man (*‘ish*) she was taken. God took a rib (*Hebrew: çelā, or ‘tsêlā, which in Sumerian means ‘life’*) and made it (*bānā = to build*) into a woman (*l’ishshā*). The word *‘tsêlā*, in Hebrew, means *‘face, side or wall of the tabernacle’* (used in the same sense that has the expression *‘Tsela Hamishcan’, ‘one of the faces’, ‘one of the “walls”; the tabernacle = Hammishkân*). Thus, one side of the first human being became the masculine part and the other, the feminine part. According to this Hebrew concept, the woman has a greater discernment, since she was created with a

spiritual compartment more than man. In other words, she is turned to the things of God (*"Tabernacle"*) more than man. Explaining differently, one side of Adam was the masculine side, made by the hands of God on clay, symbolizing the matter, the flesh. The side where the rib was removed to make the woman was the feminine side, emotional or spiritual, by the Hebrew meaning of rib (*'one face', 'one side or wall of the tabernacle'*, the tent in the desert where God spoke to Moses). So, the woman would be an emotional and spiritual complement to the man and he would be the material for her. For having originated from the spiritual side of man, from what was 'turned to the things of the tabernacle', the woman would have this side more expanded, the double than that the man would have. *Chavá* (another way to write the name *Eve*, *Hawwá*) means *'to express an opinion'* (*Lachavot dáat*). Eve talked to Adam (dialogue), which allowed the flow of life in common. Thus, the initial plan of God for the woman was *equality with the man*. With the passage of centuries it went growing the trend in rabbinic teaching of making man more prominent than the woman, slowly eliminating the idea taught by Gen. 2: 20 (*"a helper as his partner", "someone who helps him and corresponds to him"* [NIV], that is, *a helper comparable to him*). Over the years, this trend took from the woman even her right to learn to read. When we talk about the fall of man, we'll be back to the subject and how God tried to rescue what He planned through the covenants with men, especially through Moses and Jesus. Concerning to the Hebrew concept mentioned previously about having the woman a spiritual capacity more developed than man, the proof is that only to man was given the right to study the *Torah* (*the book of the Law*), for in truth he needed to study and learn what to the woman is practically intuitive.

- 6) *The function of man and woman*: As we read again the passage on the creation of man and woman we'll draw important conclusions about the role of each one from the point of view of God. We can see that before creating Eve, God gave man work and responsibilities. So, it's *function of man*: the foundation of family and society, to be responsible for teaching the woman, to work for the family sustenance, to guard and protect the woman, to sow. The *function of woman* is to be helper, she needs to be taught, therefore, she requires communication; to fit the man (rib), to be a multiplier (she receives, multiplies and returns) and to be an 'incubator' (to take care and give birth). She needs to be supplied so then to multiply the supply.
- 7) *Obedience (the two trees)*: In Gen. 2: 9; 15-17 it is written: "Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'" Thus, the blessed life of man depended on his obedience to God and His commands. While they were in obedience they would have life and could touch the tree of life and participate in God's life. So, when we obey the Lord and stand at the center of His will and desire, we can experience His life in us and participate in the communion with Him and receive His blessings.

The fall of man – 2nd lesson



Reference text: Gen. 3; complement with Gen. 4; 5; 6: 1-7.

Summary:

God had created man in His image and likeness, blessing him in everything and giving him the right to talk to Him and know His secrets and His character. The condition was obedience. But under the seductive influence of the serpent, the woman was deceived and led the man to sin as well, both eating from the tree forbidden by God. God's blessing became a curse. The earth became cursed and the work of Adam came to be with effort. The land that once produced good and pleasant fruit started to produce thorns and thistles (Gen. 3: 18), that is, weeds. The woman, who had a position of honor and equality with the man, came to be dominated by him, i.e., before the fall she was taught by him in love and complemented him. From sin onward, enmity entered their relationship and she began to be controlled by him, for she was not worthy of his trust. The seed of mistrust generated slavery. Howsoever, sin came by both and affected the lives of both and the rest of humanity. For the woman, to whom the activity of raising children would be blessed before the fall, the fact of raising offspring in a fallen world became a hard work (in pain). God knew that from then on He would have to put into practice His plan of salvation by sending His Son, who would be born on earth from the womb of a woman, but that would be the only one capable of reversing the whole process of destruction, putting an end to the works of the serpent. God drove them out of Eden and placed cherubim to guard the east of the garden. The *east*, in the bible, means: *the spiritual*; it means that God made a spiritual separation between Him and man, for he had been defiled by sin and could no longer enjoy spiritually the intimate relationship with Him as he had before. Adam gave his wife the name Eve (*hawwâ*), which means *life* (Hebrew, 'chay' or 'hay'), *root of life, the mother of mankind, the mother of all living beings* (*nephesh hayyâ = living creatures*).

Adam and Eve begot two sons: Cain and Abel. The first killed his brother and this sin of murder was generated as a result of Adam's sin. Death entered the world and human nature. Man not only came to experience spiritual death that came from Adam (1st death), but also physical death. The 2nd death described in the bible, in Revelation (Rev. 21: 14) refers to the *lake of fire*. And Adam knew his wife and she bore a son and named him *Seth* to take the place of Abel who had been killed. *Seth* means '*appointed*'. *Seth* begot *Enosh* (= *mortal, man*). Since then, mankind began to invoke [NIV, proclaim] the name of the Lord.

Comments about the fall of man:

The fall of man involves his disobedience to the word of God and the failure of the purpose for which he was created. The result of the disobedience is that his life became characterized by slavery (Heb. 2: 14-15: “Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death”), by the conflict with evil powers (Eph. 6: 12: “For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places”), by frailty and frustration (Isa. 40: 6: “A voice says, ‘Cry out!’ And I said, ‘What shall I cry?’ All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field”; Job 14: 1-2: “A mortal, born of woman, few of days and full of trouble, comes up like a flower and withers, flees like a shadow and does not last”), by the perversion of mind and heart (Gen. 8: 21: “And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done’”; Job 14: 4: “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one can”; Ps. 51: 5: “Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me”; Matt. 15: 19-20: “For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile”; Matt. 12: 39: “But he answered them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah’”) that turns the truth of God into a lie (Rom. 1: 25: “because they exchanged the truth about God [NIV: ‘the truth of God’] for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen!”).

The self that was created by God is our rationality, a sense of moral obligation, sexuality, family life, gifts of aesthetic appreciation and artistic creativity, stewardship of the fruit of the earth, our hunger for love and community experience, our consciousness of divine transcendental majesty, our innate impulse to bow down and worship God. This nature was tainted and distorted by sin. Christ came to redeem it, not to destroy it.

The self that came with the fall was the irrationality, moral perversity, blurring of sexual distinctions and lack of mastery in this area, selfishness that distorts family life, fascination by the ugly, refusal to develop the gifts of God, pollution, environmental damage, antisocial tendencies that inhibit true community, proud autonomy, idolatrous refusing on *worship the living and true God*. Christ came to destroy it (1 Jn. 3: 8).

It is our initial ego, our primordial self, that needs to be rescued. Thus, there is no longer an “existential crisis” in the human being, since he will know how God made him and for what, therefore, he will start to cooperate with the Holy Spirit for the healing of his soul and its restoration, reducing, so to speak, the conflict between flesh and spirit. Man comes to understand that surrendering to Jesus as his Lord is not a loss, nor the loss of his identity nor the loss of his dreams and material possessions, but a means of returning to the beginning, when he was created in the image and likeness of God. He will begin to pray to Him in the right way, no longer focusing his existence on 'having' and 'doing', but on 'being'. In other words, he stops identifying his true self with a profession or with what he materially has, and begins to identify with the gifts, qualities and potentials that the Lord has placed within him. Instead of saying: I am a

doctor, lawyer, etc.; I am rich, I do this or that, the man begins to say: “I am a child of God, called by Him to show His image on earth and behave like Him, in such and such a way; I am here to show His character and be helpful to my fellow man in the way that the Lord wants me to be”. The values of the kingdom of God (which are seen through the spirit) take priority over the values of the world, over carnal things, which are only seen with distorted human eyes.

Lessons learned:

1) *What was blessing became a curse for disobedience:* as we have seen, God created the world under blessing, but man chose the curse. God respected the free will that He had placed in the man; his life on earth became more difficult.

2) *Man, based on his own wisdom, moves away from the wisdom of God,* therefore, departs from the truth. What God desires is that we abandon our own wisdom to turn to His and thus get back the authority and power that man enjoyed in Eden.

3) *Idolatry* inside the man, whatever it is, puts him in a position of slavery, confront with spiritual forces of darkness and perversions because the devil’s lie causes blindness and prevents the man from seeing the actual project of God for his life.

4) The more carnal we are the more we will be vulnerable, frustrated and powerless, *for the Spirit (who gives life and power of God) does not find room to act.*

5) The secret of returning to the initial integrity created by God is to *submit to the Lordship of Jesus.*

6) *The man began to experience spiritual and physical death.*

Noah – 3rd lesson



Reference texts: Gen. 6–10

Summary:

Humankind had become corrupted and God decided to destroy the creation He had done. But He found Noah, a just man and God-fearing, with whom He decided to make a covenant (Gen. 6: 18) and, thereafter, restart the story of mankind. In Gen. 5: 32a the bible says that Noah had three sons and at five hundred years old he was called by God to build an ark to protect him, as well as his family and the animals of the earth from the Flood that was coming. God told him to build an ark of cypress wood caulked with pitch of about 300 x 50 x 30 cubits (1 cubit = 0.18 inches); therefore, 443 feet long, 74 feet wide and 44 feet high. The Lord instructed him to separate seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of unclean animals and put them in the ark (Gen. 6: 19; Gen. 7: 2). The Hebrew word for *ark* (*têbhath*) means: 'safe (*coffer*), ark, box.' The ark took one hundred years to be built (Gen. 5: 32; Gen. 7: 6). In the six hundredth year of Noah's life the Flood came, on the 17th day of the second month (Gen. 7: 11) and lasted forty days and forty nights (Gen. 7: 17). The bible also says that the level of the waters covered the mountains for twenty-three feet. When the waters drained the ark rested on the Mountains of Ararat, but Noah remained there for many months until the waters dry up completely. On the twenty-seventh day of the second month of the following year the earth was dry (Gen. 8: 14) and then Noah and his family left the ark. Noah built an altar to the Lord as a burnt offering, and God blessed them (Gen. 9: 1) as He had done with Adam and Eve, giving them prosperity and fertility. In Gen. 9: 6, so that there was respect for life and so that each man saw in others the image of God, the Lord said that if there was death, this death would be avenged by blood as well (death penalty). The covenant with Noah was that God would never destroy again His creation with another Flood. The sign of this covenant would be the presence of a rainbow in the sky. Through Ham, Shem and Japheth, the sons of Noah, the Lord populated the earth again. *Ham* generated the people of Egypt, Ethiopia, North Africa and Canaan. From *Shem* the Semitic peoples were born (Gen. 10: 24-29; 1 Chr. 1: 1-27, the descendants of Eber: the Israelites and non-Israelite peoples such as the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Arabs, the Akkadians and the Aramaeans, namely, the Syrians and Assyrians who occupied great part of Mesopotamia), and from *Japheth*, the Indo-Europeans peoples. Noah was a farmer and planted a vineyard. While drinking wine he got drunk and stood naked in his tent. Ham, seeing the nakedness of his father, spoke to the brothers that, walking backwards, covered him with a cloak not to see anything. When he was sober again, Noah cursed Ham so that he was a servant of his brothers. Thus, made the covenant with man, God scattered the people over the earth.

Important lessons from Noah:

- 1) *Inside the ark there is God's plan:* Noah means '*the Lord's work, rest, comfort, God has brought relief*'. God worked with Noah to fulfill His purpose for men. Today, we're an ark, a vessel in the hands of the Lord where He keeps His eternal purpose, and through us, He wants to change the course of humanity by reminding people of His covenant.
- 2) *Integrity, righteousness and loyalty to God:* (Gen. 6: 9: "These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God"). Noah was different from all the people of that time. In the midst of a fallen environment and a depraved society and without commitment to God, he maintained his integrity and did not deny his relationship with the Maker. He didn't worry with the external, but what his interior advised him. He remained faithful to the Lord; hence, he could hear His voice and obey His call. When we do not care about the influences around us, but we keep in our hearts the commitment to be faithful to God we can clearly hear His call, and thus be preserved from the destruction that the disobedient experience. *Integrity means to be authentic, coherent, that is, to walk according to what we preach, our exterior reflecting exactly our interior.*
- 3) *Obedience and faith:* "Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him" (Gen. 6: 22). Although Noah has not been recognized as *the father of faith* like Abraham, he exercised his faith in God, obeying Him without questioning, when all around seemed unlikely and contrary. To human eyes what he did seemed crazy, but he didn't care about the opinions of others; on the contrary, he remained in the divine vision.
- 4) *He took advantage of the situation to exercise his prophetic ministry:* His attitude of obedience, externalized through a practical action (to build the ark) was a way to preach the coming judgment of God on those who did not repent. He gave people the chance to know his God and experience His deliverance, but they didn't hear, as happened with other prophets who came after him. The people made an option by sin, by self-indulgence and lack of commitment to the Most High.
- 5) *Perseverance and determination:* "After Noah was five hundred years old, Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth... Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came on the earth" (Gen. 5: 32; Gen. 7: 6). Noah took one hundred years to accomplish God's plan, because most likely he had not help from others; at most, of his own family. It took one hundred years for the Lord to fulfill what He had promised. Noah had to stand firm on the word given to him, using his strength to go forward and not give up, trusting in Him who had made the promise.
- 6) *Worship and gratitude:* "Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (Gen. 8: 20). Like other men in the bible who experienced the power of God in their lives, Noah built an altar to Him in worship and thanksgiving for the deliverance and the fulfillment of the promise. After 'the flood' takes away dead things and the iniquities of our lives, we can and must build an altar to the Lord, declaring Him the only one in our hearts. He now comes to occupy the center of our will and giving us a new story.
- 7) *He used the authority of leader and prophet that God had given him:* "When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, 'Cursed be Canaan; lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers'. He also said, 'Blessed by the Lord my God be Shem; and let Canaan be his slave. May God make

space for Japheth, and let him live in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his slave” (Gen. 9: 24-27). Noah acted as a prophet, as God’s instrument for doing justice, releasing the blessing on Shem and Japheth and the curse on Ham, putting the divine will and justice above the carnal links. He didn’t let anything brought him back to the past and no longer competed with the lordship of the Lord in his life. He saw, perhaps, moral depravity in Ham and cursed sin in God’s name. He didn’t allow that was repeated the past story of sin in his own home and in the new earth that He had given him. Thus, when we win the blessing, we must no longer live on the past mistakes, but on the novelties of God, and take care for what He has entrusted to us.

- 8) *Noah could experience God’s protection for his fidelity even in the tribulation period:* “The flood continued forty days on the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth” (Gen. 7: 17). The number forty in the bible refers to a generation or a period of learning. Noah, like all our brothers of the past, was tested and overcame the test; he survived the Flood. Even with the destructive waters around him, he was protected by God and overcame the difficulties, as a reward for his integrity and faithfulness. During this period that he was inside the ark, he surely had time to meditate and hear His voice; he had time to be prepared for a new way of life; had time even to learn more about his family and instruct them in the ways of the Lord; he had time to learn. Likewise it is with us: we are protected when we are faithful to God and we have time to learn from Him, even during the periods of tribulation in our life, always reminding that He is in charge of ‘our boat.’
- 9) *God answers our prayers and our praise (burnt offerings) when we put Him first in our lives:* “Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease” (Gen. 8: 20-22). In Gen. 9: 1 it is written: “God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.”’ The same blessing that was given to Adam before sin was being reaffirmed over humanity, now in the person of Noah. When the Lord truly becomes our center we experience His reward and His blessing.

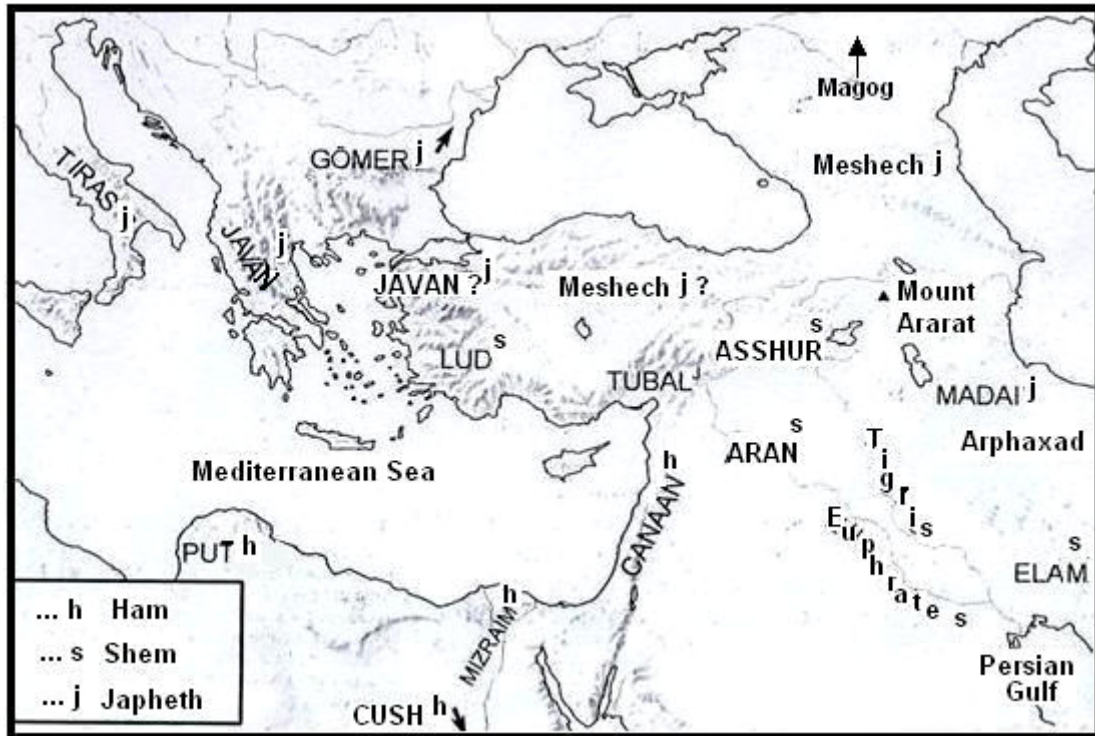
Nations descendants of Noah’s sons (Gen.10: 1-32) – seventy

Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, Aram, Uz, Hul, Gether, Meshech, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Joktan, Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, Jobab.

Ham: Cush, Mizraim (Egypt), Put, Canaan, Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, Sabteca, Sheba, Dedan, Nimrod, Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, Pathrusim, Casluhim and Caphtorim (their descendants were the Philistines), Sidon, Heth, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites, Hamathites.

Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, Tiras, Ashkenaz, Riphath, Togarmah, Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, Rodanim.

The number 70 corresponds to the number of nations (peoples) that repopulated the land after the Flood (Gen. 10: 1-32; 1 Chr 1: 5-23). Thus, Jacob's descendants were a way of repopulating Egypt; a great moment for humanity, fulfilling part of the promise to make Abraham a great nation. Therefore, the number seventy can symbolize a time of reconstruction, of refilling our land that was devastated.



Abraham – 4th lesson



Reference texts: Gen. 11: 10-32–Gen. 23

Summary:

Shem, son of Noah, begot descendants; among them was Nahor (the grandfather of Abram), which begot Terah. This one had three sons: Abram, Nahor and Haran. Haran begot Lot and died in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. Abram married Sarai, his half-sister by his father (Gen. 20: 12), and Naor married Milca, who was the daughter of Haran. Sarai was sterile. Ur was a pagan land, as were the ancestors of Abram who lived there. Terah got out of Ur of the Chaldeans carrying Abram, Sarai and Lot with him to the land of Canaan. They stopped in Haran where they stayed until the death of Terah at the age of 205 (Gen. 11: 31-32). Although the bible speaks in Gen. 11: 31-32 that Terah, the father of Abram left Ur of the Chaldeans only with Abram, Sarai and Lot, in Gen. 22: 20-23; Gen. 24: 10; Gen. 25: 20, it also says that Naor sent from Paddan Aram, in Mesopotamia, the news of his seed to Abraham and was there that this one sent his servant to bring a wife for his son Isaac, in the city of Nahor, in Mesopotamia – see map at the end of this chapter. This makes us think that not only Abram came with Terah from Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran, but the whole family; only he, Abram, some time after this, went to Canaan with Sarai and Lot after the Lord's call.

In Gen. 12: 1-4 it is written: “Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed’. So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.”

When God asked Abram to leave his country (land), He wanted to say to let the family roots, to feed on Him, to have the lineage linked to the nature of God, not men's. When He told him to leave his kindred, He was referring in fact to the family, that is, to leave their problems to God to solve. “Your father's house” means to leave the family thoughts and be equal to God, to be like Him. Only by this we can imagine the challenge that the Lord was proposing to Abram. At that time, living in family was to maintain strong ties of dependence and commitment, holding each other to all kinds of heritage and customs. The family of Abram was idolatrous, what makes us think that beyond the sick emotional bonds, there was the action of other gods feeding that sinful union. The bible does not say how Abram began to be aware of the true God or how he began to hear His voice. We can imagine that was by the action of God Himself who, knowing his sincere heart, was pleased with him, wanting to make a covenant with His son.

In Haran, Abram heard God's voice telling him to leave his land, his kindred and his father's house to go to a land He would show him. God's goal was to make Abram a great nation and through him to bless all families of the earth. So, he left Haran at the age of seventy-five and went to Canaan, taking Sarai and Lot and those who were with him (Gen. 12: 1-4). When he arrived to Shechem, to the oak of Moreh, he built an altar to the Lord, where the Canaanites lived and He confirmed His promise to give him that land. Thence, Abram went south to Bethel (there, he also built an altar to the Lord, Gen. 12: 8) and to the Negev. Because there was famine in the land he went to Egypt, but afraid to be killed by the Egyptians he commanded Sarai to tell them that she was his sister, not his wife. She was taken to Pharaoh's house. Abram thrived there, increasing the number of people and livestock that were with him. But because of Sarai, God smote Pharaoh with plagues and he drove them out of Egypt. Abram went up again to the Negev coming to Bethel. He and Lot were very wealthy and to avoid disputes between them because of pasture, they separated. Lot chose the plain of the Jordan to the east, for it was favorable for livestock, and dwelt near Sodom. Abram stayed at west, in the land of Canaan and there, God confirmed by the second time His promise to give him that land, as well as to his offspring. What Abram could travel, the Lord would give him (Gen. 13: 14-18). Abram came out and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, to the south, near Hebron.

At that time, four kings of the region were at war against five. The valley where they stood had bitumen pits. Some soldiers fled and some fell into them. Those who came to Sodom and Gomorrah took all the goods, including Lot. Abram went with his men and defeated them, bringing Lot back, with all his goods, his people and his women. When he returned victorious, the king of Sodom came to pay him tribute for the victory over their common enemies. Melchizedek (Canaanite king and priest of Salem) also met with him and blessed him. Abram, in gratitude to God, gave Melchizedek the tithe of everything. After all this, God spoke again to His anointed, strengthening his faith in Him that he would have a child. God led Abram out of the tent and made him look to the sky. Just as the stars, would be the number of his descendants. He believed in the Lord and it was reckoned [NIV, credited] as righteousness, says the bible (Gen. 15: 5-6). He risked his life, his security, his reputation, the future and even the child based on the word of someone he could not see, but he believed.

Abram (Gen. 15: 8) was asking the Lord for a sign of His promise that he would own that land (cf. Gen. 13: 14-15), for the strengthening of his faith (Gen. 15: 6) and the faith of his posterity. The text (Gen. 15: 8-21) describes the ancient way of sealing the covenants. The animal was cut in half and passed between the two parts to say that the pact was made; in other words, men declared their solemn purpose of keeping the agreement (cf. Jer. 34: 18). In this case, we can see in v. 17, that only a flaming torch, symbol of the glory of God, a single representative of the agreement, passed between the pieces of the animals and, in this case, it symbolized that the covenant would only be kept by God, because only He could fulfill the promise he had given Abram: "On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates'" (Gen. 15: 18). Still in v. 17, 'a smoking fire pot' may have been a prophetic vision given to Abram regarding his descendants in Egypt, as slaves of Pharaoh, burning the bricks in the furnaces (Ex. 9: 8), with his eyes dimmed by smoke, and experiencing great difficulties and afflictions, for Egypt was called in the bible an 'iron-smelting furnace' (Deut 4: 20). Perhaps, the flaming torch that passed between the parties prefigured the pillar of cloud and fire that took them out of Egypt.

As Sarai was barren, she offered her maidservant Hagar to Abram so that they could have a child. Abram was already eighty-five years old. Ten years had passed since God had spoken to him for the first time about his offspring. Hagar got pregnant and Sarai expelled her servant for having humiliated her because she was barren. When she was in the wilderness, the Angel of the Lord appeared to her and blessed the child that was in her womb, giving him the name of *Ishmael*, meaning *God hears, God helps*, because God heard her in her distress. God also blessed the descendants of Ishmael as He had promised to Abram. Ishmael was born when Abram was eighty-six years old. He was the father of the Arab nation. Thirteen years later, at ninety-nine years old, Abram heard again the voice of God (Gen. 17: 1-8). He changed his name from *Abram* (*'abhrām, exalted father*) to *Abraham* (*'abhrāhām, father of multitudes, father of many*) and confirmed His covenant with him and his descendants. The Lord also instituted circumcision as a sign of this covenant (the 2nd made with mankind) between Abraham and his descendants and God. He changed the name of *Sarai* (*quarrelsome, my princess*) to *Sarah* (*princess*) and promised Abraham a son who would be called *Isaac* (*yīḥāq, laughter*), because Abraham laughed at the fact of having children at one hundred years old. Abraham, at the age of ninety-nine, and Ishmael at thirteen, and all slave men of his house were circumcised that day.

The promise made to Abraham (Abraham's blessing) is composed of three main elements: offspring (in him, all families of the earth should be blessed, including the Gentiles), land (prosperity, the possession of the land of Canaan) and relationship with God (intimacy and friendship with God, for the Lord called him 'my friend' – Jam. 2: 23; Isa. 41: 8; 2 Chr. 20: 7).

To confirm his promise once again, God ("*The Angel of the Lord*") appeared to Abraham near the great oaks of Mamre in human form, along with two angels, saying that within one year Sarah would give birth to a son (Genesis 18: 1-33, where '*LORD*' – Gen. 18: 1; 13 – appears written in capital letter – NIV). Sarah laughed too when she heard the news.

Abraham accompanied them to the road to Sodom. The Angel of the Lord told him that Sodom and Gomorrah would be destroyed for their sin. Abraham then interceded for Lot and his family who lived there. The two angels visited Lot in the evening and warned him of the destruction to come, guiding him to leave the town with his family. Lot went out with his wife and two daughters, being warned not to look back. But Lot's wife disobeyed and was turned into a pillar of salt. The two cities were completely destroyed. The two daughters of Lot, in order to generate progeny, committed incest with their father that was old and generated two sons, Moab (father of the Moabites), son of the firstborn daughter, and Ben-Ami, of the younger daughter, the father of the Ammonites.

Abraham departed thence back to the Negev, to Gerar, and lied to the king of the region, Abimelech, that Sarah was his sister. At night, God warned the king in a dream that she was Abraham's wife. The king drove them out of his sight, but gave them the right to choose any place of his land to live. Abraham prayed for Abimelech and God healed him and his wives so that they could have children, for He had made them sterile because of Sarah.

Isaac was born. On the day he was weaned, Sarah noticed that Ishmael mocked the boy and asked Abraham to dismiss Hagar and her son and reject them. They went through the desert and almost fainted from thirst till God made them see a well. They quenched their thirst and the boy lived in the wilderness, became an archer and married an Egyptian girl. And God blessed him as He had promised, giving him twelve sons who became rulers of Arab nations.

Sometime later, God put Abraham to the test asking him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering to Him on *Mount Moriah* (= *seen by God or chosen by God*). Abraham took Isaac to the place of sacrifice and, when he was going to kill his son, God called him and prevented him, for He saw that Abraham's faith in Him was genuine and firm. He saw a ram behind the bushes and sacrificed it to the Lord. Abraham gave Mount Moriah the name "*The Lord Will Provide*" (Gen. 22: 14). Seeing the action of Abraham, God blessed him and all his seed forever, confirming His faithfulness.

Sarah died at hundred and twenty-seven years old and was buried in the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron in the land of Canaan. Abraham married Keturah, who bore him six children (Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah – 1 Chr. 1: 32-34). Abraham died at the age of one hundred and seventy-five, being buried in the same cave where Sara was.

Important lessons from Abraham:

- 1) *Faith*: Abraham became known as *the father of faith*, for all the tests by which the Lord made him pass were to prove his faith in Him and in the impossible of God. Abraham believed against the evidence, believed in what was impossible for man; from insecurity he attained full trust in God. We can see that at all times his faith was active: he left his home and went to the land which the Lord showed him, believed in the promise of offspring, and for twenty-five years he was prepared by Him to receive the blessing, even trying to rush His work, begetting Ishmael. He wandered for all that land as the Lord commanded him, in the hope that it would really be his and his offspring's. He almost reached to the point of sacrificing his son because he believed that God was able to resurrect him if He wished. The fact of having left the tent and looked to the sky, believing the promise that the Lord gave him, was a symbolic act of getting out of himself and of his life and his human small vision to believe in a large project of God to him. He got out of the tent of insecurity, of human vision, to have the divine vision. So, his example of faith stands as a heritage for us today so that we can believe in the promises of God to us, however much impossible they may seem, and it makes us act according to what He puts in our heart, understanding that throughout the process, we are being prepared to receive His blessing.
- 2) *Fidelity and gratitude to God*: Abraham gave the tithe to God when He gave him the victory over the enemy kings. He gave it in the hands of the priest Melchizedek, and the bible says that this act was spontaneous on the part of Abraham. This act and many others of faith and gratitude, erecting altars to the Lord when he won a victory, drew him more and more to the Most High, so he became prosperous, for he discovered the secret of prosperity talking to Him. For us, this means that when we are faithful to the Lord and thankful to Him for what He gives us, we improve our relationship with Him and we come to know His heart more deeply. Knowing His heart and thoughts, we can prophesy the blessings in our lives creating prosperity in all areas. Melchizedek is the figure of Jesus and not just our money (tithe) but our grateful and reverent heart before Him brings the desired blessings for us, besides His protection over what is ours, because He takes on the responsibility for His children.
- 3) *Selflessness, surrender and submission, logically linked to the faith*: Abraham relinquished his flesh to live in the spirit, that is, he let God's will prevail over his. He discovered that nothing could take His place in his heart. Therefore, he

dismissed Hagar and Ishmael into the desert [he dismissed his dream (Ishmael) so that God's took place: Isaac] and handed over the one that was born of his own flesh (Isaac) so that many could be blessed with this act, for his attitude led later to the surrender of the Son of God to all mankind. Almost of us, if not all have been through this before. We give our lives to Jesus, and suddenly, we lose something that meant security for us. We need not despair; it is a treatment of God to teach us that we will not manage to maintain certain positions or possessions if we continue in the flesh or if they are our gods. We will only have them back, when we understand that Jesus is the center and everything is under the dominion of His Spirit. It is not punishment of the Lord; it is care and protection of a loving Father who wants to give us something solid, that we will not lose anymore. It is a present from a God who wants to teach us to reign on earth so that we can reign in heaven. When we are grounded in Jesus, the superficial can get out of our lives, but the essence of His Spirit abides in us.

- 4) *God is a God of covenants*: in each test that was won, it was reaffirmed His covenant in Abraham's life. Abraham has not done anything to deserve the blessings, for God's love is unconditional, but his positive response to His challenges turned him His close friend and more conscious of the divine character. The Lord renewed the covenants with Abraham after each victory over the circumstances and over his own flesh. God periodically renews our hope, our faith and our trust in Him and His promise to us.
- 5) *Abraham was an intercessor*: first, for the life of Lot and the righteous inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah; then for his enemy, Abimelech, who had his home punished by God because of Sarah. Thus, Jesus teaches us to intercede and pray for our friends and even our enemies.
- 6) *There is no age to be happy*: it's always time to receive the blessing of God. Abraham was hundred years old when he received the blessing of being a father. However much our blessings seem to delay, it's always time to enjoy them. It is not our chronological age that counts, but our inner preparation for not losing them anymore.
- 7) *Not to want to hasten God's time, creating blessings on our own*: God does not make a covenant with our projects, but with His for us. His blessing is full and complete. The blessing of God in Abraham's life was on Isaac, not on Ishmael. Therefore, the Lord only approved it, truly, when Isaac was born.
- 8) *The rejected by men are protected and cared for God*: it was the case of Hagar and Ishmael who, despite having been expelled from the camp, were not forsaken by God but cared and protected, also with the right to a blessing to them and their offspring. However much we are rejected by men, we are loved, supported and protected by God, who sends us His help in due time and assures us the blessing and the sustenance.
- 9) *The provision and deliverance of God are always present when we are at the center of His will*: on Mount Moriah God provided the lamb for the sacrifice and the deliverance to Isaac, because he and Abraham were at the center of His will. They had obeyed the orders of the Lord, so He was faithful and fulfilled His part on the agreement. If Abraham had disobeyed or if he had not gone there with true faith in his heart, it could have happened otherwise. When we are in obedience to the Lord and in the center of His will, even if for men it seems absurd, He fulfills His promise, He provides us and delivers us from evil.
- 10) *To be available in the hands of God*: Abraham did not settle in any particular place, but went where God led him to have learning and growth; he did not stop, he did not

stagnate. This means not to have attachments or false security, but to flow in the Spirit, knowing our promised land and taking possession of it.



ABRAHAM' S JOURNEYS

- 1 – From Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran (Gen. 11: 31)
- 2 – From Haran to the land of Canaan at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh (Gen. 12: 4-6); then he went to Bethel
- 3 – From Bethel he went south, going always to the Negev (Gen. 12: 9)
- 4 – Because there was famine in that land he went down to Egypt (Gen. 12: 10-20)
- 5 – From Egypt he came back to the Negev and Bethel (Gen. 13: 3), then moved his tents and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron (Gen. 13: 18)

Isaac – 5th lesson



Reference texts: Gen. 17: 19; Gen. 21: 1-7; Gen. 22: 1-19; Gen. 24-27

Summary:

In Gen. 17: 19 God tells Abraham that Sarah will give birth to a son and shall name him Isaac (Hebrew *Yiḥāq*, *laughter*). We can see here that it was *God who had given him a name*: “God said, ‘No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.’” Isaac was born and circumcised on the eighth day as a sign of the covenant with the Lord (Gen. 21: 1-7).

Isaac was also put to the test when God told Abraham to offer Him his only son as a burnt offering. In Gen. 22: 12 the Word says: “He [*God*] said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the *boy* or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.’” In ARA, the word ‘boy’ is translated as ‘the young man.’ So, we can imagine that Isaac was no more a helpless child; he could defend himself if he wanted, but the bible did not say he reacted. According to Jewish tradition, Isaac was about thirty-seven years old when Abraham took him to Moriah and was a voluntary sacrifice that was put on the altar. But because of this act, God could later give Jesus to die for mankind. In Gen. 22: 19 is written: “So Abraham returned to his *young men* [*plural, meaning his servants*], and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.”

When Abraham was very old he sent Eliezer, his servant, to his relatives in Paddan Aram (Gen. 24: 1-4; Gen. 25: 20) to take a wife for his son Isaac. The servant arrived there and met Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, son of Milcah and Nahor, brother of Abraham. She took him to his home and presented the servant to his family. Rebekah had a brother named Laban, who felt interested in the story of Eliezer, for he saw the jewels that he had given her. They spent the night there, he and all his servants, and decided to go away in the morning. Rebekah wanted to go with him and was blessed by the family with the blessing similar to that God gave to Abraham: “And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, ‘May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes’” [NIV, enemies – Gen. 24: 60]. Rebekah departed with her maids and her nurse for the Negev to meet Isaac. He took her as wife. Isaac was, according to the bible, forty years old (Gen. 25: 20) when he married Rebekah. Abraham died at one hundred and seventy-five years and was buried by Isaac and Ishmael along with Sarah (Gen. 25: 7-10).

Rebekah also was barren (Gen. 25: 21) and Isaac interceded for her unto the Lord. God heard his prayer and Rebekah got pregnant. Twins were generated in her womb. The two fought and at that time God already told her that the older one should serve the younger brother, contrary to what should be expected. The firstborn was red and

covered with hair, so they called him *Esau*, which means *hairy*. After, his brother was born, with his hand holding the heel of Esau; so, they called him *Jacob (who supplants, the deceiver, who holds by the heel)*. Isaac was sixty years old when their children were born (Gen. 25: 26). The boys grew up. Isaac loved Esau, and Rebekah, Jacob.

As famine came to earth, Isaac went to Gerar to speak with Abimelech, the Philistine. The Lord told him to stay there and not to go down to Egypt, and confirmed to Isaac the same blessing of the offspring given to Abraham (Gen. 26: 2-6). So Isaac stayed in Gerar. There, a similar case happened with Isaac as had happened to Abraham and Sarah. Isaac told the men of the land that Rebekah was his sister, afraid of being killed by the Philistines, but Abimelech discovered the lie and, with fear of God's judgment, he forbade anyone to touch Rebekah.

Isaac stayed there, planted and thrived because the Lord helped him. He became very rich. The Philistines envied him and filled all the wells which Abraham's servants had dug in the region; they filled them with earth. Isaac went out and camped in the valley, reopening the wells which were dug in the days of his father and that the Philistines had stopped. He gave them the same names. His servants found a well of spring water and the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with them because of the well of *Esek (= oppression, strife)*. Isaac's servants dug another well and there was also controversy because of it (*well of Sitnah = fight, tiredness, enmity*). They dug a third well and there was no contention, so they called it *Rehoboth (= space, extensive place)*. The Lord prospered him in the land.

Thence he went to Beersheba and on the same night the Lord appeared to him, confirming once again His blessing upon his life (Gen. 26: 24). He raised an altar to Him and his servants opened a well. There, he pitched his tent. He also made a covenant with Abimelech and the name of the well, the same who had been covenant between Abraham and Abimelech, was *Beersheba (well of seven or well of the oath)*. Isaac was following the same steps of Abraham, learning to trust God through the trials of life.

Esau, at forty years old, took two Hittite wives (Judith and Besamath), who were grief of spirit to Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 26: 34-35). Later he took another wife, Mahalath (Ishmael's daughter and granddaughter of Abraham – Gen. 28: 8-9). He also took women among the daughters of Canaan (Adah – Hittite and Oholibamah – Hivite). In the region of Edom, to the southeast of the Dead Sea, in Seir (hilly land in the region of Edom), Esau dwelt and established offspring. As he had given up his birthright to Jacob for a stew of lentils (Gen. 25: 27-34), he acted as a wicked, giving no value to God's promise given to Abraham.

Isaac was old and weakened and he wanted to bless the children. His eyes could no longer see clearly. He asked Esau to make him a tasty food of hunting. But to fulfill the prophetic word that God had given to Rebekah, when the children were still in her womb, that was the younger who would inherit the blessing given to Abraham, Jacob, using of fraud (we will talk on this later when we study about him) came first and Isaac blessed him as the firstborn. Isaac died at one hundred and eighty years (Gen. 35: 28) in Hebron, where his father wandered.

Important lessons from Isaac:

- 1) *He was the son of the promise*, of the miracle of God, so his name was given by God Himself and was not changed as that of Abraham and Jacob. His name means *laughter*, and he saw the Lord's hand in blessing and protection on his life, sparing him from the sacrifice and accomplishing in him the promise given to his offspring. The same way he had been a reason of laughter in the life of Abraham and Sarah, God's action in his life was also to him a reason of laughter, despite the trials he went through. So is with us: we can show the true and sincere laughter of who believes in God's word, even though we don't see the promise fulfilled yet. Staying in the presence of the Lord as Isaac was assures us deliverance.
- 2) *He stayed in God's presence despite difficult times, and he trusted*, that is, he stayed in complete and total dependence on God. We can see this when he was in Moriah, when he depended on the Lord to choose his wife and when he walked the land of the Philistines (Gen. 26: 2-6) and in the case of wells disputed with Abimelech.
- 3) *What God gives us we lose no more*: Isaac reopened the wells dug by his father and filled by the enemy, but lest there was greater strife and even death, he opened another, when the Lord gave him, and did not lose it anymore (*Rehoboth* = *space, extensive place*). Here we have two interesting lessons about the wells. A positive lesson is that he followed the steps of his father as a way of reaffirming his faith as a descendant of the promise, and tried to reopen the wells that Abraham had opened but the enemies filled, so he could put again the family name in that land. However, God did not allow the wells were recovered by Isaac; on the contrary, He let the contentions move him away from them until he found out another important lesson: old resources do not quench the thirst, but the new given by the Lord. He did not want that Isaac walked in the vision of the ancestors (the flesh), neither in victories and experiences of others but on his own experiences and achievements, looking for new divine revelations to his life. There was no need to contend for what had no life, for the old things, for what had passed, because the God Most High had wider places (Rehoboth) for him to inhabit, and cooler waters to quench his thirst.
- 4) *Just as Abraham, Isaac was also an intercessor*. Abraham interceded for Lot in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah; Isaac did it for Rebekah who was sterile, and God heard him. Prayer transforms curse into blessing, death into life, sterility into prosperity.
- 5) *Despite our apparent mistakes and failures, God's will prevails*. Despite being Esau the firstborn, being entitled to the double blessing of his father, and despite it seem that Isaac was deceived, God's plan was being fulfilled, because who had been chosen by God to inherit the birthright blessing was Jacob. Later (Gen. 28: 4), Isaac accepted the fact that his youngest son was whom the Lord would use to fulfill the promise given to Abraham. So he blessed him, making him heir of the family's most important good: the friendship with God.

Jacob – 6th lesson



Reference texts: Gen. 25: 21-32; Gen. 27-35

Summary:

Rebekah was sterile, and Isaac interceded for her with the Lord. She got pregnant and the two children struggled in her womb, Esau and Jacob. God told her that from her two nations would be born and the older son would serve the younger. At birth, the firstborn was red and hairy, hence the name *Esau (hairy)*. *Jacob* was the next, holding his brother by the heel, hence the name (*Ya'qōbh = who supplants, the deceiver, who holds by the heel*).

“When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a *quiet man (Hebrew, ‘tending the flock’)*, living in tents. Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob” (Gen. 25: 27-28). Jacob made a stew of lentils and Esau came hungry from the field; then he asked Jacob to let him eat the red cooked. Jacob, however, taking advantage of the weakness of his brother, asked him to sell him the birthright. Esau, hungry and thinking about his immediate needs, sold his birthright to his brother and swore. Despising this blessing was to despise the right to have the double blessing of the father, in addition to the leadership of the family and descendants. When Isaac was old and did not see so well as before, he called Esau, asked him to go to the field and hunted a wild game and, then, made a tasty food for him, Isaac; thus, he would bless him as the firstborn before he died. While Esau was hunting, Rebekah said to Jacob what she had heard, and by means of fraud, she planned to trick Isaac so that Jacob stayed with the blessing of the birthright. Rebekah cooked two goats for Isaac. With the skin of the animals she covered the hands and neck of Jacob. She caught Esau’s clothes and put them on the younger son. This one went to the father bringing the food and bread prepared by Rebekah. When Isaac touched him, he realized that the neck and hands were hairy like Esau’s; as well the smell of his clothes was like his eldest son’s, although his voice was Jacob’s. Then he blessed him (Gen. 27: 27-29): “Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed. May God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!” The blessing of the offspring was similar to which God made to Abraham, as well as His promise of protection. When Esau returned and discovered the fraud, he got sad. He came to hate his brother and planned to kill him. Rebekah, to protect Jacob, told him his brother’s intentions and advised him to leave home and go to the land of his uncle Laban (Rebekah’s brother) in Haran. Neither Isaac nor Rebekah wanted Jacob to marry a Canaanite woman as Esau had done. Isaac wanted Jacob to take as wife someone from Rebekah’s house. So, he

blessed his son once again with the blessing of Abraham (the blessing of family, prosperity and intimacy with God). Jacob headed for Paddan Aram to Laban's house, the brother of Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel.

Jacob got out from Beersheba and went to Haran. After a long walk, he arrived at a place to spend the night, he lay down and put his head on a stone as a pillow. He had a dream of a ladder going up to the sky and by it the angels of God ascending and descending. Then, he saw the Lord confirming him the blessing of Abraham and Isaac on that land and on his descendants (Gen. 28: 13-15). He promised His protection to Jacob until he came back there. When he woke up he raised a column with the rock on which he was lying down, and poured oil on it. That place was called Bethel (*The House of God*), because the Lord appeared to him there. Jacob made a vow to God to give Him the tithe (Gen. 28: 20-22; Gen. 31: 13) if his travel was successful (In Gen. 12: 8 the bible says that in the same place Abraham raised an altar when he came to the land of Canaan).

By arriving to Haran, he met Rachel who was shepherding the flock of his father along with other shepherds, and was beside a well. Jacob loved Rachel as soon as he saw her. She ran back home and told his father that she had met his cousin. Jacob stayed with Laban for one month. Laban, then, for the service of Jacob, wanted to give him a salary. As Jacob loved Rachel and she was quite beautiful, he told her father that he would serve him during seven years for Rachel. However, Rachel was the younger daughter. The older one was called Leah, not as beautiful as Rachel, but her eyes were lovely [NIV, weak], says the bible (in Hebrew, 'dull eyes'). For seven years Jacob served Laban for his love of Rachel. At the end of the period, Jacob asked to marry her. On the wedding day, the girl's father used of deceit and gave him Leah. When Jacob discovered what his father-in-law had done, he got angry indeed, but the old man only promised him Rachel after a week, and for her Jacob would have to work another seven years.

Rachel was sterile. When the Lord saw that Leah was despised, He opened her womb and she conceived the first child of Jacob and gave him the name *Reuben* (*Re'ubhen*, in the Masoretic, or *Rā'â bē'onî*, in Hebrew), which means: '*He has seen my misery*', '*Lord has looked upon my affliction*' or '*see, a son*', '*behold a son*'. The competition began between the two sisters and even their servants (Zilpah, Leah's servant, and Bilhah, Rachel's) participated.

Thus, from *Leah* were born: *Reuben* (1st), *Simeon* (2nd – *Shim'on* = *he who hears, God heard*), *Levi* (3rd – *lewi*, of the root *lāwâ* = *to join*, therefore, *Levi* = *attached, joined, united, connected, adhered, set apart for the Lord, holy to the Lord*), *Judah* (4th – *Yehüdā* = *praised, celebrated, commemorated in praise (ydh) to the Lord*), *Issachar* (9th – *'ish* = *man* and *sākhār* = *reward, wage, hired worker*, for Leah bought from Rachel the right to sleep with Jacob for a handful of mandrakes) and *Zebulun* (10th = *to honor, to exalt*). She also gave birth to a daughter called *Dinah* = *innocent, acquitted, judged*.

From *Bilhah* were born: *Dan* (5th – *He has vindicated, God judged me, God is judge*) and *Naphtali* (6th – from Hebrew, *Naphtālî* = *fighter, my struggle*, for Rachel said, 'with great fights have competed with my sister and have prevailed').

From *Zilpah* were born: *Gad* (7th = *good luck, fortunate or a troop is coming*) and *Asher* (8th – *'āsher, happy, blissful, treasure*).

God heard the cry of Rachel and made her fertile. She conceived and bore Jacob a son and named him *Joseph* (11th), originated from the verb *Yāsaph* = *to add*; therefore, *yōseph* = *may be added, may God add* (children), because Rachel asked God to give her another child. Jacob was about ninety-one years old when Joseph was born (table in the

beginning of the book). Thus, after the birth of their 11th child, he asked Laban to let him come back to his land. Laban admitted he had been blessed by God because of Jacob and didn't let him go. Jacob asked Laban to tell him then what he wanted and it was agreed that the lambs, sheep and female goats that were black, speckled and spotted would be his (Jacob's), and those without blemish would be Laban's. Thus, with the flock Jacob could support his family.

Laban, however, separated the streaked and spotted male goats and all speckled and spotted female goats that same day and the black lambs and gave them to his sons so that they put them at a distance of three days' journey of Jacob. Without the streaked males of the flock the possibilities of Jacob were minimal. Hence, God gave him a strategy. He removed the bark of green rods of poplar, almond and plane trees and placed them in front of the herd. When sheep conceived before the rods, they bore streaked, speckled and spotted offspring. He put the sticks when the strong herd was going to conceive. When was the weak, he did not put them. So the weak ones were Laban's and the strong, Jacob's. By the flock, Jacob worked for Laban another six years. He enriched and also had servants, camels and donkeys.

Thus, Jacob was told by God that it was time to return to his land, because He was with him. For ten times Laban changed Jacob's wages in those years, but no harm had happened to him because the hand of the Lord was with him and God had seen all that Laban had done to Jacob. This one served Laban for fourteen years because of his daughters and six years because of his flock. Jacob left with all his belongings, cattle, children and women. But Rachel stole the household gods that were Laban's. Jacob fled hidden from Laban. When he heard everything, he chased him and reached him on the 7th day and asked him for an explanation about his stolen gods. Jacob swore that the one with whom Laban found his idols would die, because he didn't know that they were with Rachel. Laban searched, however, did not find them. Still so, he wanted to stay with his daughters, his grandchildren and with the herd. Jacob argued with him and they made a covenant, putting God between both to judge them and he promised that he would not hurt Laban's daughters and grandchildren or would take other wives for him. So Jacob set off.

When he was approaching the Promised Land God sent angels who came to meet him and not only assured him protection, but confirmed the divine promise with him and His chosen people. That place was called *Mahanaim* (*Mah^anayin*, in Hebrew), which means *two camps* or *two armies* (because of the angels – Gen. 32: 2). He needed to feel safe because he would meet Esau. Jacob gave him a rich present of his flock in order to appease his anger; he still was afraid of him. That night he stayed in the camp. By getting up at night, he took his family and crossed the ford of Jabbok, taking with him everything he had. When he was left alone, he faced an unknown man and fought with him until the morning and the stranger unable to resist him, touched his thigh joint, moving it. Jacob didn't want to let him go unless he blessed him. Then the stranger said: "You shall no longer be called *Jacob*, but *Israel*, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." *Israel* means *he struggles with God (like God, in the original) and prevails, winner, Prince of God*. And the man blessed him there. According some scholars the name Israel is most likely a compilation of the verb *sara* and the noun *El*, the common abbreviation of *Elohim* (*God*). It has the same root of the name *Sarah* that comes from the verb *sarar*, which means to rule, to reign, to be prince. So Israel would have the meaning of "*God strives, God perseveres, God contends, he will be a prince with God*". Jacob named that place *Peniel* (*'the face of God'* [from Hebrew: *Pnuw'el* or *Pniylel* = *Penuel* or *Peniel* – לאינפ; from: *Pney* or *Pniy* = *face* – פני; and *El* = *God* – אל], *'encounter with God', 'place of struggle with God'*), because

he said: "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." He got the blessing he wanted, which was to be reconciled with Esau. When his brother saw him he kissed him and both wept. After this, they separated. Esau went to Seir and Jacob to Succoth and built there a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock (*Succoth* = *shelters, tents*). He arrived to Shechem in the land of Canaan and raised there an altar and called it *El Elohe Israel* (*God, the God of Israel; or mighty is the God of Israel*). Jacob bought that field from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father. Shechem took Dinah, daughter of Jacob, by force. He asked the father (Hamor) to buy her from Jacob, even knowing that he had violated her, because he loved her. Jacob's sons were angry with the situation and only allowed that Dinah stayed with him (Shechem) if he let himself to be circumcised, as well as all his people. As Shechem loved her, he did according to what the sons of Jacob said and they became to be only one people. However, in the third day after the circumcision of men, Simeon and Levi took their swords and killed all the men of the city, including Hamor and Shechem and looted it. Jacob rebuked the sons because he was afraid of retaliation on the part of the inhabitants of the land (Gen. 34: 30). The Lord then said to Jacob to go to Bethel to dwell there and to build an altar to Him again. Jacob cleansed his people from foreign gods and was not pursued by anyone. He came to Bethel and built an altar to the Lord, calling it *El-Bethel*. God appeared to him once more and confirmed the change of his name to *Israel*, reaffirming also the blessing of Abraham and Isaac. When leaving Bethel, before coming to Ephrata (Bethlehem), Rachel gave birth to her 2nd child, with much suffering and, before dying, gave him the name of *Ben-Oni* (*son of my affliction or son of my trouble*), but Jacob gave him the name of *Benjamin* (*son of my right hand or son of happiness*). It was fulfilling the curse that Jacob cast on who had stolen the household gods of Laban, for without knowing it was Rachel who had stolen them he released this sentence of death.

Jacob came to Hebron to meet Isaac, who was still alive. Isaac died at one hundred and eighty years, and Esau and Jacob buried him. In Gen. 37: 1 it is written that Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's wanderings, in the land of Canaan. His story continues in parallel with that of Joseph. He died at 147 years (Gen. 47: 28) and was buried in Machpelah (Gen. 50: 13). Before he died he blessed all his sons and the sons of Joseph, once more in the family story reversing their position, putting the youngest in the place of the firstborn (Ephraim, the younger, occupied the place of Manasseh, the older son).

Important lessons from Jacob:

- 1) *The view of God to men:* God chose Jacob instead of Esau before his birth; therefore, Jacob didn't do anything to deserve his blessings because the Lord has already appointed him to be the patriarch of His chosen people. Acting or not the way he acted, he would inherit the birthright blessing, for it had already been determined.
- 2) *Human view:* Jacob did not know God's way of doing justice and making His will prevail in the lives of His chosen, therefore, he acted on earth following the impulses of his heart, based on the human difficulties and barriers that was trying to rise against his blessing, for he knew that the blessing of his grandfather (the blessing of the offspring, prosperity and intimacy with God) belonged to him. He fought for his blessings, even using wrong methods, but did not give them up; like many of us, he fought in the strength of his arm until discover and truly know the

God whom he served and trust Him fully, knowing He would always be by his side. So, God worked in Jacob's character, teaching him the proper way to win his blessings, at the same time that He became known by His son, revealing him His character and His good intentions. When we talk about "*The God of Israel, the God of Jacob*", we are referring to the complete surrender and the meeting with Him to be changed into His image and likeness. This shows us that the true encounter with God brings real change.

- 3) *Jacob's faith was increased along his life trajectory*: God uses always the same process to reveal Himself to men and increase their faith in Him. As He did with Abraham and Isaac, through their tests and struggles, the Lord also increased in Jacob his faith in Him through the challenges he faced. God remained faithful to His promise, confirming it to him every time he could overcome an obstacle.
- 4) *Fickleness, cowardice, and other flaws of character, as deceit and cunning were worked by God* to make him a patriarch, worthy of Abraham and Isaac; this means that there was a personal maturation. Thus, walking with God is learning and self-knowledge, improvement and sanctification.
- 5) Even with flaws of character, *the fear of the Lord and obedience to God* were in him as it was in their ancestors, as well as a *strong determination* to be blessed and not to give up his blessings for anything. Jacob saw no obstacles to do what had to be done. He managed to overcome all the snares that Laban has placed in his way, for he didn't take his eyes off his project or of his reward. When he began to know God better and trust Him more, he found out that with His wisdom he could loot the enemy and defeat it, what actually happened. He learned to obey Him and acknowledge His Lordship and His protective hand over his life, so he raised altars to the Lord when he achieved one more victory.
- 6) *He knew how to resist the enemy, he did not give in to his blackmails and did not give up his blessing; moreover, he left vengeance in hand of God* (Gen. 31: 53).
- 7) *The tithe is not bargain with God*. Jacob made a vow to the Lord that he would give Him the tithe if he had success in his wanderings, but he should not do it. His act was very different from that of Abraham who gave his tithe to Melchizedek spontaneously. In the case of Jacob, this is the second time that is talked about tithe in the bible.

Joseph – 7th lesson



Reference texts: Gen. 37: 1-36; Gen. 39–50

Summary:

Joseph was seventeen years old and he was shepherding the flock with his brothers (Gen. 37: 2). Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the first son that Rachel gave him in his old age. Jacob gave him a long robe with long sleeves, which caused jealousy in his brothers. One day, he had a dream in which he and his brothers were binding sheaves in the field and Joseph's sheaf rose and stood upright, and the sheaves of his brothers bowed before him. The brothers hated him, for they imagined Joseph ruling over them. He had another dream in which the sun, the moon and the stars bowed down to him. Jacob rebuked him, because he could not accept that one day the family would bend before Joseph, but he considered the case with himself, while the brothers hated him even more.

The sons of Jacob went to Shechem shepherding the flocks of his father and this one then sent Joseph to them to bring him news. Joseph found them in Dothan, but when they saw him from afar they conspired together to kill him. However, Reuben did not allow them to kill him; he just suggested that they threw him into one of the cisterns in the desert. He thought of restore him to his father. As soon as Joseph arrived, his brothers took out his robe and threw him into an empty cistern without water. They saw a caravan of Ishmaelites [also called Midianites (Gen. 37: 25; Gen. 37: 36)] that came from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices to Egypt. Then, Judah suggested them to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites, and all agreed. Thus, Joseph was sold to Midianites merchants.

The brothers tore Joseph's robe and stained it with the blood of a goat and took it to Jacob, who thought that Joseph had been devoured by some wild animal. Jacob mourned him many days, refusing to be comforted. Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard. As God was with him, he became a prosperous man in the house of Potiphar, and Joseph found mercy before his master, who made him steward over his house and over everything he had. The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for the love of Joseph; the blessing of the Lord was both on what he had in his house and in the field. Everything Potiphar entrusted to Joseph.

Joseph was handsome in appearance and his master's wife seduced him, but Joseph refused her invitation. For the second time she did the same, but when Joseph fled, his clothes were in her hands; she cried and accused him of molesting her. Joseph, falsely accused, was arrested and thrown in the dungeon with the king's prisoners.

But the Lord was with Joseph and He was good to him, giving him mercy on the part of the jailer, who gave into his hands all the prisoners that were in prison; and he did everything that was to be done in that place. The jailer gave him everything and

everything that Joseph did prospered because the Lord was with him. One day the chief cupbearer and the chief baker of the king were arrested there and Joseph was appointed to serve them. Both had a dream but were unable to interpret it (Gen. 40: 1-23). So, they told the dreams to Joseph who interpreted them and, according to what he had said, the chief baker was executed and the chief cupbearer returned to his office. Joseph had asked the chief cupbearer to intercede for him with Pharaoh, but when he was freed, he forgot Joseph.

After two years, Pharaoh had dreams that troubled him greatly. He called all the magicians of Egypt, who could not interpret them. It was then that the chief cupbearer remembered Joseph and told about him to Pharaoh. Joseph was summoned to interpret the king's dreams. The two dreams meant the same thing: there would be a period of seven years of great plenty in Egypt, followed by seven years of great famine (Gen. 41: 1-36). He suggested that Pharaoh found a wise man who knew how to manage the supplies so that the time of hunger wasn't so bad. Pharaoh chose Joseph to be this manager and made him an authority over the country, only below him. As second-in-command, Pharaoh changed Joseph's name to *Zaphnath-Paneah*, meaning, "*the man who lives when the deity speaks*" or "*God speaks and He lives*" (it's the Hebrew meaning). The Egyptian meaning is "*Savior of the world*". Joseph married *Asenath*, daughter of the priest *Potiphera*, and traveled across the land of Egypt. He was about thirty years old then (Gen. 41: 46).

He gathered supplies during the seven years of plenty. Before coming the famine, Joseph had two sons by *Asenath*; the firstborn was called *Manasseh* (= *He who made me forget*), because God had made him forget all his works and his father's house. The second was called *Ephraim* (= *fruitful, or twice fruitful*), because God had prospered him in the land of his affliction. Then the seven years of famine came in all lands and Joseph sold supplies to the needy.

Jacob knew that there was grain in Egypt and sent his sons there to buy cereals. All went down into Egypt, less Benjamin. They came and prostrated themselves before Joseph. He recognized them; however, he did not make himself known to them. He asked where they came from and remembered the dream he had when young; to test them, he accused them of spying. They denied and told him about his father and Benjamin, who had remained in the land of Canaan. Joseph then required them to bring the youngest brother too, and until what they were saying was proven, he kept them in prison for three days.

After three days, he let them to go back to his father with the grain they needed, but one of them would stay in prison until they brought Benjamin. José understood what they were saying when they talked to each other about the remorse they felt towards him for what they did to him when he was young.

Joseph wept but they didn't see it. Returning, he handcuffed Simeon and let the others go. The bags were filled with grain, however, by his order, the money that they had brought was returned to them. Opening the bags during the trip, they saw the money in them and were alarmed. They came home and told all that had happened to Jacob. Reuben argued with his father and offered himself to bring back Simeon and Benjamin, if he went with them to Egypt. But, afraid, Jacob did not consent.

The famine persisted in the land, and when their grain was over, Jacob ordered them to return to Egypt to buy more. Judah recalled the governor's orders about Benjamin. Then, Jacob told them to take the most precious thing he had to present him: balm, honey, spices, and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds; also double money, beyond which had been restored in the bags.

Arriving in Egypt, they presented themselves before Joseph. By seeing Benjamin, he ordered his servant to prepare lunch and to bring the travelers to his home. His brothers were scared and told him about the money that had been put in the bags of grain in the previous trip. He calmed them down and they were taken to his house, being prepared for lunch.

They gave him the gifts they brought and he asked them about Jacob, if he was still alive. He was told that Jacob was alive and well. Joseph had to leave their presence to cry when he saw Benjamin. He returned and had lunch with them, serving Benjamin a portion five times greater. This showed everyone that he was his honored guest.

Joseph commanded the butler to fill the sacks of grain, returning the money in each of them and to put his silver cup in Benjamin's.

The next morning, when they departed, Joseph ordered his butler to follow them and accuse them of having stolen his silver cup. So, it happened how Joseph commanded and they were alarmed by what they saw. They were brought back into the presence of Joseph. Judah apologized on behalf of all and interceded for Benjamin, so that Jacob did not die of grief with his son away from him. He confirmed that he was the guarantor of Benjamin before Jacob and he offered to stay as a servant of Joseph instead of the younger brother.

Joseph made everybody get out of his presence, except the Jews, his brothers. Then he made himself known and cried, leaving his brothers puzzled and frightened, for they were afraid of his reaction that could be of revenge against them. But Joseph forgave them and explained to them that everything happened by God's permission, in order to carry out His sovereign purpose in his life and his whole family. His purpose as governor of Egypt was to bring them to this land, so that he could supply them for more five years because there would be still five years of famine. He told them to bring Jacob and their wives, their children and their livestock to the land of Goshen in the Nile Delta region, for there was more vegetation in it. He embraced Benjamin and cried with him, as he did with the others. Joseph was thirty-nine years old now.

Pharaoh knew that Joseph's family had come and opened to them the land of Egypt to dwell. In Beersheba, Jacob offered sacrifices to the Lord and He in a vision, calmed his heart confirming his journey to Egypt besides the blessing of the offspring.

The descendants of *Jacob* (Gen. 46: 1-27; Ex. 1: 5) came to Egypt:

- From *Reuben*: *Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi*.
- From *Simeon*: *Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar and Shaul (son of a Canaanite woman)*.
- From *Levi*: *Gershon, Kohath and Merari*.
- From *Judah*: *Er († in Canaan), Onan († in Canaan), Shelah, Perez and Zerah*;
From *Perez*: *Hezron and Hamul*.
- From *Issachar*: *Tola, Puah (or Puvah, Masoretic text), Jashub (or Iob, Masoretic text) and Shimron*.
- From *Zebulun*: *Sered, Elon and Jahleel*.
- *Dinah* (they were all sons of Leah, who had died in Canaan – Gen. 49: 31); **total of 33 people** (including Jacob).
- From *Gad*: *Zephon (Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch or Ziphion in Masoretic text), Haggi, Shuni, Ezbom, Eri, Arodi and Areli*
- From *Asher*: *Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah and Serah* (their sister). *Beriah* begot *Heber and Malkiel* (they were all sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant); **total of 16 people**.
- From *Joseph*: *Manasseh and Ephraim*.

- From *Benjamin*: *Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppm, Huppm and Ard*. They were all sons of Rachel, who had already died in Canaan – Gen. 35: 19), **a total of 14 people**.

- From *Dan*: *Hushim*

- From *Naphtali*: *Jahziel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem* (they were all sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant); **a total of 7 people**.

The wives of Jacob's sons were not counted.

Total: $33 + 16 + 14 + 7 = 70$ people.

The number 70 is the number of nations (peoples) that populated again the earth after the Flood (Gen. 10: 1-32; 1 Chr. 1: 5-23). Thus, the descendants of Jacob were a way to populate Egypt; it was a great moment for humanity, fulfilling part of the promise to make Abraham a great nation.

Joseph met his father Jacob and took only five of his brothers and introduced them to Pharaoh, emphasizing their occupation as shepherds, allaying his concern about having political ambitions in the country.

Jacob blessed Joseph's sons, placing the right hand (symbol of blessing, strength, authority, privilege, honor) over the younger, Ephraim, instead of the older, Manasseh, for the fourth time in the story of the family, confirming the Lordship of God and His choice on the birthright (*Isaac* was younger than *Ishmael*; *Jacob* was younger than *Esau*; *Joseph* was younger than *Reuben*, and *Ephraim* was younger than *Manasseh*). Jacob blessed them with the blessing of the offspring on the land, being Ephraim's greater than Manasseh's.

When he blessed the other children, Jacob blessed Judah with the governmental leadership of his clan, although the birthright had been given to Joseph (1 Chr. 5: 1-2: 'ruler' in verse 2, was a reference to David and, therefore, Jesus).

Jacob asked Joseph to bury him in the cave of Machpelah with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah and Leah (Gen. 48: 7; Gen. 49: 31). He was embalmed (it took forty days for this) and buried as he desired. Joseph and his brothers returned to Egypt. Joseph lived one hundred and ten years and saw the children of Ephraim to the third generation. He asked his brothers and their offspring that they carried his bones from Egypt to the land of Canaan, when God took them out of there, and made them swear. The bones of Joseph were buried in Shechem, in the region given to the tribe of Manasseh (Josh. 24: 32).

Important lessons from Joseph:

- 1) *Integrity, rightness, covenant with God*: Joseph remained upright and faithful to God even before the impure proposals, as in the case of Potiphar's wife, or the adverse circumstances as happened when he was in prison, unfairly accused. Since the Lord was with him, he prospered, and His attitudes of faith and sincerity made him win the trust of the wicked, for they could know his God. He preferred to be rejected by men instead of being rejected by the Lord or go against His commandments. When we keep firm our convictions and we act according to what we preach, our light begins to be seen and many people will come to us to know our God and the reason of our faith.
- 2) *The Lord sustained him, prospered, freed and honored him, making him governor of a nation*: God supported Joseph in his basic needs and, because he was willing to be

an instrument in His hands, He enabled him with natural and spiritual gifts, which generated prosperity not only for him but for those who were by his side, as happened with Potiphar. God freed him from prison and honored him at the right time, putting him in a prominent position before everyone, including in the eyes of Pharaoh. Many times, our walk may seem long, difficult and meaningless, but if we are at the center of Lord's will, He, in due time, will deliver us from every yoke, will sustain and honor us before those who seem powerful, for He will show them His sovereignty, putting whom He wills in position of power.

- 3) *Faith and patience*: as Abraham exercised faith, Joseph also exercised it because he had to believe in the dreams that God placed in his heart when he was still young and that were accomplished years later. Not even his own family believed him at first and even attempted against his life. Joseph had to exercise faith in his God when he was in Potiphar's house, when he was in prison and when he was placed in position of authority over Egypt, for he depended on Him to manage the nation and to fulfill the prophetic word given by himself, in the case of Pharaoh's dream. The patience that he had to exercise walked along with the faith; he depended on time to see his promise fulfilled and accomplished.
- 4) *Wisdom to manage the blessing of God*: Joseph had the divine wisdom to manage the blessing that had been placed in his hands, because only the Lord's wisdom would teach him how to store so much grain in the barns of the nation to provide it back and the lands around it in the coming years of famine. Even when he came to Egypt, still young, almost a boy, he depended on the wisdom of God to be ahead of Potiphar's business and give him account for everything correctly. He had divine wisdom to interpret the dreams of his fellow prisoners as well as the dream of Pharaoh. He had the wisdom to deal with his brothers, letting the Lord heal old wounds and restore the family harmony. He had wisdom and prudence to introduce his relatives to Pharaoh, appeasing all his fears regarding the dispute of political power in the nation. When God gives us His blessing, we should ask Him for wisdom to be able to manage it successfully, because many will depend on our right action.
- 5) *He exercised forgiveness*: he not only exercised forgiveness in relation to his brothers, but to others: Potiphar and his wife (who put him in prison, unjustly) and the chief cupbearer (who was released from prison and was restored to his position according to the predictions of Joseph, but forgot him when was freed from there. He paid the good that Joseph made him, at least with indifference). So, we too, have to go through the hard tests of exercising forgiveness toward those who hurt us, accuse us unjustly, put obstacles to our walk for envy of our determination, and to those who respond with indifference and ingratitude, after they were blessed through our lives and our work.
- 6) *He experienced reconciliation* with those who had committed injustice toward him, because God gave him wisdom and strategy to reverse situations that seemingly had no solution, as in the case of his family; it was God Himself who placed repentance in the hearts of his brothers for Joseph, however, He used him wisely to confront them with their sin. At the right time, God can bring to us those who hurt us or reviled us, putting repentance in their hearts. He can use anyone and any kind of strategy to accomplish His plan of restoration in our lives.
- 7) *The promise of God can be compromised by human actions, but it will always be preserved by Him*: people can delay God's plan, but can never prevent its realization. He can use even the evil intentions of men to accomplish His purposes

in the lives of His chosen. Joseph's brothers tried to prevent that God manifested His plan in him; even so, he was used by Him to bless his brothers.

- 8) *To keep the prophetic vision of God's plan:* Joseph maintained within himself the vision of God's plan for him; he gave value to the dreams that were put in his heart when he was still young and didn't despise them to please men. Likewise, we should give value to the dreams that He places within us, even though they were placed in childhood or even that others do not give value to them and mock them. The prophetic vision of His project should be always alive in us so that our hope and our faith in Him do not die.
- 9) *To take advantage of adverse situations:* Joseph was sold to the Egyptians when he was young; however, he already knew how to take advantage of the situations to learn and grow. No matter how or from whom Joseph learned to write in Egyptian language. What matters is that when he came to the house of Potiphar he already had something that enabled him to perform tasks that other slaves could not. Reading, writing and understanding of mathematics gave him the chance to show his master that he was a different slave and worthy of his trust. The lesson for us is: we should always learn whatever it is to be empowered in any situation because we do not know how God will want to use us. Our ability and our interest to learn can make us find grace before people, who will see His good hand upon us.
- 10) *To learn how to be a provider:* Joseph learned to be a provider. The Lord gave him wisdom to know how to manage natural resources and made his heart willing to give and bless. With the grain that he had stored during the period of abundance, he could bless many peoples during the famine. From the attitudes of Joseph, we can see that he was never stingy or greedy; his values were different and he made a point of showing it to people in order to learn from him to exercise sowing and prosperity. When our values are spiritual, not carnal, God puts us in a position of honor and leadership because we are able to show His kingdom to those who don't truly know Him yet; through us, He shows His goodness, His mercy and His prosperity.
- 11) *Who blesses is blessed by God:* because he was a provider of many, Joseph was blessed not only by the father, but also by God with the blessings of *the heavens above* (spiritual), the blessings of *the deep that lies beneath* (emotional), and the blessings of *the breasts and of the womb* (materials), as described in Gen. 49: 25, and all his descendants.

Moses – 8th lesson



Reference texts: Ex. 1–40; Num. 11–14; Num. 16–17; Num. 19–24; Num. 27; Deut. 34: 1–12

Summary:

Joseph died in Egypt, but his descendants multiplied greatly and were strengthened, filling the whole land. The new king who arose in the nation did not know Joseph and so that the Jewish people stopped multiplying, Pharaoh put taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor, building store-cities as Pithom and Rameses (Ex 1: 11). However, they continued to grow and spread; and this troubled the Egyptians. They began to use the tyranny towards the Hebrews, forcing them to make bricks for their constructions or putting them to work hard in the field. The land that for hundreds of years ago had been ‘land of refuge’ became a ‘the land of slavery.’

The king ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill the newborn boys. But the midwives feared God, and did not do what Pharaoh had commanded. God blessed them and gave them family. The people increased and became very strong. So, Pharaoh ordered his people to cast the newborn boys in the Nile, letting the girls live.

A man from the house of Levi, from the family of Kohathites named Amram, married a woman, a descendant of Levi, called Jochebed (Ex. 6: 20) and had three children: Miriam, Aaron and Moses. This one was born under the orders of Pharaoh. He was beautiful and the mother hid him for three months, but seeing that she could no longer hide him, took a basket of reeds, caulked it with bitumen and pitch, and putting the boy in it, left it among the reeds along the banks of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to watch what would happen to him. When Pharaoh’s daughter was bathing in the river, she saw the basket and, opening it, she realized it was a Hebrew boy who was crying. She had compassion on the little boy and then Miriam, his sister, suggested that a Hebrew woman looked after him for her. His own mother nursed him, and when he was two years [after weaning], she gave him back to Pharaoh’s daughter, of whom he became son, and she called him *Moses*, which means, ‘*taken out of the waters*’, because of the Nile he was taken out.

Moses grew and became a man. He was prepared to be a prince of Egypt.

Witnessing an Egyptian beating a Hebrew man, and seeing no one around, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. The next day he saw two Hebrews fighting and reprimanded the guilty, who asked him about the Egyptian killed the day before. Pharaoh sought to kill Moses. Then, he fled to the land of Midian where he married Zipporah, daughter of Jethro, a priest, also called Reuel (= ‘*Your Excellency*’ or ‘*friend of God*’. The two names have the same meaning). He had by her a son whom he named *Gershom* (= *pilgrim, foreigner*). He stayed there for about forty years until Pharaoh died.

The Israelites were groaning under the bondage and their cry went up to God. Thus He remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and looked at the weeping of the people. 'Remembering', in Hebrew, in the Old Testament, means: 'to pay attention'.

Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, to the west of Midian, in the desert of Sinai, arriving at *Mount Horeb* (known as '*the mountain of God*'; *Horeb* means *dry, desert*). There, the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush which, however, was not consumed.

Then, the Lord told him that He had seen the suffering of His people in Egypt and was choosing Moses to free them from the hand of Pharaoh to take them to a land 'flowing with milk and honey', that is, a fertile and abundant land. His name, *YHWH*, '*the Lord*', '*I Am who I Am*' (*ehyeh-asher-ehyeh*), would be known by His people (Ex. 3: 14-15; Ex. 6: 2-3). *I AM*, in Hebrew, *Ehyeh*, comes from the verb, *Hayah*, '*to be*', often translated as '*I will be*', '*to become*' or else '*to reveal to be*.' *Asher* is an ambiguous pronoun which can mean, depending on context, 'that', 'who', 'which' or 'where.' Therefore, although *Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh* is generally translated as '*I Am who I Am*' or '*I am that I am*', this expression can mean: '*I will be what I will be*' or '*I will be who I will be*' or '*I shall prove to be what I shall reveal to be*' or '*I will be because I will be*.' The patriarchs had known Him as *El-Shaddai* ('*The Almighty*', '*the God who is more than sufficient*' or '*The God who holds all the power*') – Gen. 17: 1, among other names.

The Lord also told him that with a strong hand He would smite Egypt and would deliver His people. Moses tried to argue with God because he feared his mission. As he had been trained to be a prince of Egypt, he knew its military power and thought it was impossible that a people that size (the Hebrew people) could be freed from Pharaoh. He told the Lord that he had a speech problem; maybe it meant that he didn't know to argue, that he was not a good speaker. But God did not turn back. He gave him two signs (Ex. 4: 9) and ordered him to go. He assured him that He would put the right words in his mouth and Aaron, his brother, a priest and Levite, would speak for him to the people. Thus, Moses took his wife and his two sons, for another was born in Midian (*Eliezer, God's help, my God is helper*, Ex. 18: 4), and went to Egypt, taking in the hand the staff of God.

He met Aaron at Horeb. Aaron was married to Elisheba and had four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar (Ex. 6: 23). They came to Egypt and told the people the words of God; the people believed in the Lord and worshiped Him.

Aaron and Moses went to speak to Pharaoh, who did not hear them; rather, oppressed the Hebrews even more by taking of them the straw to make bricks.

Moses and Aaron spoke again to Pharaoh, but the Lord told them that He would harden the heart of the king so that he could see the wonders and the power of the true God. The bible says that Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh (Ex. 7: 7).

Thus, God sent ten plagues to Egypt to show His power to the king and deliver His people:

- 1) Water turned into blood
- 2) Frogs
- 3) Gnats
- 4) Flies
- 5) Plague on livestock
- 6) Festering boils (ulcers)
- 7) Hail

8) Locusts

9) Darkness

10) The death of all the firstborn of Egypt. Here, God instituted the Passover and instructed the people on how they should be ready for the departure. At midnight the *Destroyer* passed over Egypt, leaving alive only the children of the Hebrews, who had the mark of the blood of the lamb on their doors.

With the death of his firstborn, Pharaoh threw them out of his land and the people went out with sheep, cattle, gold, silver and clothes, and plundered the Egyptians.

The bible says in Ex. 38: 26 (Num. 1: 46; Num 26: 51) that an army of 603,550 men over twenty years old left Egypt, besides women and children, elders and foreigners who decided to go with them. In Num. 1: 47 the bible also says that in the departure of Egypt the Levites was not included in this counting. The bible tells that the time they lived in Egypt since Jacob arrived were four hundred and thirty years (Ex. 12: 40-41; Gal. 3: 17); probably their slavery has begun one hundred and twenty years before the Exodus, for in times of Joseph they were well treated guests. As they left, they also took the bones of Joseph, as he made them swear before dying. The Lord went ahead of them during the day, in a cloud to guide them by the path; at night, in a pillar of fire.

Pharaoh pursued them and caught them when they were camped in the desert by the sea. The Hebrew word for *Red Sea* is *Yam Suph*, which means *Sea of Reeds*. Reeds are papyrus that proliferated in the swampy area that stretched from the Gulf of Suez to the Mediterranean Sea and that grow in fresh water, such as the Bitter Lakes, Timsa, Balah and Manzala, in the Nile Delta. That's why we can not identify on any map of the Exodus, the crossing point through the Red Sea itself. It is presumed that the most likely places are the Gulf of Suez, the Great Bitter Lake between the Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea, Lake Manzala in the mouth of the Nile in north of Egypt or the South Mediterranean. The term *Yam Suph* is used for different types of aquatic forms. Despite the all the controversies, it remains the main hypothesis (taking into account Num. 33: 1-37) that the crossing has been near Suez (see map at the end of the chapter).

The people then complained with Moses, accusing him of having taken them out of Egypt to die in the desert. Moses reinforced their faith in the Lord, lifted his staff and stretched his hand over the Red Sea as God commanded and the waters divided. Thus, Israel passed through the midst of the sea. When they finished crossing, the water regained its strength and drowned the Egyptians who had persecuted them. They all died: soldiers and horses.

Moses sang a song of victory and exaltation to the name of the Lord and all the people followed him. Miriam also took a tambourine and sang, and all the women danced with her. Thereafter, Moses began to lead the people as the Lord guided him, but had to administer the complaints against him, as if he was guilty of any circumstance that seemed contrary. We can see this in the case of the bitter waters of Marah, which God turned into fresh water to quench the thirst of the people; also when they asked for food and He gave them manna in the morning and meat in the evening. Nobody knew what was that 'dew' that fell in the morning, so they called it *Manna* (Hebrew = *What is it?*) – Ex. 16: 15; 31. The Israelites still did not show confidence in God after everything they had seen; so they complained for any reason. They easily resisted the command of Moses and doubted the care of the Lord. Once more they quarreled in Rephidim because of the water and He quenched their thirst (Moses struck the rock and the water came out of it).

Moses also had to face a battle with Amalek in Rephidim. Amalek, the father of the Amalekites, was a descendant of a grandson of Esau; they were fierce nomads that

pillaged other tribes, often killing for simple pleasure. They were found in the Negev and the Sinai. There, Moses began to train Joshua as a military commander of Israel. Moses stood on a hill with his staff raised to give victory to the people of God. When his arms got tired, Aaron and Hur (according to Jewish tradition, he was Miriam's husband) held them on each side until sunset. Thus, Israel prevailed and Moses built an altar to the Lord and called it "*The Lord is my banner*" (*YHWH Nissi*) – Ex 17: 15.

Moses judged the people from morning till evening. Seeing this, his father-in-law advised him to appoint assistants to this task so that he did not get tired. Therefore, he would not take the burden alone, but would share it with others. He did so and Jethro returned to his home.

In the third month after leaving Egypt they came to Sinai. And in the midst of fire and smoke, thunder and lightning, God spoke to Moses and Aaron to go up the mount. In that place He gave them the laws that would govern the people. Then, God asked Moses to go up again and stay there because He would give him stone tablets with the Law and the Commandments that He had written so that Moses could teach the Israelites. Aaron and Hur stayed with the people. Only Joshua accompanied him until some extent of the walk. On the seventh day the Lord appeared to Moses and he stayed there for forty days and forty nights. In that place God gave him the instructions to build the Tabernacle, and chose Aaron and his sons to minister as priests before the Tent of Meeting (Tent of the Testimony – Ex. 38: 21; Num. 1: 50; Num. 9: 15; Num. 17: 7; 8; Num. 18: 2; 2 Chr. 24: 6 or Sanctuary – Ex. 25: 8). Having just finished speaking, He gave him the two stone tablets written by *the finger of God* (Ex. 31: 18).

But the people, seeing that Moses delayed to come down and thinking that God had departed from them, forced Aaron to make to them a god they could see. He, then, made a golden calf (Ex. 32: 1-10; 18-24) and they celebrated. God communicated it to Moses while he was on Mount Sinai and expressed His displeasure saying to His anointed that He would consume the people, and from him alone (Moses), He would make a great nation. But this one interceded for the crowd and came down the mountain. When he approached the camp, he saw the calf and the dancing and angrily smashed the tablets of the Law at the foot of Sinai. He burned the calf and reduced it into powder, which he spread over the water, and gave the children of Israel to drink. He also rebuked Aaron and commanded the Levites to kill the idolaters. Three thousand were killed that day.

The people who left Egypt did not yet know the "God of Sinai", nor did they have His laws; they were more acquainted with the Egyptian gods. Therefore, we can think that the golden calf made by Aaron was related to the Egyptian idolatry. Captive for four hundred and thirty years, they barely remembered the legacy left by the patriarchs, except the land promised by God to them. So there are two possibilities regarding the golden calf: **a)** The god *Apis* (*Hapi-anku*), the personification of the earth and reincarnation of Osiris. He was the bull of Memphis and was associated with the god Ptah, the god builder of that city; he symbolized the power of the king (Pharaoh). **b)** The goddess *Hathor*, goddess of women, of heaven, love, joy, wine, dance, fertility and of the Necropolis of Thebes, for she welcomed the dead and watched over the tombs. She was represented as a cow with the sun disk between the horns or as a woman with the head or ears of a cow, or else, as a woman of ancient Egyptian clothing, who has yellow skin and bears on head a pair of cow horns, between which sits a red disk encircled by a cobra. She holds a forked staff in one hand and an Ankh sign in the other. The Ankh, (the thoracic vertebra of a bull, seen in cross section), also known as *crux ansata*, was for the Egyptians the symbol of life, also as a symbol of eternal life, life after death.



The Egyptian goddess Hathor



Apis the bull of Memphis and the Golden Calf

Based on the reaction of the Israelites described in the bible (like an orgy), it is more likely they were worshipping *Hathor* or the two gods (see Ex. 32: 4, where it is written ‘your gods’: “He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’”)

The next day, Moses ascended the Mount and interceded for the people again, offering his own life in return. But the Lord said that He Himself would punish them for their sin and His Angel would go before them to give them victory over their enemies. He, however, wouldn’t follow in their midst. Then, Moses asked Him to see His glory, that is, God Himself. The Lord put him in a cleft in the rock and made Moses see His glory behind his back. After that, He gave him again the stone tablets with the Law. As he descended the Mount, his face shone.

Under the guidance of God, the Tabernacle was built. When the cloud was over it the Israelites stopped, and when the cloud rose, they walked forward. Despite everything they had seen by the hands of the Lord, the people remained unhappy, having great desire of the food of the Egyptians; they wanted meat, fish, cucumbers, melons, garlic and onions, complaining about the manna. Moses complained to the Lord because he felt his task too heavy to bear and he could not satisfy the desire of his brothers. He even asked for God to kill him, because he could stand it no more. The Lord told him to gather seventy of the elders of Israel, on which He would pour His Spirit, and they would carry the burden of the people along with him. God also told him to prepare the Hebrews because the next day they would eat meat and would eat it for one month, until they became bored of it because they complained against Him. Then, a wind of the Lord blew and brought quails from the sea and spread them through the camp as far as a day’s walk in any direction, about three feet upon the earth. While they ate, the wrath of the Lord kindled against the people and struck them with plague.

If this problem was not enough, Miriam and Aaron were envious of the special position of Moses as a spokesman of God and, using as pretext the Cushite woman (Ethiopian) he had taken, they caused contention, but the Lord rebuked them. Miriam became a leper, and through the intercession of Moses she was healed, however, shut out of the camp for seven days.

Shortly after, two hundred and fifty men led by Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled against the spiritual leadership of Moses and Aaron, because for them the whole congregation was holy. Moreover, Korah was from the tribe of Levi, from the family of Kohathites, like Aaron, and carried the ark and the sacred objects; he was a Levite, however, was not of the priestly lineage because he wasn’t a descendant of Amram, father of Aaron and Moses, but from Izhar, the brother of Amram (Ex. 6: 21; Num. 16: 1; 1 Chr. 6: 33-38). The Lord opened the earth beneath the feet of the three rebels and swallowed them, as well as their families. The other two hundred and fifty were consumed by His fire. From the seed of Korah (Num. 26: 11) Elkanah father of Samuel was born (1 Chr. 6: 22; 27).

The next day the entire congregation complained against Moses and Aaron, accusing them of killing their brothers. But God, with great wrath, was already consuming the people with plague. Moses and Aaron interceded for them and the plague ceased; however, another fourteen thousand and seven hundred died. Thus, the Lord told to the twelve princes of the tribes that brought their staffs to the tent of meeting and the staff that He chose would flourish and the quarrels would cease. Aaron’s staff was for the house of Levi; it bloomed on the next day and was placed beside the Ark of the Covenant as a sign of God’s choice.

By divine command, Moses sent twelve men to spy the land God promised them (Num. 13: 1-17), a prince of each tribe of Israel, among them Caleb by the tribe of Judah, and Joshua, by the tribe of Ephraim. They returned after forty days. Joshua and Caleb showed them the fruit of the land: a cluster of grapes that they brought in a stick, as well as pomegranates and figs. Nevertheless, the other ten spies conveyed fear to the people when they told them about the nations that inhabited the region: giants (Anakims), before whom the Israelites seemed locusts. Only Joshua and Caleb saw the land with good eyes and with daring to conquer it. The people complained again against Moses and Aaron and they prostrated themselves before the congregation. They wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb too. Then the glory of the Lord appeared upon the Tabernacle, willing to decimate the people. Again, Moses interceded for them with God, but He gave the penalty: none of the men over twenty years old who left Egypt, putting Him to the test ten times (Num. 14: 11; 21-23 cf. Ps. 78: 40-41), would see the Promised Land, for would die in the wilderness; only the second generation would see it. Also Joshua and Caleb would see it for having persevered and believed in the promise (Num. 14: 21-24; 29-30). This conversation between God and Moses took place in Kadesh-Barnea (Num. 33: 36; Num. 33: 36). From then on they would wander in the desert for forty years (Num. 14: 34). The other ten spies died of plague before the Lord. After Aaron's death (Num 33: 37-38) the people return to Ezion-Geber and begin their journey towards the Promised Land (Nm 33: 38-49).

The ten times people put God to the test until this point of the story were:

- 1) By the Red Sea, before the crossing: Ex. 14: 11-12
- 2) In Mara, because of the bitter water: Ex 15: 22-25.
- 3) In Taberah, when the people began to complain about their hardships: Num. 11: 1-3; Deut. 9: 22. Taberah means: fiery, burnt.
- 4) Complaint for wanting the food of the Egyptians. God gave them Manna in the morning and sent the quails in the evening: Ex. 16: 1-8; 11-15; 31; Num. 11: 4-7; 13; 31-35; Deut. 9: 22; Ps. 78: 23-31 and Ps. 106: 14-15, where the psalmist repeats the event in the desert and God's reaction.
- 5) They complained for not having water to drink; and the place came to be called Massah and Meribah due to the provocation (Massah means 'testing') and the quarrel of the people (Meribah means 'quarreling'): Ex. 17: 1-2; 5-7; Deut. 9: 22.
- 6) The golden calf: Ex. 32: 1-10; Ps. 106: 19-23.
- 7) Miriam and Aaron oppose Moses: Num. 12: 1; 6-10; 13; 15.
- 8) The rebellion of Korah. This incident may have occurred while the men were exploring out the land (in the forty days when they were out of the camp): Num. 16: 1-3; 8-10; 28-33; 35; Ps. 106: 16-18.
- 9) Complaint against the leadership of Moses and Aaron (The budding of Aaron's staff): Num. 16: 41-50; Num. 17: 5-8.
- 10) Complaint against Moses and Aaron after the report of the ten spies: Num. 13: 1-3; 25-26; 32; Num. 14: 1-4; Ps. 106: 24-27.

The trajectory of the Israelites until this point of the conversation between God and Moses in Kadesh-Barnea can be seen in Num. 33: 1-37.

The stages of Israel's journey from Egypt (Num. 33: 1-37) are: Rameses – Succoth – Etham – returned to Pi Hahiroth, to the east of Baal Zephon, and camped near Migdol – they crossed the Red Sea – Desert of Etham – Marah – Elim – camped by the Red Sea – desert of Sin – Dophkah – Alush – Rephidim – Desert of Sinai, where they were camped for one year (Num. 9: 1; Num. 10: 11; Ex. 40: 2; 17) – Kibroth Hattaavah (Num. 11: 35) – Hazeroth – Rithmah – Rimmon Perez – Libnah – Rissah – Kehelathah – Mount Shepher – Haradah – Makheloth – Tahath – Terah – Mithcah – Hashmonah –

Moseroth – Bene Jaakan – Hor Haggidgad – Jotbathah – Abronah – Ezion Geber – desert of Zin (Miriam died – Num. 20: 1; Num. 33: 36), where Kadesh Barnea is. At this point, the Lord uttered the punishment: they would pilgrim in the wilderness for forty years (Num. 14: 34). At the end of this period, they left Kadesh, came back to Ezion Geber (map), headed to the North and camped in Mount Hor, in the border of the land of Edom, where Aaron died (Num. 33: 37-39; Deut. 2: 1-4). Thenceforth, they would cross Zered Valley (The limit between Edom and Moab – Deut. 2: 14). From Hor they went to Zalmonah – Punon – Oboth – Iye Abarim (or Iyim) – Dibon Gad – Almon Diblathaim – mountains of Abarim, near Nebo – plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho (Num. 33: 40-49).

As there was no water for the people (Num. 20: 1-13; Deut. 32: 51), there was new contend against Moses, and God ordered him and Aaron to take the staff and *spoke* to the rock so that it flowed with water. However, instead of speaking to the rock, Moses struck it twice with his staff. Water went out and they drank. For this disobedience, because the pressure of the people provoked an unthinking attitude in Moses, he and Aaron were forbidden to enter the land of Canaan. That's why the Lord said that they did not trust in Him enough to honor Him as holy in the sight of the Israelites (Num. 20: 12). The waters were once again called Meribah, because there was another quarrel with God: Num. 20: 1-3; 7-13; Ps. 106: 32-33. Soon after, Aaron died on Mount Hor on the 1st day of the 5th month of the 40th year of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt (Num. 33: 38). Eleazar, his son, was as high priest in his place.

The people complained again and God sent poisonous snakes to kill many children of Israel. Moses once again prayed for the people and God told him to make a bronze snake and put on a pole; if anyone that was bitten, looked at it, would heal (Num. 21: 4-9 cf. 2 Kin. 18: 4). Later, the serpent became an object of idolatrous worship (2 Kin. 18: 4 – King Hezekiah got rid of it). It was called Nehushtan (the footnote of the NIV says, 'Nehushtan in Hebrew sounds like the Hebrew word for bronze and snake and unclean thing'). The note also says that in the original the phrase 'It was called Nehushtan' may be: 'He called it Nehushtan' referring to Moses as the one who gave it this name).

The bible often translates, indifferently, the word 'copper' (in Hebrew, nehosheth or nchosheth – Num. 21: 9; Deut. 8: 9; Ezra 8: 27; Job 41: 27) by 'bronze' (nehushah – bronze is a yellowish-brown alloy of copper with up to one-third tin; Ezek. 1: 4 uses the word hashmal – 'gleaming amber' in our translation – to describe true brass, a yellow alloy of copper and zinc). In Num. 21: 9, when referring to the 'bronze serpent', the bible writes the word nchosheth, corresponding to 'copper'. The word for serpent is 'nachash'.

The people wandered a few more months in the desert, until the Lord began to lead them toward the north to Bashan and Ammon, regions at the east of the River Jordan. He was training them to be conquerors of the Promised Land. God gave them victory over the two Amorite kings of these lands (Sihon, King of Heshbon and Og, king of Bashan).

When they reached the plains of Moab along the Jordan near Jericho, the Moabite king (Balak) was afraid of the Israelites and hired Balaam, a famous Assyrian soothsayer, to curse them. God reversed the situation and Balaam for three times blessed Israel. He and Balak went back each one to his land and Israel stayed camped in the plains of Moab. Later, Balaam was killed by the Israelites when they defeated the Moabites, before crossing the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land (Num. 31: 8).

Still in the plains of Moab the people worshiped Baal of Peor (Num. 25: 1-3 (1-18); Ps. 106: 28-31; Ps. 78: 56-59), the main Moabite deity. Peor was a well-known hill in the region. The Israelites began worshiping that deity, and this provoked the wrath of

God. An Israelite brought a Midianite woman to the camp; then, the plague began to decimate the people. Thanks to Phinehas, the priest, son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron, the worship of Baal of Peor ceased, for he drove the spear through the bodies of the Israelite and the woman he had brought to the camp, killing them inside the tent. The plague killed 24,000 people.

God called Moses and brought him up to Mount Nebo to glimpse the land before he died, and ordered him to lay his hands on Joshua in order to take his place in the leadership. Moses repeated the laws for the people and blessed them. The bible says (Deut. 34: 6) that Moses died there, at hundred and twenty years old and God buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, where nobody found his body.

Important lessons from Moses:

- 1) *Nothing and no one can kill the project of God:* Pharaoh, despite all attempts to stop the growth of the Hebrew people, failed to kill Moses, newborn under those orders. So, we can say that Moses was God's plan for His people at that moment of humanity and nobody could prevent his birth or his growth as the Lord had already planned for him. All the events that followed his birth were in total control of God. When He has a project in our lives, however much people try to delay it, stop it or kill it, it will be accomplished, because the Lord's hand is upon it.
- 2) *God is responsible for His project from the beginning to the end,* taking care of every detail and giving provision and supply for it to go ahead: we can see that God provided Moses breast-feeding and the care of him as a baby, and then, his livelihood and education as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He provided his training in all areas as if he was the future king of Egypt. He needed study and wisdom in the science and Egyptian policy, alongside the combat training, as was done with a warrior. He learned to defend himself, learned to be a leader in the military sphere. All this enabled him to survive in the wilderness. With us the same thing occurs. When God has a plan for us, He personally prepares all our training. All experiences of life we go through are lessons that He uses for our growth and nothing will be lost; on the contrary, everything we learn comes to have an objective that fits perfectly into His plans for us.
- 3) *When a stage of learning ends God provides the favorable conditions for the other:* when God finished the training of Moses in the Egyptian court, He took him to the desert (after having killed his compatriot and hid him in the sand), where he learned to shepherd sheep; an activity completely different from everything he had done so far, but that was an increase of God in his life, because the first step aimed to prepare him as a military leader and this second step aimed to prepare him as a spiritual leader. Here, Moses needed to learn to develop some gifts such as meekness, patience, perseverance, the care for the sheep, to think more about God, to depend more on Him and draw closer to Him. The same way it happens in our lives. He prepares us, first, with appropriate conditions to act in the natural world and then, prepares us to know more closely His kingdom and the spiritual world, aiming to make us leaders, kings and priests as it is written in His word; in short, He gives us conditions to act with authority so that we can act in His name on earth and in the spiritual world. He wants to reveal Himself through our testimony of life to those who do not know Him yet, and to make us conquer His fullness and His abundance, for we are His children and heirs.

- 4) *When the training period ends, the revelation of God becomes clear:* Moses met God on Mount Horeb, before the burning bush; there, he knew clearly the plan of the Lord for his life. We, likewise, when finish our training period we experience our 'moment of bush', where what God wants from us becomes clear. The divine revelation comes in a clear and unmistakable manner.
- 5) *Faith:* as the patriarchs before him, Moses learned to develop his faith in God in an active and growing way; every challenge put him in an exercise of faith, for many depended on it to be freed from captivity and survive in poor conditions. It began with the meeting with Aaron and the visit to Pharaoh, going through all the miracles and wonders in Egypt, in the Red Sea and in the desert until being able to contemplate the Promised Land.
- 6) *God does not look the exterior, but the interior formed by Him in us:* in other words, He does not take into account our weaknesses or our arguments, but the strength of our spirit and the willingness of our soul to His service. As happened with David when he was anointed, God did not look at appearance but to the heart, and chose him among the eight sons of Jesse. Like Moses argued with Him based on his impossibilities, we even can put before Him our opinions, feelings, arguments and limitations; but He makes us look with His eyes, not ours. He makes us see the ability of His Spirit in us and believe in His guidance and help to accomplish our mission successfully.
- 7) *God is in control of all things* and, even if the enemy seems to have power, the Lord makes His will prevail to protect and save those who are His. We can see this through the plagues He sent to Egypt. Neither the powers of the magicians nor the authority of Pharaoh were able to prevent the departure of people from bondage. God showed His mighty hand in favor of the oppressed and His chosen.
- 8) *The word of God opens the sea of impossibilities:* Moses is the symbol of the prophetic word in the Church, besides symbolizing the Law. Thus, the prophetic word of God opens the sea of impossibilities (*the Red Sea*) and defeats the enemy. The miracle becomes possible. When the people crossed the sea, they experienced a new condition of life. They were no longer slaves but future leaders and conquerors. Likewise, the crossing of the Red Sea is an important landmark in the life of the believer, because it prefigures the water baptism, where God separates us from the old life as slaves of the world (Egypt) and prepares us to give us His kingdom. The word *Egypt*, in Hebrew, *Mizraim*, means *land of slavery, dilemma, conflict, confusion, affliction, disturbance, trouble*.
- 9) *The praise and gratitude to God for victory:* after they crossed the Red Sea, the bible says that Moses and Miriam sang a song in gratitude for the victory that the Lord had given them.
- 10) *Meekness, patience, discipline and ability to manage the adverse conditions and the human wills:* as soon as they crossed the Red Sea and entered the desert, Moses had to face the complaint of the people, which happened for almost forty years. Often he had to use discipline to make clear his position of authority. He had to exercise faith in God, knowing that He was in the control of everything, and His will would finally prevail.
- 11) *God's help comes, sometimes, from the improbable:* we can see this in the passages where God meets the thirst of the people through a rock. It is unlikely to get water from a stone, but God wanted to be glorified in such miracles. Figuratively, the *Rock is Jesus*, and it is from Him that flow the living waters to renew us in our spiritual walk. It's touching the *Rock* that we receive eternal life (Deut. 32: 15; Ezek. 47: 1; Zech. 14: 8; Jn. 7: 38; Jn. 3: 36).

- 12) *Sometimes, an unexpected fight is the beginning of the training, even if we have no apparent conditions:* we can see this when they had to face Amalek. They were not yet a trained army; indeed, they were newly-freed of slavery; they had no apparent conditions of winning. The victory came by faith. With this situation, God was already preparing them to be conquerors; He was doing them to see themselves as winners.
- 13) *God fulfilled the promise to Moses* when He spoke to him in the burning bush, that he would be confirmed as leader of the Lord. The sign is that he would return to that place with the people and worship the Lord there. The interesting is that, often, the name *Horeb* is used as *Sinai*, although in the strict sense, Mount Horeb is a Mount in Sinai mountain range. Many people believe that Mount Sinai received its name for being located in the wilderness of Sin, therefore, '*Sim-nai*' ('*Sin*' means: '*marsh*'). *Horeb* means: *dry, desert*, apparently a contrast with *Sinai*, which means: *woodland of the Lord*. When we think of a forest we do not associate it to a desert, but a fertile place and full of life. Thus, the promise of God that is made when we are in a desert is accomplished, bringing life and abundance. The first time God appeared to Moses there, it was in an unusual way but simple, like a bush. When he returned with the people to Sinai, the manifestation of God was prodigious, with lightning and thunder, fire and clouds.
- 14) *To delegate tasks:* a leader must learn to delegate certain functions not to be burdened with the smallest things that can take his time of being in a more intimate relationship with God; only then, he can receive the largest and most important directions for the ministry. Moses had to meet the guidelines of Jethro to be freer to listen to the Lord's voice, instead of judging unimportant causes among the people.
- 15) *To have intimacy with God it is necessary to go up to a high place, away from the crowd:* Moses received the laws and statutes of God in private contact with Him at the top of Sinai, far from the crowd, so that he could be ahead of his mission. When we want to receive important divine revelations, we must move away from the crowd, from the presence of those who are in the flesh and have no commitment to Him.
- 16) *Submission and surrender bring the correct guidelines for the leader:* Moses stayed forty days and forty nights in the presence of the Lord and we can imagine that he was fasting, with his soul and spirit totally focused on God, in order to receive from Him the important guidelines for the nation. Likewise, when we are called by God to a special purpose, we must put ourselves in a position of submission and surrender without worrying about the flesh or other distractions that can take His place as Lord of the situation.
- 17) *Lack of commitment to God leads to insecurity, fickleness and idolatry:* that's what we see when the people, without the presence of the leader, for Moses symbolized God's presence with them, built the golden calf. They felt cut off from the communion with the Lord, what placed them in an unfavorable position of weakness and sin.
- 18) *To be an intercessor:* Moses like Abraham and Isaac, for example, was an intercessor. God can adapt His methods to our choices, but His pre-established laws are immutable, for His righteousness will never fail to be carried out. Several times, Moses prevented God Himself from consuming the people for their sin and start all over again only with him (Moses). However, we can see that He never failed to execute His justice by punishing individual sin to leave His holiness untouched. Likewise, He used Moses himself with authority and discipline to teach the truth, what was correct, not covering up the error or sin. We can notice that in several

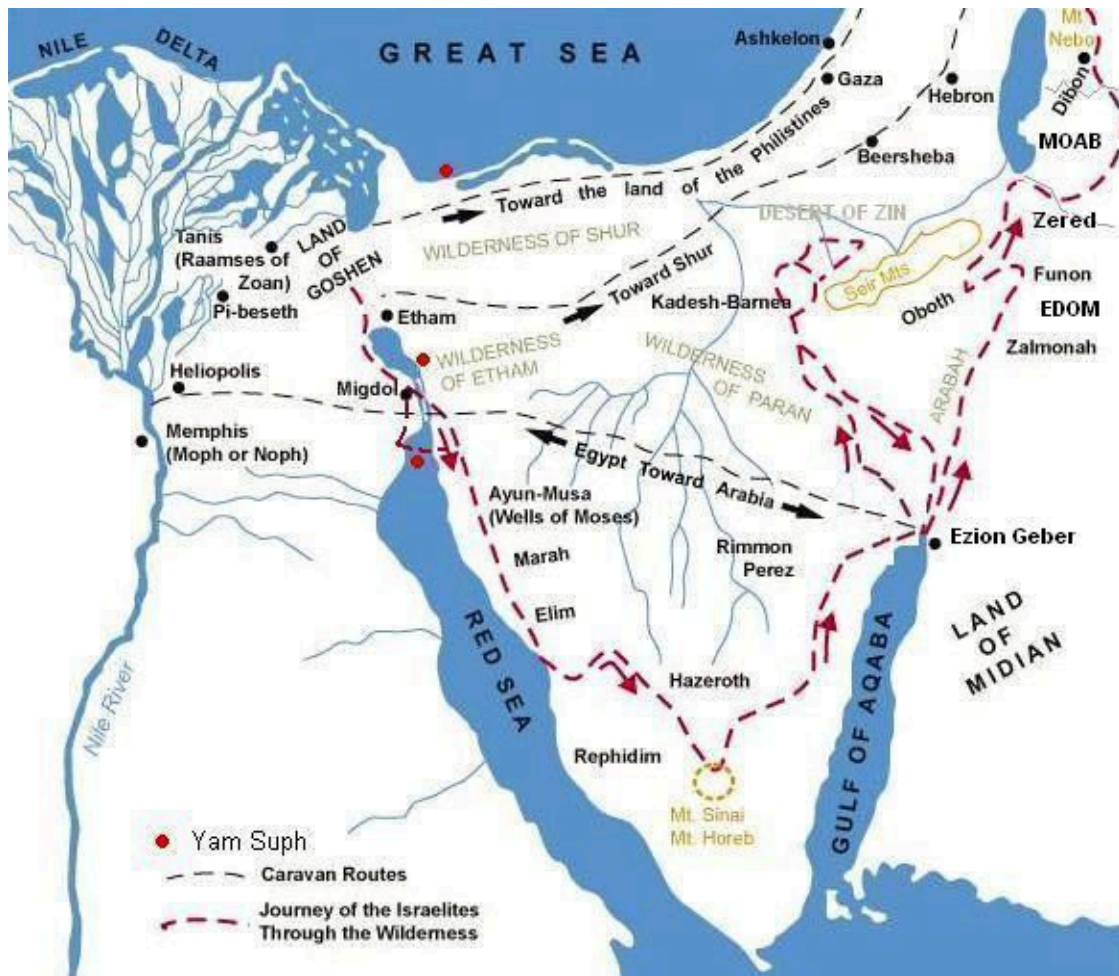
occasions the attitude of Moses was even harsh to preserve the innocent from a greater harm.

- 19) *The leader must be bold and not be afraid of knowing more of God:* Moses was very bold in asking God to let him see His glory. He wanted more of Him; he needed to know Him deeply in order to proceed on his journey. The Lord answered his request, which increased the faith and the safety in him. So, we do not need to be afraid to ask for more of God, for this will increase our faith in Him and will put us in a new level of relationship with Him.
- 20) *Distorted vision, not to give value to the freedom of God and not to give value to the spiritual food leads us to complaint and moves us away from Him:* that's what happened to the people when they despised all that the Lord had done on their behalf and came to complain about the food (*Manna*), wanting the food of Egypt. The people, symbolically, disdained the spiritual food of God to feed the lusts of the flesh. They did not value the freedom that He had brought to them. They were ungrateful.
- 21) *Often the leader also experiences human frailty, which should lead him to seek help in the Lord:* Moses found himself powerless in the face of the constant complaints of the people, but presented his complaint to the Lord and did what other men in the bible did: the fatigue almost led him to forget the victories that he had conquered and the sustaining power of God over his life and wanted to die. The same happened with Elijah after he achieved a great victory over the prophets of Baal: he wanted death due to the psychological and spiritual exhaustion. Neither of them died, but they were comforted and enlivened by the Lord.
- 22) *God does not overburden anyone, for He knows our limit:* Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had already advised him to delegate tasks and seek for assistants to judge the people. But, here, it was God himself who divided His Spirit among seventy of the elders of Israel to carry the spiritual leadership along with Moses. He recognized his human limitation and supplied him with His strength.
- 23) *We must pray according to God's will:* not always our prayer requests are good. That's what happened when the people rebelled against God and against Moses, asking meat to eat and the quails of the desert came to feed them, but when they were still eating, the wrath of the Lord destroyed them. They didn't ask according to His will. They were ungrateful and disobedient and constantly provoked Him. The bible speaks in the Epistle of Jam. 4: 3: "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures", and in Ps. 78: 23-31 and Ps. 106: 14-15, the psalmist repeats the event in the desert and God's reaction. Here He satisfied the people's will, bad will, aiming at their own flesh; they asked wrongly, as James says. This teaches us that He makes us see where we went wrong and the consequences of our wrong request.
- 24) *Jealousy among brothers generates sin (leprosy), emotional wounds and isolation:* we can see this when Miriam and Aaron conspired against Moses because they envied the leadership that God had given him. The result was that He confirmed His choice and still punished the envious, showing clearly their sin before them (leprosy), taking them to isolation and removing them from His presence.
- 25) *Cowardice, unbelief and weaknesses of character can steal the faith of the weakest and lead to a delay of the blessing:* that's what happened when the ten spies returned and polluted the Israelites with their distorted view of the facts. Their cowardice and their wrong action generated serious consequences for an entire nation, making it go in pilgrimage in the wilderness for forty years, therefore delaying the possession of the blessing. Our weaknesses of character may not be a

stumbling block for the young in faith, for they may become discouraged and give up; even though we feel incapable sometimes, our mouth must proclaim the word of God with faith. Paying heed to lying words brings injustice (Joshua and Caleb were almost stoned by the people who saw themselves discouraged and desperate).

- 26) *Those who can see through the eyes of God gain the right of inheritance*: contrary to the ten spies, Joshua and Caleb saw the Promised Land through the eyes of God, therefore, they were the only ones of that generation that won from Him the right to the inheritance of Canaan.
- 27) *Patience*: forty years in the desert developed the patience and perseverance, in addition to be an emotional and spiritual treatment, not only to Moses, Joshua and Caleb, but mainly for that nation. Forty in the bible refers to a time of learning or the time of a generation. All of them needed to learn patience because they were not ready to receive the blessing. The three men who were ready to receive it had to exercise this patience and improve it because of the mistakes of others. Not only patience was improved, as well as faith in God.
- 28) *Time to renew the mind and learn to give value to the promise and the dream of God*: the time of forty years in the desert not only improved the patience; it was a time of learning for all of them, teaching them to renew the mind and think, not in the way of the flesh, but God's way. They needed to see themselves as conquerors, not as defeated slaves. Self-worth still needed to be healed.
- 29) *Greed and competition are not part of the kingdom of God and the choice of the leader is divine, not human*: greed and competition are the weapons of the world, not the weapons of God. That's what happened to Korah, Dathan and Abiram who coveted the leadership of Moses and Aaron. The result was the punishment of the Lord and the confirmation of His choice about who was in the leadership. It's not men who elect leaders, but God Himself. He puts the spiritual authority over whom He wills and makes this very clear. With the Lord there is no power struggle.
- 30) *Disobedience is barrier to the blessing and God never repeats the same strategies with us*: the disobedience of Moses and Aaron to the orders of God about *speaking to the rock, not hurting it with the staff*, prevented them from taking possession of the land. They thought the Lord would use the same strategies He had used in the past, but this time He wanted to do differently to show them that He is a creative God and that holds all the power; furthermore, His different strategies place us dependent on Him so that the glory may always be His, not ours. But we can not forget that Moses and Aaron were feeling very pressured by the people, and the weakness of the flesh prevailed over the power of the spirit.
- 31) *Sin creates gaps for the devil (snake)*: here again, the sin of rebellion and unbelief of the people opened gap to devastation and death. God sent poisonous snakes, that is, He delivered them again in the hands of the enemy so that they could learn that disobedience and sin cause death. However, He gave a strategy of escape and salvation. He commanded Moses to make a bronze snake and hung it in a pole and everyone that looked at it would be saved. The bronze snake foreshadows the CROSS, the redemption through the blood of Jesus, freeing us from sin and death (Jn. 3: 14-15).
- 32) *God gives us a real experience to confirm His healing upon our lives*: when they were ending their journey in the wilderness and were ready to enter the land of Canaan, God gave them a practical experience to show them that they were healed and transformed, that they were not slaves anymore, but conquerors. He put them to take the region of Bashan and Ammon, before they camped in the plains of Moab, near Jericho. They were about to enter the Promised Land.

33) *The blessing of God still stands, even if given a long time ago:* God had given to Abraham the blessing of being protected by Him saying: “I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse.” The word was still in effect (Num. 24: 9b), so Balaam could not curse the chosen people. The Lord was still caring for His promise. Surely there is no enchantment, no divination against God’s people (Num. 23: 23a).



EXODUS (Yam Suph = Sea of Reeds)



TABERNACLE

Duties of the Levites (Descendants of Levi, son of Jacob, separated for the priesthood in the tabernacle): Levi begot Gershon, Kohath and Merari. It was from the descendants of Kohath that Moses, Aaron and Miriam were born. Kohath's family took care of the most holy things of the tabernacle, after Aaron and his sons cover them; then they carried them, including the Ark of the Covenant. Aaron and his sons took care of the priesthood itself, serving in the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place. Gershon's family took care to carry the curtains and the outer covering, as well as other utensils of the tabernacle, not the sacred objects; and the family of Merari was responsible for the objects, the stakes and everything else that was in the Outer Court the tabernacle, besides its wood frames.



THE BRONZE SNAKE AND JORDAN RIVER

Joshua – 9th lesson



Reference texts: Josh. 1–24

Summary:

Moses had died and the leadership of the people was now on Joshua. He was called Hoshea by his family (Hoshea, הוֹשֵׁעַ, ‘savior, deliverer’, Strong #1954; Num. 13: 8; 16; Deut. 32: 44), but it was Moses who called him Joshua (Yehôshua‘, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, Strong #3091, YHWH saved). He was son of Nun, descendant of Ephraim (1 Chr. 7: 27).

God told him to cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land, assuring him that any place that he set his feet would be his. He confirmed His protection and renewed his hope of victory, giving him strength and courage to enter Canaan.

As the tribes of Gad, Reuben and half tribe of Manasseh had their land at this side of the Jordan, they agreed to leave their families here and cross the river to help their brothers to take possession of theirs; then they might come back home.

Joshua sent two spies ahead to observe the city of Jericho. They entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there. Their arrival was announced to the king of Jericho, who sent men to search the woman’s home to find them, but she hid them well and misguided their persecutors.

Everyone in that land had heard of the Israelites and their mighty God, and they feared them. Then, Rahab made a deal with the spies that they would spare her life, as well as her family, because she protected them in her home and, in turn, she would not betray the mission of the children of Israel to the citizens there.

Her house was over the city wall and she helped them to go down to the ground by a rope. They told her to tie a scarlet cord to the window and thus her whole house would be spared from destruction.

The spies told Joshua what they saw and stayed on the banks of the Jordan for three days. There, Joshua instructed the people to cross the river after the ark of the Lord, which would be carried by the Levites, and Israel would keep more or less a distance of thousand yards of it. By placing the soles of the priests’ feet in the riverbed, it happened that the waters divided and the river dried up as had happened to the Red Sea. The Levites remained with the ark in the middle of the Jordan River until all the people crossed. A leader from each tribe of Israel took a stone from its bed and took it to the camp. In the place where the ark was, twelve stones were also erected as a memorial to the Lord. When the soles of the priests’ feet stepped on dry land, the waters of the Jordan returned to run as before. They camped in Gilgal, on the eastern border of Jericho; with the twelve stones that were taken from the river, Joshua erected a column in Gilgal in memorial to the Lord for the victory.

Then the Lord told him to circumcise the people, for those that now entered the Promised Land had been born in the desert and had not been circumcised like their

parents. They stayed in the camp until they were healed. Joshua heard again God's voice saying: "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt", so that place is called Gilgal, which means *to roll, to remove*.

Thus, the Lord reaffirmed the covenant with His people. They celebrated Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening in the plains of Jericho. The next day, the people ate the produce from the land of Canaan, for the manna ceased.

Joshua was standing at the foot of Jericho when he looked up and saw the angel of the Lord who confirmed the victory over the enemies and gave him strategies to take possession of the city: they would go round it once for six consecutive days, with the priests ahead carrying the ark of the covenant and blowing trumpets of rams' horns, and on the seventh day, they would do it for seven times. During the six days the Israelites would be in complete silence and in the seventh, after the horns blow, they would scream and the wall of the city would fall down; they would plunder it, but should not take the spoils for themselves, for it was condemned by God. Only gold, silver, bronze and iron they would consecrate to the Lord and would go to His treasury. Also Rahab and her family would be spared.

Everything was destroyed when the wall fell down. Rahab and her kindred were saved and camped outside the camp of Israel until they were incorporated into the nation, for later Rahab married one of the spies, Salmon, and became part of the Israelite people (Matt. 1: 4-5; 1 Chr. 2: 11), by the tribe of Judah. To make that achievement a permanent memorial of God's provision and deliverance, Joshua cursed every man who tried to raise and rebuild the city, at the expense of the lives of his firstborn and his youngest. The prophecy was fulfilled in 1 Kin. 16: 34.

However, Achan, son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi (NIV and in Septuagint, Zimri), the son of Zerah, a descendant of Judah, took of the accursed things which God had forbidden the Israelites to touch.

The next town was *Ai (ruin)*, very small compared to Jericho, so they were confident that with only two or three thousand men they would defeat it, but they were vanquished, injured and persecuted by the citizens of Ai.

Then Joshua fell on his face and cried to the Lord because he didn't understand why God had forsaken them. But He said that Israel had sinned and kept things condemned, hiding them in their luggage. As long as they did not eliminate what they stole from their midst, the Lord would not go with them. In the morning God revealed with who the condemned things were and His punishment was that the man was burned, as well as everything he had. Achan was found guilty and revealed that he had hidden a beautiful Babylonian robe, two hundred shekels of silver (2,300 kg or 5 pounds) and a bar of gold weighting fifty shekels (0,6 kg or 1 ¼ pounds) in the earth into his tent. Everything was burned in the valley of Achor according to the sentence of the Lord, as also Achan, his entire family, his cattle, his tent and belongings. And all Israel stoned them and burned them. So clean and pure in God's eyes, they took Ai by ambush and looted it. They killed its king and all the inhabitants, getting the spoils with them. Joshua raised an altar to the Lord on Mount Ebal and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings (fellowship offerings), which symbolized the gratitude to God for His victory as service of thanksgiving we do today. There, he wrote a copy of the Law of Moses and read it to all the people.

The valley of Achor (Josh 7: 24-26; Isa. 65: 10; Hos. 2: 25), on the border of Judah (Josh. 15: 7), is probably the Wadi Qelt, located 1.6 km south of Jericho. We can see today in this Wadi a Byzantine Christian monastery called Saint George Monastery, built in 340 CE and destroyed by the Persians in 614 CE (the Sassanian dynasty: 224–

651). It was rebuilt and abandoned in the 12th century and finally rebuilt and inhabited by Greek-Orthodox monks in the 19th century. Its name in Arabic is Mar Jaras.



The valley of Achor in the Wadi Qelt in Israel



Details of Saint George Monastery

The inhabitants of Gibeon, afraid of Joshua, sent spies disguised as ambassadors from a distant land to make agreement with Israel, but their stratagem was discovered after three days and, as the Israelites could not go back on the promises they had made of not killing them, they sentenced them to forced labor, and all his descendants would be forever slaves of the people of God.

The king of Jerusalem made a covenant with four other kings to fight against Gibeon, for it had made an agreement with the Israelites. However, God gave them in the hands of Joshua; He threw down huge stones from heaven on them and they died. The bible says that on this day, by the word of Joshua, the sun and the moon stopped in the sky until the battle was won. So, God gave them victory over the Amorites. The five kings who had hidden in a cave at Makkedah were killed by the Israelites and hung on a tree. After this, they removed them and buried them there.

Joshua then came into Makkedah, destroying the entire city and its king. The other six cities around were also taken by men of war and destroyed, as well as their kings. They returned to the camp in Gilgal. The next day the Lord gave them victory over another three kings. This way, Joshua took the whole land, including the cities of Anakims (only a few survived in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod, region of the Philistines: Josh. 11: 22).

Some years passed and the battles of conquest of the land came to an end. However, some regions were not yet conquered. Joshua was old. The lands were: the land of the Philistines (Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron – Josh. 13: 1-6); a part to the South of Canaan, the land of Avvim; to the North, the land of Sidonians, the Gebalites (the area of Byblos) and all of Lebanon at the foot of Mount Hermon; Geshur, to the East of River Jordan, and Maacah (Josh. 13: 13).

The Lord commanded him to distribute the land among His people. The land not conquered would be divided in the same way and it would be up to the people to take it, as well to defeat the enemies that were in it (Josh. 11: 22; Josh. 15: 63; Josh. 16: 10; Josh. 17: 12; Judg. 1: 21; Judg. 1: 27-36). Only the Levites had no inheritance, because the Lord had told them that He would be their inheritance. They received cities to dwell (forty-eight cities) and its surroundings for their livestock and their property (Josh. 14: 4; Josh. 21: 41). Joshua blessed Caleb, son of Jephunneh, the *Kenizzite*, and gave him *Hebron* (= *union, confederation*), a part among the children of Judah. It was, in fact, the field of the town with its villages (Josh. 20: 12), because the town itself had fallen by lot to the Levites, besides being Hebron also a city of refuge (the others are: Kedesh, Shechem, Bezer, Ramoth, Golan). *Kenizzite* ('*saved once for all*', '*thrown to the corner*', '*push aside*'), from the sons of Kenaz, was a descendant of Eliphaz, the eldest son of Edom (or Esau, Gen. 36: 11; 15; 42; 1 Chr. 1: 36; 53). Part of this people joined the Jews (1 Chr. 4: 13-15), like Caleb, by the tribe of Judah. Caleb defeated the Anakims (Anakites) of this region with the help of his nephew Othniel and gave him Achsah his daughter as wife (Judg. 1: 13; Josh. 15: 13-19). She, in turn, asked him a present: the springs of water, not dry land. Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs. Having just divided the land by inheritance, the children of Israel gave to Joshua the city which he asked: *Timnath Serah* (*Timnath Heres*), which means *portion of the sun or double portion*, in the hill country of Ephraim; he built the city and dwelt in it.

Long after the Lord had given rest unto Israel from all his enemies around, now being Joshua old, he called all Israel and urged the people to observe the law of the Lord, reminding them of the victories He had given, and warning them to not serve other gods. The people renewed their covenant before the Lord.

Joshua died at the age of one hundred and ten years and was buried in his own heritage. Eleazar son of Aaron, also died and they buried him in Gibeah (in the hill country of Ephraim), that belonged to his son Phinehas, a Levite, who took his place.

Important lessons from Joshua:

- 1) *Patience and meekness:* we must remember that Joshua was a follower of Moses and chosen by God to be his successor. The bible reports that when Moses ascended the Mount to receive the tablets of the Law, Joshua waited at one point of the path until he returned. It was Joshua who stood at the entrance of the tent of meeting when Moses spoke to the Lord. Therefore, we can imagine that these qualities were incorporated into his personality or developed in it, if he already had them, in intimate contact with his leader. Patience and meekness were, undoubtedly, essential qualities of a conqueror of the Promised Land, because if they were missing, it could be a disaster for the nation. With us occurs in the same way. When we want to take definitive possession of our land, we must have the patience and meekness to be in the total dependence on God, waiting for the right moment to act and realize His strategies.
- 2) *God always fulfills His promises and completes what He started:* the promise was made to Abraham, passing to Isaac, Jacob and Joseph in regard to the offspring, but only began to have accomplishment with regard to the Promised Land when the children of Israel left Egypt. It would only be complete before the eyes of the world with the definitive conquest of Canaan by the Israelites. Therefore, the Lord raised Joshua to carry out His initial plan so that all people saw that He was the true God and trustworthy, a God who fulfills His word.
- 3) *Individualism is not part of the designs of God:* when God raises us to do something, He actually thinks about the collectivity and wants us to think so too. That's what happened when they entered Canaan. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and half tribe of Manasseh had already conquered their land on the east side of Jordan River, but the Lord directed Joshua that they left their families and helped their brothers to take possession of theirs; only then they would come back. It is the famous saying, "*one for all and all for one*", that was the common to happen in the Jewish mentality of Ancient times. Rarely they thought in their attitudes as isolated acts; on the contrary, everything they did involved the whole community, so God spoke to Moses on destroying all the people when He found sin in some individuals; their actions had repercussions on the lives of their fellow men, as we will see later with Achan (item 12). This may seem a bit unfair to us, but we should think that this 'law' still continues to act in a certain way, liking it or not, because our attitudes are reflected in the lives of many people around us. If we sin or commit thoughtless acts, others may suffer for it. And if we take decisions according to God's will, many can be freed and blessed. So when He blesses us or chooses us for a special purpose, He is thinking in making us a blessing to many brothers, not only to bless us individually.
- 4) *Boldness and willingness to change the way of living generate transformation and miracle:* here, it is about Rahab, who decided to change her attitude and know the true salvation. Probably, she was already in the plans of God, so much that she had her eyes opened to see the opportunity to be free from a life of sin and humiliation when the two spies came into her house. According to the biblical account, since

Moses left Egypt, the peoples of other lands began to take notice of the God of the Israelites and, when they took the land of the Amorites (Heshbon and Bashan) all other dwellers of Canaan began to fear before Joshua. It is likely that Rahab had already taken notice of the God of Israel before the Jews cross the Jordan River. As she said, the people of Jericho were afraid; surely, she had time to meditate, and found within her the boldness to change her life completely. Anyway, the Lord honored her, marrying her with a descendant of Judah, which would make her an ancestor of David. As a lesson for us, we can say that when we have the boldness to take a new position in any area of our lives, God honors us, brings us the resources and gives us the victory so that we can be living witnesses of His power.

- 5) *When we have the mark of the blood of Jesus on us we are spared from destruction:* the scarlet cord that Rahab hung in the window was another way to express God's protection over His people, as He did in Egypt with the blood of the lamb on the doors of the houses, when the Destroyer came, killing all the firstborn. It's the same way of the Lord to protect us from the enemy, when we have on us the mark of the blood of His Son.
- 6) *Changing our mind can be the decisive step to take possession of the blessing:* crossing the Jordan symbolizes the separation of God's mind from the mind of man, to be cleansed of leprosy, to pass through the watershed. When the people crossed the Jordan River, they could see themselves as conquerors and winners, no longer as slaves of other nations; in other words, they only took possession of the land, truly, when they had an inner certainty that were no longer slaves but a free nation by the hand of God. The interesting here is that the priests were a key piece in the divine plan, for they were the first to have to show daring and courage to put their feet into the river, carrying the ark, believing in His word that the waters would be divided once they stepped on them. They went ahead of the people, taking the presence of God, symbolized by the Ark of the Covenant, and waited for everyone to pass, and after, to go out of the riverbed. Therefore, our thought must always be in obedience to the Lord, in constant renewal and growth so that we can have more victories.
- 7) *To remember the author of our achievement:* as soon as they left the Jordan the twelve stones that they erected in the river bed as a memorial to the Lord stayed there and were never removed, as well as those who were brought to the camp were also erected as column in memorial to God for His victory. When we receive a blessing in our lives, we must remember who was the strategist and the author of it and proclaim His glory.
- 8) *When something ceases it is because we are ready for the new of God:* on the day after Passover the manna ceased and the people ate the produce of the land of Canaan. Now, they didn't need the scarce supply from God, for they had conquered the land of plenty. They no longer needed the old food, because they had something new to enjoy. Moreover, they celebrated the Passover, which symbolizes slavery and death, but also freedom and resurrection. They buried the past, died to the old, they abandoned slavery and the old habits to be able to resurrect to the new, to freedom. We go through the same thing: when we give to God what is old we can experience His new in our life. the little supply ceases so that we can enjoy the much.
- 9) *Before the final defeat of the enemy, God reveals Himself to us with the perfect strategy:* the angel of the Lord appeared to Joshua when he was at the feet of Jericho, probably alone and at night, hidden from the adversary, trying to get information about his foible to be able to find out strategies of battle. That's when he met the angel, who supplied him with the information he needed to win. When

we're about to face a decisive battle, we must put ourselves in prayer, seeking God's guidance. Our strategies are spiritual, not carnal. The angel of the Lord here (Josh. 5: 14) was, probably, the archangel Michael, since he is the commander of the army of the Lord. If it wasn't Michael, it was another angel of war. Some people say it was about Jesus Himself, the true commander of the army of God, since the expression 'Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy' was the same spoken by the Lord to Moses at the burning bush. The text says: ¹³ Once when Joshua was by Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing before him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went to him and said to him, 'Are you one of us, or one of our adversaries?' ¹⁴ He replied, 'Neither; but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come' [In Hebrew it is written 'the chief of the army of the Lord']. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and he said to him, 'What do you command your servant, my lord?' ¹⁵ The commander of the army of the Lord said to Joshua, 'Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy'. And Joshua did so.

- 10) *Often, it is our cry of faith in God's promise that assures us victory:* on the seventh day surrounding Jericho, after the seventh round, the Israelites cried and it was this symbolic cry of faith in the divine promise that made the walls collapse. Often, it is a cry of 'Glory to God' given at the right time or a praise 'from the bottom of our heart' that ends our war and gives us victory. Probably, the citizens of Jericho were prepared for a direct attack of the Israelites but not for trumpets, sounding patiently for six days, ahead of a mute and passive people; neither they were expecting that the people shouted fiercely before attacking. This attitude troubled them and put the power of God in action, throwing down the stronghold of the enemy.
- 11) *To remember the firstfruits:* in the Law of Moses, the people were instructed to bring the Lord the offering of firstfruits to ensure God's blessing for the whole harvest. Thus, Jericho was as an *offering of the firstfruits* (*offering* = *korban*, in Hebrew, *qorbān* or *qrbh* = 'what is brought near', 'to draw near to God'; *qorbān* is practically a generic term, while others are specifically used for burnt offering, sin offering and guilt offering etc.); hence He had guided the people not to touch the spoils. This showed His sovereignty and would assure His glory over the first victory of the Israelites in Canaan. From there, they would not be defeated anymore.
- 12) *Disobeying God and touching the sacred things brings serious consequences for many people:* Achan not only disobeyed God, but with this sin he provoked a curse on the nation, for they were defeated at Ai and his whole family 'paid the price' for his acts of rebellion. According to Jewish tradition, Achan was born in the Red Sea when the people left Egypt, and saw the death of his parents in the wilderness by the sentence of God. Perhaps, this has left a hurt in his heart or a desperate desire for possessions to compensate him for the deprivation of the desert. Probably, because of this is that he acted on carnal impulse more than by reason; however, this 'oblivion' in relation to God as the *First* in everything brought him the curse and death. *Achan* Achan means 'to trouble, troublemaker, troublesome, man of tribulation, man of affliction'; and derives from Achor or Achar, in Hebrew ('ākhar: to stir up, disturb, trouble), also derived from the verb = cākhar = to trouble, to afflict, to grieve. Therefore, sin creates a curse, which affects other lives.
- 13) *God is not accomplice with sin:* in Josh. 7: 12 it is written: "Therefore the Israelites are unable to stand before their enemies; they turn their backs to their enemies, because they have become a thing devoted for destruction themselves. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you." And in v.13a the bible says: "Proceed to sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves for

tomorrow; for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, There are devoted things among you, O Israel.” God is holy and wants us to be too. Obeying His commands we will be safe and under His will.

- 14) *Evil must be uprooted because it affects the whole community*: “And the one who is taken as having the devoted things shall be burned with fire, together with all that he has, for having transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and for having done an outrageous thing in Israel” (Josh. 7: 15). Not to discourage people neither to ‘pollute’ the minds of others with the rebellion, the Lord punished physically the sin of Achan to uproot the evil from among His people. With us that live *under the Grace*, not the *Law*, confessing our sins and covering us with Jesus’ forgiving blood is the way to uproot the evil from our souls so that others around us are not affected as well. We must change our attitudes.
- 15) *God’s promise still stands, regardless of our interior willingness*: the promise on the part of God was fulfilled, giving them all the land, but on their part were deficient; over the years they discouraged, leaving some former inhabitants with them; so, later, they bore the consequences of their error, because the warnings of the Lord given to Moses and Joshua were held, taking from them the sovereignty, and making that God, by the idolatry of His people, delivered them in the hands of the enemy. Therefore, when He promises total victory over our land, we mustn’t do the job by half; rather, to persevere until all old dwellers are uprooted. This way we can live safe, without risk of a ‘counterattack.’ Look again in Josh. 11: 22; Josh. 15: 63; Josh. 16: 10; Josh. 17: 12; Judg. 1: 21; 27-36.
- 16) *The supply has to be total*: when Achsah asked Caleb a field, he gave her the dry land; however, she persevered and asked the springs of water. Then, he gave her the upper springs and lower springs, that is, the spiritual and material sources. When we took possession of our land, we should ask God to give us abundant supply in all areas, spiritual and material, the sources of heaven and earth, in order to plow and sow our land without scarcity.
- In Joshua 15: 16-19 it is written [NRSV]: “And Caleb said, ‘Whoever attacks Kiriath-sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife.’ Othniel son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. When she came to him, she urged him to ask her father for a field. As she dismounted from her donkey, Caleb said to her, ‘What do you wish?’ She said to him, ‘Give me a present [*Berakâ*]; since you have set me in the land of the Negeb [KJV: for thou hast given me a south land], give me springs of water as well.’ So Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.”
- Negeb (in Hebrew, Negev, ‘dry’) is a desert to the south of Israel, near the Sinai Peninsula and the Mediterranean Sea and that only experiences life when the rains fill the beds of its dry rivers. Kiriath-sepher (‘Village of scribes’, ancient name of Debir), which researchers have not yet been able to accurately identify with any current city, possibly was located on the northern edge of the Negeb; therefore in a very dry place. ‘Springs of water’ may refer to ‘gullots’, which are most likely cisterns or reservoirs formed by dammed wadis (wadis = dry riverbeds that fill with water in the rainy season). Ruins of ancient dams can still be found in the Negeb. Gullot is the plural of gullah (Strong #1543), meaning: a fountain, bowl or globe (all as round), pommel, spring (source of water).
- 17) *The conqueror is entitled to a double portion of anointing*: Joshua ‘paid the price’ and won, so he could dwell in the land he asked. *Timnath Serah* or *Timnath Heres* means ‘portion of the sun’ or ‘double portion.’ He was the ‘firstborn’ in the land, so

he had the right to the blessing of the firstborn, the double portion of the father, the double anointing of the light (sun) of the Lord on his life.



Deborah – 10th lesson



Reference texts: Judg. 2: 1-18; Judg. 4; Judg. 5

Summary:

The period of Judges (Begins in 1375 BC) covers the period after the people entered Canaan and after Joshua died and all the elders of Israel, they who saw all the great deeds of God in their midst (Judg. 2: 7-10; 16), and extends for a period of three hundred and twenty-five years. The other generation that arose after Joshua died did not know the Lord or the works He had done for Israel. They did what was evil before the Lord, for they served baals (baalim in Hebrew, plural of Baal = Lord, possessor, owner, husband; Ashtoreth or Asherah was his consort), who were the Canaanite gods worshiped in every locality of the land. God was already displeased with His people for not having taken the whole land; rather, leaving the former inhabitants, for He knew that His people were at risk of joining idolatry. Therefore, the Angel of the Lord came and warned the people (Judg. 2: 1-5); however, they didn't change their attitude. So, He delivered them into the hands of their enemies and the Israelites could not resist them. God raised judges who delivered them from their foes, but when the judge died, they fell back into sin and returned to the previous condition.

Judges that judged Israel (and their tribes): Othniel (Judah – Judg. 3: 7-11), Ehud (Benjamin – Judg. 3: 12-30), Shamgar (unknown tribe – Judg. 3: 31; Judg. 5: 6), Deborah (Ramah of Ephraim – Judg. 4: 1-5; Judg. 5: 7; 31), Gideon (Manasseh – Judg. 6: 1-8), Abimelech (Son of Gideon by a concubine; actually he chose himself to judge and was killed – Judg. 8: 31; Judg. 9: 22), Tola (Issachar – Judg. 10:1-2), Jair of Gilead (Manasseh – Judg. 10: 3-5; Gilead was son of Makir, the firstborn of Manasseh, son of Joseph – Josh. 17: 1), Jephthah (Manasseh – Judg. 11: 1-2; Judg. 12: 7), Ibzan (Bethlehem, probably in Zebulun, for Bethlehem of Judah is usually known as Bethlehem Ephrathah – Judg. 12: 8-10), Elon (Zebulun – Judg. 12:11-12), Abdon (Ephraim – Judg. 12: 13-15) and Samson (Dan – Judg. 13: 1-5; Judg. 15: 20; Judg. 16: 31). After the death of Jair (around 1103 BC) there was a period of 40 years, when Israel was handed over to the hands of the Philistines (Judg. 13: 1) and Eli the priest was the representative leader of the Lord over His people. In the period, the prophet Samuel was raised by Eli and grew up in stature before the Lord (1 Sam. 4: 18). In fact, some historians see Shamgar not as a judge, but as a Canaanite from the southern city of Beth-Anath, or Beth Anoth – cf. Josh. 15: 59), who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad, and gave temporary relief to the Israelites (Judg. 3: 31). The oxgoad had a sharp metal point. The oxgoad must have been about eight feet long. At one end

there was a stinger and at the other a blade shaped like a chisel, which was used to clean the plow. When necessary, the goad served as a substitute for the sword (J. D. Douglas – The New Bible Dictionary, 2nd edition 1995).

Years	Biblical Reference
1375-1367 BC	The king of Aram Naharaim or Mesopotamia (Cushan-Rishathaim) ruled over the Israelites for 8 years → Judg. 3: 7-10 Othniel (Judah)
40 years of peace	Judg. 3: 11
18 years of oppression	Judg. 3: 12-14; they were subject to Eglon (Moabite) + Ammonites and Amalekites (Judg. 3: 13); Ehud (judge from Benjamin) Judg. 3: 15-30. After, Shamgar defeated the Philistines (Judg. 3: 31; Judg. 5: 6)
80 years of peace	Judg. 3: 30
20 years of oppression	Judg. 4: 1-3 Jabin (Canaanite) → Deborah the judge (Ramah of Ephraim) – Judg. 4: 1-5; Judg. 5: 7; 31
40 years of peace	Judg. 5: 31 (Period of Deborah): 1209–1169 BC
7 years of oppression	Judg. 6: 1 Midianites → Gideon (Manasseh) – Judg. 6: 1-8; Judg. 6: 32 It coincides with the period of Ruth 1: 1 (1170-1169 BC). Gideon wins – Judg. 7: 19-25; 8: 10-12
40 years of peace	Judg. 8: 28 – It coincides with the period of Ruth 1: 22; Ruth 2: 1 Gideon judged Israel from 1162 to 1122 BC
3 years as judge	Abimelech (But He was not chosen by God) – Judg. 9: 22
23 years as judge	Judg. 10: 1-2 – Tola (Issachar) (c. 1126-1103 BC)
22 years as judge	Judg. 10: 3-5 – Jair (Manasseh) (c. 1125-1103 BC)
18 years of oppression	Judg. 10: 6-8 Philistines and Ammonites – Concomitant
6 years as judge	Judg. 12: 7 Jephthah (Manasseh) – Judg. 11: 1-2; Judg. 12: 7 – defeated the Ammonites
7 years as judge	Judg. 12: 8-10 Ibzan (Bethlehem of Zebulun) – still fighting against the Philistines
10 years as judge	Judg. 12: 11-12 Elon (Zebulun) – still fighting against the Philistines
8 years as judge	Judg. 12: 13-15 Abdon (Ephraim) – still fighting against the Philistines
	40 years in the hands of the Philistines (Judg. 13: 1 – 1103-1063 BC). Eli the priest lived during these 40 years (1 Sam. 4: 18).
	Samson: Judg. 13: 1-5; 15: 20; 16: 31 (tribe of Dan – Judg. 13–16). Samson was born around 1090 BC and acted as judge from 1075 to 1055 BC (J. D. Douglas – The New Bible Dictionary, 2 nd edition 1995).

Samuel (from the tribe of Ephraim – 1 Sam 1—25) judged concurrently with Samson at Bethel, Mizpah and Gilgal (1 Sam 7: 15-16) as a prophet and itinerant judge. Samuel was recognized as a prophet (1 Sam. 3: 20), and after Eli's death (1 Sam 4: 18)

he assumed the office of priest in Israel as well, although he was not of Aaronic lineage (in 1063 BC – J. D. Douglas – The New Bible Dictionary, 2nd edition 1995 – The Book of Judges), when the Philistines stole the Ark of the Covenant in Ebenezer and the sons of Eli were also killed (1 Sam. 4: 1; 11; 17; 22; 1 Sam. 5: 1). It is interesting that when Samuel managed to gather the people at Mizpah and urged them to repent (1 Sam. 7: 3; 6), they themselves fought against the Philistines and defeated them (1 Sam. 7: 10-11; 13), and Samuel took a stone as a memorial of victory and named it Ebenezer, which means ‘stone of help’ (1 Sam. 7: 12), the same name as the place where they had previously been defeated and where the ark of the Covenant was taken.

Deborah:

The Israelites strayed from the ways of the Lord after the death of the judge Ehud and were delivered into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, descendant of the Hivites and who reigned in Hazor, to the north of the Promised Land. The commander of his army was Sisera, and commanded the nine hundred iron chariots of Jabin. His oppression lasted twenty years over Israel.

Then, Deborah arose ‘*as Mother in Israel.*’ She was a prophetess and used to sit under the *Palm of Deborah* between Ramah and Bethel, in the hill country of Ephraim (Judg. 4: 4-5). Her name (*d^ebhôrâ*) means *honeybee*, but comes from two Hebrew roots: *Davah* (to say, to speak), *Ledabet* (anything). The bible refers to her as the wife of *Lappidoth* (*lappidhōth*, torches). Others think that the commander of the armies of Israel, *Barak* (*bārâq*), lightning, was Deborah’s husband. Still others think that ‘*the wife of Lappidoth*’ was a description of her (‘*woman of torches or woman of lightning*’).

The children of Israel came to Deborah. Then she called Barak, the son of Abinoam, from Kedesh in Naphtali, tribe of the North, and sent him to Mount Tabor with ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun. The Lord would take Sisera to the Kishon River and would deliver him on Barak’s hands. He felt insecure and asked Deborah to accompany them in this campaign. She agreed to go with them, but told him that the honor of this victory would not be his, because the enemy would perish at the hands of a woman.

Heber the Kenite, a descendant of the brother-in-law of Moses, Hobab (Num. 10: 29 cf. Judg. 4: 11; Judg. 1: 16), lived near Kedesh and was an ally of Sisera. This one led his nine hundred chariots to the brook of Kishon and he and his army were defeated by Barak. Sisera fled to the tent of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite. However, she knew that Heber’s ancestors were related to the Israelites by Moses, and probably Jael’s family had suffered at the hands of Sisera (Hivite), for she was aware of his mistake and his wickedness and because she lived in the land of Israel. *Kenite* (Judg. 1: 16; 4: 11) was a member of a tribe Kenite-Midianite, located at the southeast of the Gulf of Aqaba (part of the Red Sea to the east, between the Sinai Peninsula and the region of Midian, corresponding to Saudi Arabia). The name *Kenite* means *blacksmith*, because of copper (also called brass or bronze, an alloy of copper with zinc) existing in this region (Gen. 15: 19; Num. 10: 29-33; Judg. 1: 16; Judg. 4: 11; 1 Sam. 15: 6; 1 Sam. 27: 10; 1 Sam. 30: 29; 1 Chr. 2: 55). Reuel (Jethro), father-in-law of Moses, was Kenite-Midianite (Judg. 1: 16). The Rechabites (Jer. 35: 2, 3, 5, 18) belonged to the tribe of the Kenites (1 Chr. 2: 55; 2 Kin. 10: 15; Jer. 35: 6-19). The Rechabites rejected the fixed agricultural and civilized life. They followed the nomadic life, as happened to Israel during the period that went through the wilderness in faithfulness to God. The ancestor was Cain who bore the mark of God (Gen. 4: 15-22). *Nod* (In Hebrew the noun *nôdh* is the same that the infinitive of the verb *nûdh* (*nwd*), which means ‘to wander, to walk to and fro’), the land of Cain, was a land to the east of Eden. This name is unknown outside the bible; however, its form and context suggest that this was a region where it was

necessary a nomadic existence, a site after the Flood attributed to the Middle East, probably Midian, the land of Moses' father-in-law. The Midianites were descendant of Midian (*'strife'*), son of Abraham and Keturah (Gen. 25: 2), and lived as semi-nomad, dwelling in the desert, on the borders of Transjordan with Moab and Edom.

Sisera entered the tent of Jael and asked her for water. She opened a skin of milk, gave him to drink and covered him. So, she took a tent peg and a hammer, and drove the peg into his temple (temporal region of the skull, where the ears are) and killed him while he slept. She left the tent and told Barak where Sisera was. Thus, the children of Israel prevailed against Jabin king of Canaan, until they exterminated his entire army.

The song of Deborah (Judg. 5: 1-31) confirms the story described in the previous chapter (Judg. 4) and says that she arose as *mother* in Israel to judge her people in the midst of so great idolatry, because nobody else has done it and the villages were deserted. Barak, one of the commanders of the army of Israel, led the attack against Jabin. Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin, Naphtali, Issachar and Zebulun, helped in the war. In the tribe of Reuben there was discussion. The tribes of Gad, Asher and Dan did not come to help their brothers. In fact, the children of Israel no longer saw themselves as a single people, but as many separate tribes. Then a great rain came from the Lord, who made the Kishon River overflow, miring in the mud the chariots and the riders, and the Canaanite army was defeated by the swords of the Israelites. The song also recalls the death of Sisera by Jael and tells the expectation of his mother, waiting for his return of the battle and seeking solace in the hope that he was dividing the spoils, so he was slow in coming. The song ends as a prayer or a prophecy about the defeat of the enemy and the victory of the righteous who love the Lord.

The bible says that the land stayed at peace for forty years (Period of Deborah): 1209–1169 BC.

Important lessons from Deborah:

- 1) *Even seeing His people in sin, God does not abandon them, but looks for ways to rescue them:* we can see this through the whole Word, especially in this book of Judges, where the Lord gave heed to the oppression of His people and raised leaders to free them. The bible says, "I the Lord do not change." So, until now, God continues attentive to His chosen, even if they are in wrong paths, waiting for the right moment to rescue them from the ways of error and sin.
- 2) *A single person who is in the presence of God can encourage others who are not:* Deborah took, indeed, an initiative of revival in that nation. In Judg. 5: 7 it is written: "because you arose, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel" and in Judg. 5: 12, where is written "Awake, awake, Deborah!" in the original is written: "You arose", or "Arise, Deborah." So, she volunteered as an instrument of God. From her attitude, Barak was revived and brought with him the entire army and all the people to overthrow their oppressors. We must also put ourselves as instruments in the hands of the Lord so that His plan of salvation is fulfilled in lives in general, as well as His individual project is fulfilled in those He desires to bring to His kingdom.
- 3) *God not always chooses the most qualified,* but the humble and weak, in whom He can awake boldness and courage to shame the strong. Barak was more technically capable than Jael because he was military commander; however, the Lord let Jael, a woman seemingly frail, receive the honor by defeating the enemy leader. It was God Himself that probably instilled in Jael the courage to make the decision that had to

be taken, using, perhaps, her inner desire to see His justice to prevail over the marks left by years of oppression that she experienced at the hands of Jabin. We may feel unable to certain missions or to take a stance, but when we recognize God's hand on the project we acquire boldness to move forward. The important thing is not to have resources and human capacities, but to be in dependence on Him.

- 4) *God is Sovereign over all creation*: one more time in the story of Israel, God uses the forces of nature to deliver His people. He can use the ordinary, like a hailstorm, or the unlikely, as opening the waters of the sea or the river, for He is the sovereign over all things. Even today, He is the same and can use all ways to bring His blessing to our lives; this way, the honor and the glory of the victory will be only His.
- 5) *Not to let the enemy hide in our house and not to put the loyalty to men above the faithfulness to God*: Jael, apparently, let the enemy enter her tent, but didn't let him remain there, that is, the enemy of our souls may even try to leave his mark, however, it behooves to us to put him out of our land not to incur in the same error of Israel when entered Canaan. Even because if we get used to the evil within us we will not be able to show the world the light of Jesus or live His holiness, which moves us away from true communion with Him. Jael also made another important decision: she did not put the obedience to Jabin or her husband above the obedience to God, because although Heber having made pacts and agreements with the Canaanites and Hivites, perhaps for some personal compensation, she decided to obey the Lord's voice in her heart and destroy the enemy of Israel; she probably remembered the distant relationship between the Kenites and Israelites and how much the two nations were benefited by having joined the project of the true God (Moses and Jethro, the Midianite, his father-in-law). We must not put our loyalty to men above our loyalty to the Lord. Peter and the apostles understood this truth, so they said: "We must obey God rather than any human authority" (Acts 5: 29).
- 6) *When the people of God let other gods reign in their midst, the vision of the whole ceases to exist*: here, we can remember the reaction of the tribes in relation to the battle. Some joined and helped, others fled from the fight, because they preferred to take care of themselves. We can identify many gods in this text of Judges, such as: self-indulgence, doctrines, selfishness, idolatry, individualism, material comfort etc. Ephraim and Manasseh (Joseph's sons) helped in the battle. The meaning of their names is: 'fruitful' (Ephraim) and 'He who made me to forget' (Manasseh) and in Gen. 49: 24, Jacob exalted the military power of Joseph (his blessing was prophetic on his son). Benjamin was also beside Deborah and his name means 'son of my right hand' (Gen. 49: 27), which, symbolically, speaks of loyalty and willingness to help. Naphtali (Gen. 49: 21) means 'my struggle', 'fighter', and it was a necessary characteristic to the combat in Kishon. Zebulun (Gen. 49: 13) means 'to honor', 'to exalt', and Deborah exalted his courage and fighting ability when she made her song. Issachar also helped. His name means 'reward, wage, hired worker' (Gen. 49: 14-15) and he was already accustomed with the position of servant and carrier of burdens. Perhaps, the tribes of Judah and Simeon also helped. If we look now to those who did not help, we will see a characteristic in Reuben, described in Gen. 49: 3 in the blessings of Jacob: 'honor and power' [NIV; or 'rank and power' – NRSV] or 'pride and power' [ARA], which probably caused a dispute among the components of the tribe, making it difficult to help the brothers. In other words, the pride of the ego and the power struggle are gods who compete with the divine guidance of interaction and cooperation. Gilead was the land occupied by the tribe of Gad, to the east of the river Jordan, fertile and suitable for livestock. Gad means

'good luck, fortunate.' The well-being that this tribe enjoyed and the abundance it lived can have discouraged it from war, keeping it in self-indulgence and individualism. Asher (*Gen. 49: 20*) means '*happy, blissful, treasure*' and the main characteristic of this tribe was prosperity, other god that can occupy the hearts of the people of the Lord, making them forget the less fortunate. Dan (*Gen. 49: 16-17*) has a feature described by Jacob like *cunning and treachery* (snake). Perhaps, due to this, he denied help when his brothers needed it most. Briefly: when one enjoys some well-being, even though it is fed by a bad habit, it becomes more difficult to identify with those who suffer. On the other hand, those who have already got used to the hard life and with hard work respond more readily to a call for help because they experienced the need for themselves.

- 7) *The wisdom of God generates respect, reliability and security:* Deborah had the wisdom of God, not human's, so what she spoke was heeded and recognized as true. Barak trusted her to climb Mount Tabor with ten thousand men. Deborah, as we have seen, has the Hebrew meaning of "*to speak anything.*" In fact, she did not speak anything, she talked to God and He was with the mouth of Deborah. He gave her wisdom to judge and this assured her the respect of the nation. Wisdom is a gift that gives to the person who owns it the ability to act the right way and use the knowledge he has of right manner in any situation.
- 8) *To set the example through attitudes:* a Jew gives great importance to the meaning of someone's name, for the name is not only a title but it describes the real personality of that person. Deborah also means *honeybee*, and like a bee she acted in Israel. This insect lives in swarm, in a community with which it cares. Its work produces good things. The bee works outside the hive and then brings the fruit of its labor for the good of the community (pollen for honey production). Deborah, for being in the presence of God, was a helpful instrument to her compatriots, and the work that she performed brought benefits to everyone, even to those who had remained on the margins of the conflict. She knew how to use the best she had wisely and set the example to her brothers; she revived her people and reminded them of the importance of unity and service.
- 9) *Resemblance with Moses and Miriam:* like her ancestors, who sang a song to the Lord after the victory, Deborah also sang a song. At that time the song was a very common teaching resource: it told a story, it celebrated the victory with the intention of inspiring the praise and worship to God, it revived the faith and the Lord's care for His people and it was a relief for those who had suffered for so many years under the yoke. Furthermore, it was a way of teaching people and leaving recorded something important in their memory for future generations. Deborah left recorded the glory of God over Sisera and Jabin. We should do the same way after a victory that the Lord gives us: to thank Him and leave recorded in some way, the honor and glory due to Him.



JUDGES OF ISRAEL

Gideon – 11th lesson



Reference texts: Judg. 6–8

Summary:

Deborah judged Israel for forty years and, as usual, the people returned to sin after she ceased to lead them. So, the Lord delivered the children of Israel into the hands of the Midianites for seven years. The Midianites were descendants of Midian (*'strife'*), son of Abraham and Keturah (Gen. 25: 2), and lived as semi-nomads, inhabiting in the desert on the borders of Transjordan with Moab and Edom. They rode camels of the Amalekites, who were nomads found in the Negev and the Sinai. Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel opened holes in the mountains and hid in caves or built fortifications to preserve at least a little of the crop, for every time they sowed the Midianites and the Amalekites came and destroyed everything, not just plantation, but the flock and cattle. Thus the Israelites were without sustenance. They cried out to the Lord.

“Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites” (Judg. 6: 11). Abiezer was the nephew of Gilead, the son of Machir, son of Manasseh, son of Joseph, son of Jacob (1 Chr. 7: 14-18). So, it was a clan of Manasseh and was the clan of Gideon, according to him, the poorest one. Its seat was in Ophrah, to the west of the Jordan, where the second half of the tribe of Manasseh established. The first half of this tribe had stayed beyond the Jordan, along with Reuben and Gad, when the Israelites came to Canaan. Manasseh occupied the region of Bashan; Reuben, the region of the Transjordan and Gad, the region of Gilead.

Gideon (*Gidh'e'ôn*) means *'lumberjack, feller, cutter of trees, thresher (of wheat)'*. The Angel called him a brave man (*'mighty warrior'*) and said the Lord was with him and calling him to deliver Israel from the Midianites. Gideon opened his heart and complained of his condition, the poverty of his family and the abandonment of God. But the angel strengthened his faith in the victory. As a sign of the veracity of the calling, the Angel consumed with fire the young goat and the unleavened bread that Gideon brought to Him as an offering. Gideon feared the Lord, for he recognized Him in the Angel, and heard His voice speaking of peace to him. He built there an altar and called it *'the Lord is peace'* (YHWH Shalom). That same night, God asked him to destroy the altar of Baal that belonged to his father, Joash, and cut down the Asherah Pole that was by it. There, he should raise another altar, now to the Lord, and offer a bull as a burnt offering. The family of Gideon mixed the worship of God with the worship of false gods. He knew he had failed spiritually, so he did not want to accept the leadership that the Lord was giving him; however, precisely because Gideon realized his inability is that He was using him. God saw his insecurity, but also a courageous leader. So Gideon,

along with ten of his servants, obeyed His orders, carrying them out at night for fear of the citizens of the place.

When the citizens discovered the fact, they went to Joash to argue him and he told them that if Baal was a god, they should let him contend for himself. Therefore Gideon was called *Jerub-Baal* (*y^erubba'al* = *let Baal contend, Baal fights, let Baal give the increase*, Judg. 6: 32). In 2 Sam. 11: 21 the name is replaced by *Jerub-Besheth* (*y^erubbesheth*), eliminating the infamous name of Baal, substituting the word for other that means 'shame' (*beseth* or *besheth*, in Hebrew). *Jerub-Besheth* means: *let the shame contend*.

As the Midianites and Amalekites stood against him, Gideon also summoned the entire city and all the tribe of Manasseh, as well as that of Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali so that met with him. Gideon asked God again a sign to confirm His choice on him as deliverer of Israel, and twice the Lord answered him (test with wool). Thirty-two thousand men were with him, but lest to boast in their strength, the Lord told him to send back home all fearful and timid. So, twenty-two thousand went back, leaving only ten thousand with Gideon. For God it was still too many people and He made the men go down to the fountain of Harod. Only those that lapped water raising hand to mouth were chosen; those who knelt were dismissed. Then, three hundred men remained. The Midianites were below in the valley. Before descending against them by order of God, Gideon and his servant came to inspect the enemy's camp. He heard one of them telling another soldier the dream he had had, and that was, indeed, the confirmation that Gideon needed to understand that the Lord was already giving him the victory. He and the other three hundred warriors came down against them with trumpets in their right hand and with jars with torches on the left. It was night. By breaking the jars and sounding the trumpets the enemies were frightened and, by miraculous way of God, they killed each other. The others who escaped were persecuted by men from Naphtali, Asher and Manasseh who were summoned. When Gideon summoned the men of Ephraim, they went down against the Midianites and killed the two princes of them, but complained with Gideon because they had not been called before, when their camp was attacked. Ephraim had a great military power and felt despised by Gideon. With diplomacy, he calmed them down. He crossed the Jordan River with three hundred men and asked for food to the people of Succoth; however, they denied him. The men of Peniel (or Penuel) did the same as those of Succoth. All men that remained of the Midianites were fifteen thousand soldiers led by Zebah and Zalmunna. The other one hundred and twenty thousand had died. Gideon went against them and destroyed them, and the two princes fled. Gideon reached them and arrested them. He showed them to the citizens of Succoth that had denied him help, and punished with death the seventy-seven responsible elders, using whips made of thorns of the wilderness and briers. He pulled down the tower of Peniel and killed the men of the city because they had also denied him assistance with food for his army. He executed Zebah and Zalmunna for having killed his brothers (his family of origin) in Tabor; however, he took the ornaments in the shape of the crescent moon that were on their camels' necks.

Gideon refused to be king over Israel; he said that the Lord would dominate over them, neither him nor his son (Jether, the firstborn). He asked the people the gold earrings from the spoil of the Ishmaelites in the weight of one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold (= 43 pounds or 19.5 kilograms), besides the crescents and the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian, and the collars that were on the necks of their camels. With the metal, he made an ephod (which was usually used only by the high priest) and put it in his hometown in Ophrah. This was evil before the Lord because it became an object of idolatry for the people, and a snare to Gideon and his

household. He turned the ephod into a pagan cult. The time Gideon judged Israel was from 1162 to 1122 BC and during this time, the land enjoyed peace for forty years.

He had seventy sons, for he had many wives. His concubine bore him a son, who was called Abimelech (*"My father is king"*), who later also became Israel's judge, killing sixty-eight of his brothers to stay with power. Only Jotham (69th) escaped and cast a curse upon Abimelech for his sin of betrayal. The curse was fulfilled and he was killed by a stone in the head and by the sword of his shield-bearer by trying to get into Thebez. Thebez (Judg. 9: 50) is the modern city of Tubas, located 20.9 km north of Shechem. The city's name 'Tubas' derives from the Canaanite word 'Tuba Syoys', which means 'illuminating star.'

Gideon died in old age and was buried in Ophrah.

Important lessons from Gideon:

- 1) *God hears the cry of the afflicted and oppressed:* whenever His people were under yoke, and whenever they repented of their sins and cried unto the Lord, He answered and saved them from hands of the enemy. In this passage, He acted by sending His angel and giving them a deliverer. With us is the same thing. When we feel lonely, neglected and oppressed, because of sin or not, we can be sure that we will be listened and He will send us help and deliverance. God not only sends us relief as strengthens the courage in us. He called Gideon a mighty warrior in a situation where the courage seemed to be the last quality in him.
- 2) *God does not see the appearance but the interior:* the insecurity generated by sin and by the circumstances around him was printed in the attitude of Gideon, but God saw him as a courageous leader. Gideon had low self-worth and could not see himself with good eyes, but the Lord was already seeing what would be accomplished through him. He Himself would put in the heart of His chosen the boldness necessary to lead. When we feel incapable of accomplishing the mission that the Lord puts in our hands, He shows us that He sees us with good eyes. He does not take our weaknesses into account; He sees the power of His Spirit working in us, and enhances the positive qualities of our personality to bring us victory.
- 3) *God leaves no doubt about His call or His revelations:* peace settles in our hearts as a sign that we are making the right choice. When the Angel spoke to Gideon under the oak of Ophrah, He consumed the burnt offering with fire to give him the assurance of His call and of the revelation that He had given him. So, Gideon felt peace and built an altar to the Lord, calling it *"The Lord is peace."* When we respond to God's call to us, we feel His peace in our hearts and He leaves no doubt as to what He had revealed. When He speaks, we are sure that it was He who spoke, not our heart.
- 4) *God is not conniving with idolatry nor does He share His glory with others; He does not accept divided worship:* the first providence that the Lord took before leading Gideon to battle was to make clear to him who was the God whom he served, guiding him to destroy the false altars. Thus, God closed the gap left by the sin of their ancestors so that he could leave the fight feeling safe and strengthened. Furthermore, He made it quite clear to the eyes of everybody that He, *the Lord, YHWH, 'I AM'*, was the God of victory, not Baal.
- 5) *Our faith is increased by the victory we have achieved through an act of obedience to the Lord:* Gideon obeyed God and destroyed the altar of Baal, so he had his faith

increased as well as his inner confidence when the people gave him the name of Jerub-Baal, because his attitude brought him the respect of citizens of Ophrah. When we obey the voice of God and perform what He gives us to do our faith in Him is increased as well as our confidence in ourselves because we gain the respect and admiration of those around us, by seeing that we performed something that they didn't had the courage to perform.

- 6) *Tolerance and mercy of God toward our weaknesses:* all He had done and talked until that moment was already enough for Gideon to take position, but God knew his insecurity and his need for confirmation, so He gave him another two signs through the test with the wool. He knew that Gideon needed visible signs to be able to believe. Although asking for signs to God is not a sin, He wants us to believe in Him and in what He puts in our hearts through His Spirit so that we do not live a lifetime on 'crutches' but on the truth of His word. When we need a consolation or a strengthening He Himself will give us, until we can feel safe to walk. The Lord gave another sign of His strength and His faithfulness to Gideon before invading the Midianite's camp, through the dream that was told to the enemy soldier and heard by Gideon and his shield-bearer.
- 7) *The victory of God is independent of strength, trust and human capacity:* by sending back the twenty-two thousand men and then, more nine thousand and seven hundred of the ten thousand that were left, leaving only three hundred with Gideon, God wanted to show His people that He was still the same that had saved their ancestors from Egypt. He did not depended on the strength or the human capacity to act; they, yes, needed to trust Him more, so the Lord has given them an impossible victory in the eyes of men to show them that He was the only God. This generation did not remember the victories in the Red Sea and in the desert, for they had not seen them, so He wanted to give them an experience of a miracle so that they could renew their covenant with Him. With us is the same thing. God does not depend on our ability or our power to perform miracles. He makes them in the most unusual way to show us that everything is possible for Him.
- 8) *Fear and shyness don't help to win; on the contrary, they discourage others:* the timid and fearful were not prepared for a battle and could be a stumbling block for the rest of the army, so God sent them away. The cowardice moves us away from His kingdom, for it doesn't let us act by faith. In addition, it discourages our brothers from walking too.
- 9) *Watchfulness and discipline are important qualities for a warrior:* God tested the men who were with Gideon, putting them at the fountain. The careless knelt down to drink, but the watchful remained standing, taking water to their mouth with their hands, keeping their eyes on what was happening around and watching to see if the enemy was near. God wants us to be vigilant so that we don't lose our battles. The rest is reserved for after the victory, not for when we are about to enter the fight.
- 10) *God's wisdom is foolishness to men, His strategies seem absurd:* no one could imagine that three hundred men with trumpets and jars with torches could rout an army of thousands of soldiers. But it was with a strategy so absurd that God gave victory to His people, because the fear caused by Him in the heart of the enemy caused the Midianites and Amalekites to kill each other. When the Lord directs us to a challenge, we can be sure of victory and follow safely the strategies that He gives us, however much absurd they may seem. The wisdom of God, the bible says, is foolishness to men.
- 11) *A good leader does not leave their subordinates humiliated:* even dismissing the fearful of the hardest battle, Gideon made them feel important and participants in the

victory, by making them chase the Midianites when they were fleeing, for the Israelites could feel helpful, despite their previous weaknesses. Therefore, we must not despise the weakest, but encourage them to use what they have of positive to feel participants in the victory. Each will serve God with what he has, not with what he has not. The Word says: “For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has – not according to what one does not have” (2 Cor. 8: 12).

- 12) *There is consequence in treason:* the people of Succoth and Peniel preferred to maintain good relations with the Midianites for fear of retaliation and denied aid to their brothers. They thought that Gideon had no chance of winning and chose to stay on the stronger side. They decided to stay on the side of the enemy and this was treason. The result was death, for Gideon returned victorious and killed them. Likewise, when we betray the trust of God or of our brothers in Christ we will suffer the consequences of our sin of treason and cowardice, which is to feel cut off from the communion with His Spirit.
- 13) *The family heritages need to be fully uprooted:* Gideon, by an act of humility, refused to rule over the people, saying that only God could rule over them, but then he committed a serious mistake that became a snare to his life: he made an ephod of gold as an altar of worship; this was an act of idolatry. Gideon had not yet been fully treated of the idolatry and the insecurity in his relationship with the Lord; he didn't manage to get rid of the visible signs that he asked or the customs of false worship or of the mixture of gods that he learned from his father. This family custom was still in him. So, to serve God in a sincere and true way we must uproot the old habits of our nature, changing totally our way of thinking and acting. In Christ we are new creatures.
- 14) *Wanting to reign with our own forces, without the blessing of God, leads to punishment:* Abimelech had not been chosen by God to be judge over Israel. He killed his brothers; he did not take into account the positive acts of Gideon, his father, and still was punished by the Lord for having ‘usurped a throne’ that was not his. What we get by our own forces we can lose, but what God gives us, we no longer lose, for it is resulting of His blessing.

Samson – 12th lesson



Reference texts: Judg. 13–16

Summary:

Samson in Hebrew, *Shimshôn*, comes from *shemesh*, *sun*; so, it means ‘*small sun*.’ He was born around 1090 BC (Judg. 13: 1) at the beginning of the Philistine oppression, which lasted for forty years. He began his career around 1075 BC when the Philistines captured the ark and burned Ebenezer (1 Sam. 4: 1-22, while in Shiloh or at Mizpah Samuel judged as a prophet), and judged Israel for twenty years (1075–1055 BC).

His father’s name was Manoah (= *rest, quietness*), from the tribe of Dan, and lived in Zorah. His mother was sterile, until the Angel of the Lord appeared to her and told her that she would conceive and her child would be consecrated to God from the womb to be a Nazirite. *Nazirite* comes from the Hebrew *nāzīr* (*vine*), derived from *nāzar*: *to separate, to consecrate, to abstain*; compared with the word *nezer*: *diadem, crown of God*, sometimes identified with the long hair of Nazirites. Although the Law of Moses talks about Naziritiship (Num. 6: 1-21), the origin of the practice is pre-Mosaic and obscure (Semites and other primitive peoples). There were three rules to be respected by the Nazirite:

1) *To renounce wine and other fermented drink, or grape juice and not to eat anything that comes from the grapevine, fresh or dried, not even the seeds or the skins* (Num. 6: 3-4) to maintain his integrity and holiness and not to be possessed by any other than the spirit of God (Prov. 20: 1; Lev. 10: 9-11). Thus, he approached Him in a more worthy way. For us, the spiritual significance of this abstinence is to renounce carnal passions and emotional imbalance, submitting to the control of the Holy Spirit.

2) *Not to cut the hair* (Num. 6: 5). The hair, for the Jews of that time, symbolized the seat of life, the source of life, as well as the vine (*nāzīr* = *unpruned vine* – Lev. 25: 5; 11 [NRSV]; at the end of separation time the hair was burned on the altar – Num. 6: 18-19). For us, the spiritual meaning of this practice is not to leave the spiritual covering of God, but to be aware of His protection and the presence of His Spirit.

3) *Not to approach any corpse* (Nm 6: 6), even if relatives and this applied also to the high priest (Aaron could not mourn the death of his sons Nadab and Abihu who were killed by the Lord for burning incense on the altar without His order, nor could go to the funeral because he was high priest: Lev. 10: 6-7). Other references: Lev. 21: 1-4; 10-12. For us, the meaning of this is not to touch again the old things, in things that had passed away, in dead things, in sin.

The Naziriteship was usually done to get certain favors from God. Some men made temporary vow (at least for thirty days, as in the case of Paul – Acts 18: 18; Acts 21: 23-24); others did so as a vow for life: Samuel, Samson and John the Baptist.

Samson's parents received then this guidance from the Lord. Later, Samson violated the vows in some situations, as we'll see later on. God also said to Manoah and his wife that their son would begin to deliver Israel from the power of the Philistines.

Samson grew and God blessed him, until the Spirit of the Lord began to work through him.

Samson saw a Philistine woman in Timnah and fell in love. He asked his parents to speak to her parents so that she might be his wife. This was the Lord's direction, who sought an occasion against the Philistines. By going with his parents to Timnah to ask her in marriage, Samson came across a young lion that came to him and, by the strength of the Spirit of the Lord, he tore the animal in half. After a few days, when would be the wedding, he found in the carcass of the lion killed by him a swarm of bees and honey, which he ate, as well as his parents, not knowing where it came from. Here he violated one of the vows of the separation, which was *the prohibition of touching a corpse* (Judg. 14: 8).

His wedding banquet was also a violation of the vows of consecration, for it was *a banquet with wine* (*Mishteh*, Judg. 14: 10: “vayyêredh 'âbhiyhu 'el-hâ'ishâh vayya'as shâm shimshon**mishteh** kiy kên ya'asu habbachuriym”, that is, “His father went down to the woman, and Samson made a **feast** there as the young men were accustomed to do”). In Hebrew, ‘mishteh’ has the meaning of ‘drink, to drink, a banquet, usually with much drinking’; wine = ‘yayin’; banquet of wine = mishtêh hayyayin, the same kind of banquet (banquet of wine) offered by Esther to Ahasuerus and Haman (Est. 5: 6; Est. 7: 2; Est. 7: 7) and by Ahasuerus to the nobles of Persia (Est. 1: 3; 5 cf. Est. 1: 7-8). He presented to the thirty men who were with him a riddle to be deciphered within seven days of the wedding, and in return he would give thirty changes of clothing. Pressing his wife, they got, through her, the answer to Samson's riddle. When they said to Samson, he discovered the betrayal and went to the city of Ashkelon (Philistine city), and killing thirty people he deprived them of their changes of clothing and gave them to the guests who said the answer to his puzzle. His bride was given as wife to his companion, who had been his best man.

The wedding of Samson was a *Sadig*, in which the woman remains living with her parents and her husband visits her once in a while. It took some time and Samson went to visit his wife; then, he knew she had been given to another man. He was furious and went out, catching three hundred foxes and putting torches between their tails; he lit them and let them loose in the harvest the Philistines, destroying their vineyards, their olive trees and cereals. In retaliation, the Philistines burned his wife and his father. Samson, in turn, killed them and hid in the cleft of the rock in Etam. The people of Judah suffered because of all these things; so, three thousand men went down to Etam and arrested Samson with ropes to hand him over to the Philistines. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he broke the ropes and with a donkey's jawbone he injured thousand of his enemies. He felt thirsty and cried out to the Lord. Then, He opened the hollow of the rock and water came out of it. Samson regained strength and revived and the place became known as *En Hakkore*, which means: ‘*caller's spring*.’

Then Samson went to Gaza and spent the night *with a prostitute*, once again violating his vow of consecration (Judg. 16: 1 – to renounce to carnal passions and emotional imbalance). The enemies were waiting until dawn to arrest him, but at midnight he rose up, took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill

that is in front of Hebron. This was one of the greatest humiliations that the Philistines could suffer because the city gate was a symbol of national power.

For the fourth time, Samson violated the vows of consecration to fall in love with Delilah, the Philistine woman who lived in the valley of Sorek near Timnah. The princes of the Philistines persuaded her to make Samson tell her the secret of his strength. Three times he deceived her and the enemies could not catch him, until he told her about his vow of Naziriteship (Judg. 16: 17) and about the force that was linked to the length of his hair. With this she betrayed him, receiving eleven hundred shekels of silver (about 28 pounds, 13 kilograms) of each prince of the Philistines. They gouged out Samson's eyes and put him to turn a mill in the prison. His hair began to grow again, and during this period, he also had time to let repentance come to his heart.

The princes of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice in victory over Israel by arresting Samson. This one was called from the prison to amuse them. Three thousand men and women were in the temple of Dagon. Samson prayed to the Lord to give him strength by this last time to take revenge of the Philistines. The Lord gave it to him and, clinging to the two columns that supported the house, he overthrew it, killing the Philistines who were there and dying with them too. He was buried in the tomb of Manoah his father.

Important lessons from Samson:

- 1) *As it was said about the prohibitions pertaining to the vow of separation (Naziriteship),* God tells us to abstain from the passions of the flesh, to be under the dominion of His Spirit and no longer touch in what doesn't bring us life, that is, in sin and in what was left behind.
- 2) *God can make fertile what was barren when He has a great project to be fulfilled:* the wife of Manoah was not the first sterile woman in the bible to conceive after the visitation of the Lord. He had a plan for their lives through Samson, so He turned the curse into a blessing, making that the woman conceived a child who from the womb would be devoted to God. There is a great similarity between the case of Samson and his mother and the cases of Samuel and John the Baptist who were Nazirites for life and were born of barren women transformed into fertile by the Lord: Hanna and Elizabeth. Likewise in our lives, when He has a great project, He can turn something that was dry and seemingly lifeless into something fruitful so that His power can be manifested.
- 3) *What God designs for our life is always the light:* Samson means 'small sun' and, by the miraculous way as he was conceived, for his mother was sterile, he was a daring project of God to deliver His people from captivity, because they had sinned again and done what was evil in His sight. Samson was designed by God to be a *small light* for that generation. Likewise, the apostle John talks about John the Baptist in Jn. 1: 6-9: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world." Paul speaks in one of his epistles that we, who are from the light, must walk as children of light (Eph. 5: 8). Jesus also said that we are the light of the world (Matt. 5: 14-16) and that our good works should be seen by men to praise the Father in heaven. So, when God chooses us and calls us to be His, we become *small suns* so that the world knows Him.

- 4) *To take seriously the choice and commitment to God:* Samson knew of his separation from the womb as a Nazirite, and probably was created under the discipline of Naziriteship as had been told to Manoah. However, he did not take seriously those vows and for four times he let his flesh be led by his passions; he abandoned the commitment to the Lord, which cost him his vision and his life, because the Spirit of God had withdrawn from him. By disclosing his secret to Delilah, he broke his vow and his covenant completely, and the Lord abandoned him (Judg. 16: 4-20). This means that *breaking off the relationship with God leads to loss of strength*, because the flame of the Spirit goes fading, while the flesh prevails. This is a conscious choice, an exercise of our free will. It may be that in some cases, by spiritual exhaustion after a very long struggle, the spiritual sensitivity stays temporarily asleep, as happened with Elijah after he destroyed the prophets of Baal and confronted Ahab, and it may even seem that the Spirit of God withdrew; but in the case of Samson, his human weakness surmounted the commitment of his spirit. We can also take another conclusion from the experiences of Samson, in the case of the fight with the lion that came to him: in the bible, *lion* means: *power, leadership, manifestation of powers or influences over us*. He had been involved with a non-Israelite woman, which was bad for God. He relinquished His guidance and the direction given by his parents in order to obey his own passions, what left him susceptible to influences, as we saw after his wedding party. Although this weakness has been allowed by the Lord to accomplish His plans against the Philistines, what we can see is that *the carnal passions make man subject to bad influences* and, if he does not react and destroy them, he will not get rid of them. Samson destroyed the lion by the power of the Spirit upon him. It is the power of God that destroys our enemies.
- 5) *When God destroys what was harmful for us, we can enjoy His abundance:* Samson destroyed the lion and could eat the honey. Thus, when we go through a struggle, but we manage to emerge victorious, we can savor the taste of our reward. What seemed invincible and destructive no longer exists and God puts His blessing in its place.
- 6) *To hide in the heart of God: Etam means firm, fortress, a place of wild beasts.* After Samson destroyed the harvest of the Philistines with the foxes and revenged himself on them for having killed his wife and his father-in-law, he took refuge in the cleft of a rock in Etam. This means that after a fight, when we need to regain our strength, or when we sin and need forgiveness, we should seek shelter in the Lord. It is in the heart of God that we find not only the forgiveness we need, but the protection against those who want to destroy us.
- 7) *When we cry out, He answers us:* we can see a similar action of God supplying Samson, when He satisfied his need for water, by making water gush from the rock in *En Hakkore*. *The Rock* in our lives is Jesus, and His Spirit is the water that quenches our thirst, doing us to regain breath and filling us with life. Samson cried out and God heard him and helped him.
- 8) *Repentance puts us back under the protection of the Lord*, as happened when Samson's hair began to grow again and he was able, for the last time, to take revenge on the Philistines. He didn't have victory because of the hair, but, probably, because without the physical vision that caused him lust, he had time to look inward and repent of his sin. Then, God covered him again with His robe and with His strength.

Ruth – 13th lesson



Reference texts: Ruth 1–4

Summary:

The time of the Judges was a very troubled time for the Jewish people. Joshua was already dead and the later generations did not know the Lord or the works that He had done for Israel (Judg. 2: 10; 16-19). At that time when the material and spiritual hunger reigned is that Naomi (*my delight, delightful, blessed, fortunate, pleasing, beautiful*) and Elimelech (*My God is King*) moved to Moab with their sons, Chilion and Mahlon.

Moab was the name of the land of Lot's descendant (Gen. 19: 37), from his incestuous relationship with the eldest daughter. Moab means *desire, family of a father*. He was the brother of Ammon or Ben-Ami, a descendant of Lot's incest with his youngest daughter, and means *son of my people (Ben-Ammi) and craftsman (Ammon)*. Therefore, they were relatives of Israel. Marriage between Jews and Moabites was not forbidden by the Lord; only the Moabites and Ammonites were forbidden to enter the tabernacle (Deut. 23: 3-4), not exactly by the sin of incest of their ancestors, but because they hired Balaam to curse the Israelites (Num. 22: 1-6).

Chilion (*weakening; pining away; consumption – as in a wasting disease; anxiety*) married Orpah, Moabite, whose name means *youthful vigor*, among others (*mane, gazelle, neck*); apparently someone who would compensate his weakened spirit. Mahlon (*sick, skinny, illness*) married Ruth (*friend, companion, faithful and beautiful*). After the death of Elimelech and Mahlon and Chilion, Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem of Judah. Orpah was faithful, but her loyalty was only human; therefore, in middle of the way she gave in to Naomi's insistence and went back to Moab, to what she knew. Ruth, on the contrary, followed Naomi. Arriving to Bethlehem, however, Naomi brought a mark of bitterness in her heart (Ruth 1: 20-22): "She said to them, 'Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty; why call me Naomi when the Lord has dealt harshly with me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?' So Naomi returned together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest." She brought this bitterness due to the circumstances extremely contrary, full of theft, loss, desolation and spiritual oppression that involved her in a strange land, preventing her from maintaining her original character as *happy, blessed and fortunate*.

In Ruth 2: 2 it is written: "And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find

favor'. She said to her, 'Go, my daughter.'" Ruth knew that if she did not work, there would be no food for her or for her mother-in-law. She did not care about the kind of work, or if to others it seemed humbling or not.

Gleaning was the act of gathering the grain forgotten by the reapers and it was something permitted by the Law of Moses as social security system (Deut. 24: 19-22). *Gleaning* was a mocking way of expressing *dependence on divine provision*. Ruth was literally living by faith. She gleaned the ears of grain and gathered them among the sheaves. She was a simple gleaner, but God's providence had already placed her in the field of Boaz, Naomi's kinsman-redeemer. *Boaz* means '*strength, firmness*', and he is the figure of Jesus. The Redeemer was a not so distant relative, influential, whom the family could usually call upon when their lineage or their goods were at risk of being lost. He should, among other things, buy back the family land that was sold in times of crisis.

Boaz was gentle with Ruth, giving her protection, ordering the servants not to touch her, guiding her to follow what his maidservants did and giving her portion of water and food as if she worked for him. He also gave orders to his servants to let her pick up some more handfuls from the bundles so that it was left over for her and for her mother-in-law. Boaz was receptive and kind to her, because she had sought for help at the right place (Rut. 2: 12: "May the Lord reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!") and because he saw loyalty and a real change of attitude in her (Rut. 2: 11: "But Boaz answered her, 'All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before'"). Ruth worked in the fields of Boaz until the wheat and barley harvest had finished. Usually the barley harvest anticipates the wheat's and starts around the 14th day of the month Ziv or Iyar, which corresponds to April-May. Passover begins on the 14th of the preceding month in the first month of the Jewish religious calendar, the month of Aviv or Nisan, which corresponds to March-April. By the 6th day of the month May-June (month of Sivan) is the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (seven weeks after the start of harvest), commemorating the end of the wheat harvest (Deut. 16: 9-12). The bible does not tell also the emotional details that happened in Ruth's life in this time of adaptation to this new community, but we can imagine by our own growth with God that it was not easy to forget and change the habits of origin, to deal with her spiritual and family heritages and leave back the bad memories of the old life. Surely, what eased the process were the love and care of Naomi and Boaz, and her own desire to have a new life and a new chance. Naomi also waited for signs of maturity and confidence in Ruth to suggest the idea of marriage to Boaz, and therefore a deeper ransom for both women. Naomi knew that there was a nearer kinsman-redeemer and he could take the place of Boaz in the negotiations (Ruth 4: 1-10), so she decided to trust him and in God.

In Rut. 3: 7-8; 13-14 the bible says that Ruth lay down at Boaz's feet, which meant a marriage ceremonial request, and she asked him to spread the cloak over her (Rut. 3: 9b) or 'the corner of his garment' (NIV). In Hebrew, the word *cloak* (*kanaph*) has several meanings: *mantle, cloak* (as in 1 Sam. 24: 5 – when David cuts the corner of Saul's cloak), *shirt, skirt, corner, border, garment, extremity, edge, wing, winged, covering*. In this case of Ruth, it refers to a custom associated with *marriage proposals* (in the case of a woman); it was a woman's way of asking for marriage. For a man, spreading his cloak over a woman showed *acquisition* of that woman, since *kanaph* has the sense of *covering, dominion, possession and protection*, suggesting that more than a request of marriage this was a request of protection. In Rut. 3: 9 it's written: "He said,

‘Who are you?’ And she answered, ‘I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin’ [NRSV]”; in NIV is: “‘Who are you?’ he asked. ‘I am your servant Ruth’, she said. ‘Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer.’” The Hebrew transliteration is: “vayyo'mer miy-'âttvatto'mer 'ânokhiy Ruth 'amâthekha uphârastâ **khenâphekha** 'al-'amâthkhakiy **gho'êl** 'âttâh”. **Goel** (*go'el* or *gho'el*) is a Hebrew term that comes from the verb *ga'al* (‘to redeem’), therefore, *go'el* means *redeemer*, which in the Hebrew bible and the rabbinical tradition denotes a person who, as the nearest relative of another, is in charge with the duty of restoring his rights and to avenge him of the damage caused to him. Other names are used: ‘kinsman-redeemer’ and ‘avenger.’ When Ruth says, “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer,” it was the same as saying “spread your wing” or “take me under your wing of protection”, showing us also the strength that a commitment to marriage has to a Jew. The woman receives protection from the man and he gains her as a precious asset, not in the pejorative sense of possession of only a material good, as it can be misunderstood nowadays. One becomes a complement to the other. Boaz states that he is willing to redeem Ruth through marriage, but informs Ruth that there is another male relative who has the first right of ransom. He also used the same word before, when he said that Ruth trusted God by taking refuge under his wings (Rut. 2: 12) or *cloak*. Spiritually speaking, *cloak* or *mantle* means *anointing, protection, covering of the blood of the covenant on our lives*. That’s the moment of decision when we will occupy spiritually the highest places, when we need more protection, more anointing and a greater empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Maybe this marriage is referring to the baptism in the Holy Spirit or a greater outpouring of Him.

Boaz did not disappoint Ruth; instead, he took her cloak and filled it with supplies and sent her them back to town. Returning home and telling Naomi, she received the confirmation of the determination and the persevering character of Boaz (Rut. 3: 18: “She replied, ‘Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today’”).

In fact, the marriage should be with Naomi, not with Ruth, for Naomi was the widow of Elimelech and the land was hers (Rut. 4: 3: “He then said to the next-of-kin, ‘Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our kinsman Elimelech’”), but Naomi had no conditions to have children to raise offspring; so, it behooved to Ruth to take the place of family matriarch. God blessed her and she conceived a son who would continue the lineage of the redeemers in the family, besides it has been a means of restoring joy to Naomi and remove the bitterness of her heart, because she found herself restored and justified. The baby’s name was *Obed*, which has several meanings: *servant of God, worshiper and He restored*. With the growth and the testimony of Ruth, Naomi was restored and healed.

Important lessons from Ruth:

- 1) *Effects of spiritual scarcity:* it seems contradictory that someone named Elimelech (whose meaning is: *My God is King*) and Naomi (which means *my delight, delightful, blessed, fortunate, pleasing, beautiful*) have children who call Chilion (*weakening; pining away; consumption – as in a wasting disease; anxiety*) and Mahlon (*skinny, sick, illness*). Probably, they were the picture of famine and shortage that occurred in Israel and that caused a sick constitution, physical and emotional, with anxiety and low physical endurance. We can extrapolate this

deformity to the spiritual as well, where the knowledge of the word seemed scarce and owned for only a few priests, but the people had no access to it and lived in idolatry. When the physical and material supply are lacking, particularly in the area of nourishment, learning and intelligence is affected. But when the supply of faith, peace, love and comprehension are lacking by the scarcity and ignorance of God's word, the spiritual and emotional consequences can be tragic, deforming the character, killing the dreams, hindering the healthy relationships, destroying the family and creating all kind of deformation of personality that opens gaps for spiritual devastation and destruction. Only the true love can bring healing, deliverance and redemption.

- 2) *The curse prevents the relationship with God:* here I am referring to the Moabites. Please notice that the Lord did not forbid them to enter His sanctuary, that is, in His presence, by the sin of their flesh, but because they cursed the people whom He had blessed. This means that every time we curse the anointed and the chosen of God we are prevented from entering His presence for this sin of ours. So, we feel distant and sad because we can not enjoy His blessing upon us. This fellowship can only be restored when we recognize our sin and ask the Lord for forgiveness; from there, our responsibility is to break the curses with our own lips.
- 3) *When the shortage of the true spiritual supply is present and relationships are unsatisfying, sick and sinful, the results are: death, sterility, devastation, deprivation and loss of dreams; the growth is hindered by the prisons and chains of the devil.* Chilion married Orpah, Moabite, whose name means *youthful vigor*, among others (*mane, gazelle, neck*); apparently, someone who would compensate his weakened spirit. Mahlon (*sick, skinny, illness*) married Ruth who, in the ten years she lived with Mahlon, had no children, which leads us to think she was sterile (Rut. 1: 4; Rut. 4: 10), although we can not put aside the possibility of sterility being Mahlon's, for he was the 'sick.' Certainly, the constant contact with a sick, sterile and pessimistic person must have affected her as well or, at best, should have made her to meditate on her own life and her circumstances, leading her, later, to make the decision of knowing the true God, the God of Naomi, and get rid of such contamination and have a new chance to be happy.
- 4) *Faithfulness, loyalty and covenant in the flesh:* Orpah was faithful, but her faithfulness was only human; therefore she returned to Moab, to what she knew. Who is faithful only to the flesh, but has no covenant in the spirit, in other words, who only loves with human love, has a bridge with the past and remains with the soul committed to what he was taken from.
- 5) *Spiritual Covenant:* Ruth, unlike Orpah, did with Naomi and her God a spiritual covenant, and her statement on Rut. 1: 16-17 was a true conversion, because she left the old life, her family and took the risk of living a new story and have a new family: "But Ruth said, 'Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die – there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!'" Therefore, she made the decision and did not turn back. She stood firm and destroyed the bridge with the past. That is what happens to those who have true spiritual covenant with Jesus.
- 6) *God has a purpose for us and a reward for our faithfulness:* gleaning was a mocking way of expressing dependence on divine provision. Ruth was literally living by faith. She gleaned the ears of grain and gathered them among the sheaves. She was a simple gleaner, but God's providence had already placed her in the field

of Boaz, Naomi's kinsman-redeemer. *Boaz* means '*strength, firmness*' and he is the figure of Jesus. He did not want her as a gleaner but as the owner of the field. Thus, when we obey His directions, He has a reward for our loyalty and puts us in position of 'head.'

- 7) *We have a kinsman-redeemer*: the redeemer was a not so distant relative, influential, whom the family could usually call upon when their lineage or their goods were at risk of being lost. Christ is our close kin (our kinsman-redeemer) who came to buy us back to God's family. In the NT, this concept is revealed in the several synonyms of 'to redeem', which convey the idea of paying a ransom, making an acquisition or recover what was lost. We, the Gentiles, by being grafted into the family tree of Jesus through our conversion, came to have Him as our redeemer.
- 8) *There is a time for healing*: after her conversion, Ruth was going through a healing by the Holy Spirit, strengthening her to occupy the place that God had already determined to her and preparing her to take on an engagement with the redeemer. I also see that all the time she gleaned ears, Ruth was worked and freed from the spirit of poverty and misery, idolatry and the distortions of her self-image that could prevent her from assuming her position of honor in that society. The bible does not tell the emotional details that happened in Ruth's life in this time of adaptation to this new community, but we can imagine by our own growth with God that it was not easy to forget and change the habits of origin, to deal with her spiritual and family heritages and leave back the bad memories of the old life. Likewise, when we surrender to Jesus, He begins a process of healing, restoration and redemption in our lives, making us think, feel, act and speak differently from that we had in the world. Now we are new creatures.
- 9) *When we seek God sincerely, He doesn't disappoint us*: In Rut. 3: 7-8; 13-14 the bible says that Ruth lay down at Boaz's feet, which meant a marriage ceremonial request and she asked him to spread the cloak over her. Spiritually speaking, *cloak* or *mantle* means *anointing, protection, covering of the blood of the covenant on our lives*. That's the moment of decision when we will occupy spiritually the highest places, when we need more protection, more anointing and a greater empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Maybe this marriage is referring to the baptism in the Holy Spirit or a greater outpouring of Him. Boaz did not disappoint Ruth; instead, he took her cloak and filled it with supplies and sent her them back to town. This is what Jesus does for us, when, by faith, we assume a commitment to Him and ask Him for help. He not only confirms His promise as He increases our anointing because we overcame one more challenge to come to Him and to our blessing. I see something more than a marriage request or protection in the fact that Ruth lies down at the feet of Boaz; I see submission and surrender to his will, for she and Naomi knew that there was a nearer kinsman-redeemer and he could take the place of Boaz in the negotiations (Rut. 4: 1-10), but they decided to trust him and in God. This redeemer figuratively is sin, which tries to hold us back in its plots; our family heritages that try to bring us back to our origins; in short, anything that tries to keep us chained to Satan and the Law instead of grace.
- 10) *God does not rest until finish His work in us*: when we make our petitions to Jesus and trust our cause to Him, He does not rest until His work in us is complete so that we can receive what belongs to us (Rut. 3: 18: "She replied, 'Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today'"). He also works in the circumstances around us so that as soon as possible all can be cleared, for He saw faith and determination in us.

- 11) *He restores and transforms everything*: the baby's name was *Obed*, which has several meanings: *servant of God*, *worshiper* and *He restored*. In other words, when we give our lives to Jesus and seek a real change of life, what was barren becomes fertile, what is bitter becomes sweet, what was desolation and failure becomes accomplishment and what was scarce and insufficient becomes abundance. Ruth, from a mere gleaner became 'the owner of the field' because she married its owner. By marrying Jesus emotionally and spiritually, His whole harvest, His whole kingdom, becomes our inheritance. Most likely, the dream of Ruth was to be happy, to have a new family and be a mother, to be restored, honored and loved, to be accepted in society even as foreigner, in short, to be part of the group. The dream of our heart can be: to have children, biological or spiritual ones; to have professional or ministerial fulfillment; to feel a helpful human being to God and to society; to be accepted and loved; to have back what we lost or to have what we have never had. When this is achieved with the help of Jesus, it happens what happened to Ruth: we beget an *Obed*, that is, we and our dream become *servants of God*, His instruments here on earth; so, we can be true *worshipers* because *He restored* us.
- 12) *In us there is a Ruth and a Naomi*: there is no place for bitterness (Mara – Ruth 1: 20) and frustration when the blessing of God comes full and complete upon our lives. The reverse is also true; we can not have a great blessing of God with bitterness and frustration in the heart. Therefore, the focus of the story was on Ruth because through her growth and her testimony Naomi was healed and restored. It is interesting to perceive that within us, we can have a Ruth and a Naomi; Naomi, an old creature (our flesh) that was deprived of love, food, understanding, God's light, of a lighter life, and that was desolate, deprived, widowed, frustrated and ended up to get bitter. And we also have a new creature within us, a Ruth, our spirit, which decided to be born again, to do God's will and get strength to recover what was lost or stolen. It is with our spirit that Jesus makes a covenant, and through it our flesh, our Naomi, begins to be changed and healed from the wounds of the past.

Hanna and Samuel – 14th lesson



Reference texts: 1 Sam. 1–3; 1 Sam. 7–16; 1 Sm 25: 1

Summary:

A man from Ephraim named Elkanah (*Hebrew, Elkanah, 'God comforted'*) had two wives: Hannah (*Hannâ, 'full of grace'*) and Peninnah (*'coral'*). Peninnah had children; Hannah did not. Elkanah was from Levitical lineage, but not of the lineage of Amram (1 Chr. 6: 18; 27; 33-38), for he descended from his brother: Izhar. The bible writes in 1 Sam. 1: 1 the lineage and origin of Elkanah with the Levitical genealogy described above in the book of Chronicles. Elkanah was the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, Ephraimite. In 1 Chr. 6: 34-35, the name Eliel can refer to the same person of 1 Sam. 1: 1 (Elihu); Tohu in 1 Sam. 1: 1 may be the same person, Toah (1 Chr. 6: 34); Zuph (1 Sam. 1: 1) is confirmed in 1 Chr. 6: 35. Probably, Zuph was a Levite who lived in the land of Ephraim.

Elkanah lived in the hill country of Ephraim, in the city of Ramathaim-Zuphim, also known as Ramah, the city of Samuel (1 Sam. 7: 17). There were two more cities in Israel called Ramah: one of them in Benjamin (Josh. 18: 25); other in Naphtali (Josh. 19: 36).

When Elkanah, once a year in Shiloh, offered his sacrifice to the Lord, he gave portions of this to Peninnah, Hanna and his children. However, he gave a double portion to Hannah because he loved her. Hannah was sterile and Peninnah provoked her till annoy her; so, Hannah wept and did not eat. Elkanah tried to comfort her, tried to fill with his love the need that Hannah had to bear children. In the temple in Shiloh, Hanna prayed to the Lord and wept abundantly pouring her soul before Him and made a vow that if He gave her a son, she would consecrate him to God as a Nazirite for life. Hannah took a long time in the Lord's presence and the priest *Eli* (*Hebrew = My God; Aramaic = height*) saw her lips moving, but no sound came out of them and he thought she was drunk. Hanna told him her affliction and he let her go in peace, blessing her and wishing that God granted her what she had requested.

Hanna came back without sorrow to her home in Ramah. She conceived and bore a son whom she named Samuel, and she said: "*Because I asked the Lord for him.*" Probably the complete sentence would have been: "I asked for him a pious name." Samuel (Sh^cmü'el) means: 'name of God', 'pious name', 'asked of God', 'heard by God').

One year after having prayed in the temple asking for a child, Hanna did not come along with Elkanah to offer his yearly sacrifice, but told her husband that when the boy was weaned, about two years old, she would present him to the Lord and he would remain there forever. After weaning, she took him to Eli the priest and left him there. Hannah sang a song of praise and exaltation to God and went back to Ramah.

The sons of Eli, Hophni (*'boxer' or 'belonging to the wrist'*) and Phinehas (*'black'*) were perverted men, unworthy (*"sons of Belial" – Belial in the bible can refer to a demon, an angel of hostility, or symbolize wicked or worthless people*) and they didn't care about the Lord. They didn't exercise properly the priestly offices and thus they also perverted the people.

Samuel served the Lord, even being a child, dressed in a linen ephod. From year to year, Hannah brought him a new robe when Elkanah went up to the temple, and Eli blessed them. God also blessed her and she had another three sons and two daughters.

The young Samuel grew up in stature and in the favor with the Lord and men.

A man of God came to Eli and said him that the Lord was not pleased with him or sons and that all his descendants would die at a young age. He also said that Hophni and Phinehas would die on the same day (which actually happened when the Philistines stole the Ark of the Lord – 1 Sam. 4: 11) and that He would raise in their place a faithful priest who would obey Him; so, his descendants would be blessed.

The bible says that in those days the word of God was too rare and the visions were not frequent. Samuel was still young when the Lord called him. He didn't yet have God's revelation; the bible says that Samuel did not yet know the Lord's voice. Three times He called him, but the boy thought it was Eli who was calling; until the fourth time he said: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Then God revealed to him what would happen to Israel in the near future, especially with Eli and his house. Samuel told the priest what he heard, because Eli asked him to tell all that the Lord had revealed to him. Samuel grew up and his words were reliable because they came from God and none of his words fell to the ground. All Israel recognized him as a prophet of the Lord and He continued to appear to him at Shiloh.

When the Ark of the Covenant was stolen by the Philistines (around 1063 BC, the start date of Samuel's ministry), Eli's two sons died and Samuel assumed the office of priest, for Eli also died by hearing the news of the death of his children. From year-to-year Samuel went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all those places – 1 Sam. 7: 16. Mizpah was located between Ephraim and Benjamin. Bethel was in Ephraim; and Gilgal was in West Manasseh, near Ephraim.

Years later, Samuel as judge of religious issues, urged the people to repent and turn to the Lord.

The sons of Samuel (Joel, *'YHWH is God'*, and Abijah, *'YHWH is Father'*, 1 Sam. 8: 1-5) were not good judges of the people, because they turned aside toward greed, accepting bribes and perverting justice. Then, the people asked for a king who ruled over them. Samuel not only officiated as a judge on religious matters, but was also involved with the affairs of state, so the Israelites asked him to anoint a king over them. God allowed and Saul was anointed king of Israel. However, his actions brought great sadness to Samuel because Saul twice disobeyed the orders of God. Then, the Lord instructed him to anoint a successor of Saul and the prophet was sent to the house of Jesse in Bethlehem of Judah, where he anointed David as future king. Both of them (Samuel and David) met again years later when David fled from Saul, before David was anointed king of Judah in Hebron.

From there Samuel 'disappears from the scene' and the bible comes back to talk about him in 1 Sam. 25: 1; 1 Chr. 28: 3a, when it mentions his death and his burial in Ramah (Ramathaim-Zuphim, in Ephraim). Samuel died before seeing David to seat on the throne of the nation. Joel, a Levite, son of Samuel, generated Heman, one of the singers of the tribe of Kohathites separated for the praise in the reign of David (1 Chr. 6: 33-38).

Important lessons from Hannah and Samuel:

- 1) *Jesus gives us a double portion:* Elkanah is the figure of Jesus, and as he loved Hannah, he gave her a double portion of food to compensate her for her distress. Thus, we are chosen and loved of the Lord and He always has for us a double portion of His blessings to comfort us in our grief and in our need.
- 2) *Giving in to the provocations of the enemy takes away our strength and makes us reject the grace of God:* the provocations of Peninnah irritated Hanna and she wept and did not eat. She rejected the consolation and supply of Elkanah because she gave attention to her rival; her tears fogged her eyes, and her sadness prevented her from receiving food and strength to fight. Likewise, when we let the adversary take our peace and communion with God, we can not enjoy His best, because our spiritual vision becomes blurry, in the same way that the weeping blurs our physical vision.
- 3) *Persevering in the request and pouring out our heart before God brings solution:* the bible says that Hannah took a long time in the Lord's presence, praying, what drew the attention of Eli. Even weakened by the words she heard from Peninnah, Hanna shed the bitterness of her soul before the altar, stayed there, seeking the ultimate solution to her problems on the throne of God. So, she went home justified and satisfied. The bible says that her face was no longer sad. We must persevere in our way, not giving up on our requests (dreams), even if we have to cry our grief and our sorrow before the Lord. The important is to believe that in Him is the solution to what we seek and He hears us.
- 4) *When God is the author of the miracle, the honor is totally His:* God was the author of the miracle in the life of Hannah; therefore, she gave Him the 'firstfruits' of her blessing, which was Samuel. This one was consecrated to the Lord as a Nazirite for life. We can see a resemblance with two other situations where the child had the separation of Naziriteship for life: Samson, whose mother was rescued from sterility and John the Baptist, for Elizabeth was also barren. In the three cases of human impossibility (sterility), God did the miracle and the honor was assigned to Him for it; the children represented the offerings of firstfruits that were given to Him.
- 5) *God comforts those who seek and honor Him:* the Lord knew the heart of Elkanah and Hannah, and as He was honored by them in their vow, He comforted them by giving them what they wanted most. When we put Him as the first in our lives, He comforts us, manifesting His promise.
- 6) *When we make a vow we must fulfill it and the firstfruits for God assure us new fruit:* Hanna's vow was completely fulfilled, so the Lord blessed her much more. She not only fulfilled the vow itself, but gave Him what first bore fruit in her life, so she was blessed with new sons and daughters. Her fidelity not only generated blessings for herself but for her offspring, because through her, Samuel was also blessed. Our faithfulness to God is precious and a door so that His abundance may be upon us and does not cease anymore.
- 7) *When we serve the Lord from the heart His anointing goes increasing:* Samuel served the Lord in the temple and every year Hannah brought him a new robe, which means that every year, God added more anointing to His chosen, more knowledge of Him and more intimacy with Him. If we are steady in our search and our spiritual growth, God honors us increasing every day the anointing of His Spirit, for through Him we can have more knowledge of the truth. So, He enables us with power to accomplish His purpose here on earth.

- 8) *Lack of commitment gives rise to serious consequences*: the lack of fear and commitment to their priestly functions made Hophni and Phinehas die and that their descendants suffered the curse decreed by the Lord. Eli was also punished for failing to reprimand his children properly and not having corrected them because of their sin.
- 9) *It's necessary a private meeting with God to know Him in truth*: Samuel was young and ministered in the Tabernacle with Eli, but had not yet experienced a personal encounter with God, so he did not know His voice and did not understand many things; but when the Lord spoke to him at night and he opened his mind to hear him, then yes, it was revealed His purpose to him as prophet and priest of Israel. It's not enough to walk in revelation or the experiences of others. We must have our own revelation to know with accuracy what He wants from us.
- 10) *God always confirms His word*: the Lord spoke twice with Eli, using different people to warn him about the misconduct of his house before Him. He used in the first place another prophet, and then, Samuel himself. When God has some important message to give us, He will speak the same thing through different people until we have understood His message.
- 11) *The responsibility is personal, that is, the free will is individual*: we can see references about it in Ezek. 18: 20; Deut. 24: 16; 2 Chr. 25: 4b; Jer. 31: 30. Parents are not responsible for personal choices of the children, nor children for parents'. Each will receive God's justice or punishment according to his own choices. Samuel followed the godly paths of Elkanah and Hannah, so he was blessed by the Lord and could be able to live under His *grace* (the meaning of the name *Hanna*) and His *comfort* (the meaning of the name *Elkanah*). However, Samuel's sons did not choose the same piety and faithfulness to God, so were rejected and demoralized as judges of Israel. They despised the heritage that had been given to them: to have God as Father (*Abijah = YHWH is Father*) and Lord (*Joel = YHWH is God*), to follow the inclinations of the flesh. Likewise, the sons of Eli were negligent toward God and leant to evil, to the strength of the flesh (*Hophni = boxer or belonging to the wrist; Phinehas = black*) and experienced the death generated by their sin. We don't need to walk in the wrong ways of our parents, but always try to follow the loyalty and obedience to the Word; so we'll be blessed.

King David – 15th lesson



Reference texts: 1 Sam. 8–1 Kin. 2; 1 Chr. 2–29

Saul's reign: 1050–1010 BC

David's reign: 1010–970 BC

Summary:

When Samuel was old and appointed his sons judges over Israel, the people saw that their procedure was not worthy, therefore, they asked for a king who ruled over them. Samuel prayed to God and He granted the wish of the people, instructing him to anoint Saul (*shā'ül begged, pleaded and desired*), Benjamite, the son of Kish (*qish, bow, power*). Saul had a majestic bearing, the appearance of a king. At that time, Saul was in search of his father's donkeys that had been astray. Saul and his servants got into the land of Zuph, where Samuel was with the people to offer sacrifices in the high place. Saul was invited to dinner with them and Samuel gave him a special portion; on the next day he anointed him (1 Sam. 10: 1) secretly as king over Israel. Samuel informed Saul not to worry anymore about the donkeys of his father, for they had been found. Then, in Mizpah (1 Sam. 10: 17-25) Saul was anointed publicly, in a singular episode when, by means of lot, the people heard of God's choice about their king who, however, was found hidden among the luggage.. Saul confirmed his election as king by defeating Nahash king of Ammon in Jabesh Gilead. Nahash had made a very cruel peace agreement with Israel, promising to gouge out their citizens' right eye; the people, in turn, asked for help to Saul. He defeated the enemy and was confirmed as king over them. A religious ceremony at Gilgal confirmed his appointment as king (1 Sam. 11: 14-15).

During the following years to his appointment Saul acted as a warrior, destroying Israel's enemies but in the battle against the Philistines, seeing that Samuel delayed in coming and the people started to give up the fight, he offered priestly sacrifice in Gilgal without being a priest, that is, he took upon himself the office of priest without being such. When Samuel arrived, he rebuked him severely (1 Sam. 13: 8-14) and told him that he had been rejected by God as king. Saul knew that, in the mind of the Lord, there was already a man after His heart to replace him. Jonathan son of Saul started the attacks against the camp of the Philistines, and so the Israelites could defeat them. During his reign there was a fierce war against the Philistines. God sent Samuel again to the king, informing him that He would deliver Amalek into his hands (1 Sam. 15: 1-35), but both the Amalekite king and the whole nation should be destroyed; nothing should remain of them, because the Lord had already cursed them. Saul disobeyed God's orders and spared their king, Agag, and part of cattle; he was reprimanded again by Samuel, who told him that obedience to God was better than sacrifices and burnt

offerings and, because of this second disobedience to divine guidance, the Lord would depose him of his post, giving it to another. Thus, Samuel cut his relations with Saul, for the Lord rejected him.

The prophet was instructed by Him to go to Bethlehem to anoint a son of Jesse, because Saul's successor would be chosen there. Samuel arrived in Bethlehem and the people were troubled with so distinguished visitor. He told them he had come to sacrifice to the Lord. He arrived at the house of Jesse, and after having passed before the prophet his seven children without, however, none of them being chosen by God, he called his youngest son, who was herding his sheep. His name was David (*Dāwīdh* or *Dāwidh*). The name has dubious roots and meanings, perhaps as *Dawīdum*, *chief*, of the Old Babylonian. The Hebrew root 'dod' or 'dud' means 'love'. The meaning well known by all ("The beloved of God") is possibly a description of the role of David as the Lord's chosen to be leader of His people (As His beloved, who made all His will) instead of the actual meaning of his name. In 1 Sam. 16: 12-13 it's written: "He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes [NIV, 'with fine appearance'; KJV, 'a beautiful countenance'], and was handsome [NIV: 'handsome features'; KJV, 'goodly to look to']. The Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.' Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah." 'Ruddy' (in Hebrew, *admoni*, אדמוני) didn't mean exactly the color of his hair. In Hebrew means, 'reddish', 'ruddy' (healthy). Perhaps this can refer to his physical skill. Therefore, the best translation could be 'covered with blood' or 'warrior.' In the OT only David and Esau received this qualification ('ruddy'). This means that he was courageous, believed in goodness, in the righteousness of God on his life and was sincere and clear and pure in heart. In Hebrew the expression 'came mightily upon him', 'came upon him in power' means 'hastened upon', that is, the Spirit of God came in haste upon him. And the Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him before his brothers and returned to Ramah.

Having the Spirit of the Lord withdrawn from Saul, from the part of God an evil spirit tormented him. His servants suggested him that he sought a man who could play the harp so that, by playing it, when the unclean spirit came, he came out of the king. Then, one of the servants, knowing that David praised the Lord with all his soul, suggested that they brought him to Saul. David sat before the king (the original translation suggests that "*being before*" did not mean to stay there forever, but "*being at service of someone*") and, whenever he was called, he played harp for Saul to calm him down. The Philistines didn't give up on making war against Israel, and one day a warrior went out of their camp, and for forty days, morning and afternoon, he shouted to the army of Saul, defying Israel. In 1 Sam. 17: 4-10; 16 it is written: "And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span (*about three meters or nine feet*). He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze (*57 kilograms or 125 pounds*). He had greaves of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron (*7 kilograms or 15 pounds*); and his shield-bearer went before him. He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel: 'Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and

serve us.’ And the Philistine said, ‘Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together’... For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.”

Thus, the Goliath was nine feet tall (*about 3 meters*), his spear weighed *7 kilograms*, and his armor, about *57 kilograms*. Therefore, looking through human eyes it was impossible for a kid to win, but David accepted the challenge, knowing that the prize for who defeated the giant would be the hand the king’s daughter for his wife and tax exemption for the whole house of his father. David came to Saul and introduced himself as a warrior to fight against the Philistine. Saul saw before him only a boy who, apparently, had no conditions to fight against an experienced soldier as Goliath and offered him his armor. In 1 Sam. 17: 39-40; 50 we read: “David strapped Saul’s sword over the armor, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, ‘I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them.’ So David removed them. Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the stream, and put them in his shepherd’s bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine... So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David’s hand.” David took the giant’s sword and cut off his head with it, bringing it to Saul. David went against Goliath with the simplicity and the faith of surrender to God, not with Saul’s armor or the sword. He went also with the authority (staff) and reverence to Him, because he was worried about the affronts of the giant to the people of the Lord. Thus, overcoming the enemy of the nation, he was appointed Saul’s shield-bearer. He became a national hero. When Israel returned from the victory over the Philistines, because after he defeated the giant the Israelites chased the enemies and won, the women sang and magnified the heroic acts of David, which caused jealousy in the heart of Saul. On the other hand, Jonathan (*y^ehônãthân or yônãthân, YHWH gave us, gift of God, YHWH has given*), son of Saul, loved David as soon as he saw him and they made a covenant. They became good friends.

Whenever the evil spirit took possession of Saul, David played his harp and the spirit retreated. In one of these fits of rage, Saul tried to pin David to the wall with a spear and he turned away from him twice (1 Sam. 18: 11). Saul didn’t see David with good eyes, for jealousy and envy had taken possession of him. So he plotted a new way to kill him. As he had promised his daughter’s hand to him who won the giant, he asked as dowry hundred foreskins of the Philistines; so, if David died at the hands of the enemy, Saul would not be directly responsible (1 Sam. 18: 21). The first daughter of Saul was Merab, but ended up marrying another man, and Michal was given to David (1 Sam. 18: 17; 21; 25). However, David was victorious and brought to Saul two hundred foreskins of the Philistines, the double that he had asked (1 Sam. 18: 27). The victories of David began to aggrandize him before the people, and again there was war against the Philistines. They were defeated once more by the Lord’s anointed, and at night, when the evil spirit came upon Saul and David was playing his harp to calm him, the king tried to pin him to the wall with his spear. David fled to his house and when Saul sent officers to arrest him, they no longer found him there because Michal (*mikhal = who is like God*), the second daughter of Saul and David’s wife, helped him to escape from his father. Later, Saul gave Michal to Palti (Paltiel) as wife (1 Sam. 25: 44): “Saul had given his daughter Michal, David’s wife, to Palti son of Laish, who was from Gallim.” When David became king, he sent messengers to her back to him (2 Sam. 3: 14-16): “Then David sent messengers to Saul’s son Ishbaal, saying, ‘Give me my wife Michal, to whom I became engaged at the price of one hundred foreskins of the Philistines’. Ishbaal sent and took her from her husband Paltiel the son of Laish. But her

husband went with her, weeping as he walked behind her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, 'Go back home!' So he went back."

From there, David became a fugitive. The first place where he took refuge was with Samuel in the house of the prophets, in the province of Ramah (1 Sam. 19: 18-24). Saul sent three delegations to snatch David from the hands of the man of God, but the three were taken by the spirit of prophecy. When he, personally, went also there, began to prophesy like the others.

David asked Jonathan for help and then he fled to Nob to the priest Ahimelech. He was hungry and got from the priest the permission to eat the bread of the Presence which was in the Holy Place, where only the Levites could enter. He took Goliath's sword that was with Ahimelech and escaped again. When Saul heard this, he killed the priest and his sons. The only one of them who escaped was Abiathar, who later became a priest of David (1 Sam. 22: 20-23; 2 Sam. 8: 17; 2 Sam. 20: 25; 1 Chr. 18: 16).

Looking for a safe place, away from Saul, David took refuge in the land of the Philistines, for he knew that it was the last place that Saul would find him. There, he pretended to be mad so that the king Achish did not kill him and, expelled from there by the king himself, he went to the cave of Adullam. In that place he had already four hundred men with him and his own family. We can see that at the beginning they were a heterogeneous collection of fugitives; later, an armed force that attacked foreign invaders, protecting crops and livestock of the Israelite communities at the border and living on the generosity of them. The Lord was training David to be king, not only enabling him in war, but working within his soul. He didn't stay there for long, but went to seek refuge in the forest of Hereth, then in Keilah, in the desert of Ziph, at Horesh, going to En Gedi, then the desert of Paran (or Maom, which is more correct, and whose village was in the highlands of the tribe of Judah – Josh. 15: 55; 1 Chr. 4: 41; 1 Sam. 23: 24. In the Masoretic Text it is written 'wilderness of Paran', and there was a mistake here, for Paran (Hab. 3: 3) is a desert situated in the central-eastern region of the Sinai peninsula, northeast of Mount Sinai and south-west of Kadesh, with the Arabah and Gulf of Aqaba on its eastern border), until he took refuge in the land of the Philistines, Gath (here, he already had six hundred men with him: 1 Sam. 23: 13; 1 Sam. 27: 2). En Gedi (*'en-gedhi, fountain of the goat'*) is a fountain of fresh water at west of the Dead Sea, in the land of Judah. The fertility of this area, in the midst of a so barren region, made it appropriate for outlaws, to find food and as a place of hiding; so David went there (1 Sam. 23: 29; 1 Sam. 24: 1-3). His former name was Hazazon Tamar, *'clefts of the palms'* (Gen. 14: 7; 2 Chr. 20: 2), because it was bathed by a constant hot stream, and was once famous for its palm trees and vineyards (Song 1: 14).

This is a summary of David's escape route, which lasted for years until Saul died and he could replace him on the throne of Israel. Returning to the activity that David performed for his people, protecting them from the enemies, there was an episode reported in 1 Sam. 25: 2-44, when he was faced with a wealthy sheep farmer, named Nabal (*crazy*), in the desert of Maom. He refused to acknowledge his debt of gratitude to the God's anointed. The wife of Nabal interfered in David's favor; the Lord killed her crazy husband and she became David's wife.

Shortly after leaving Adullam, David freed Keilah, however, its people betrayed him, denouncing him to Saul. That's when David moved to the desert Ziph. There, the inhabitants (ziphites) revealed the king his hiding place (1 Sam. 23: 19-29) and Saul went to meet him, just getting rid at the last minute, when the king knew about another attack of the Philistines, having to leave his persecution for later. Within a few years that followed, David spared Saul's life twice; in the first time, to the point of cutting the edge of the robe of the king (1 Sam. 24: 4) and in the second removing the spear and the

jug of water in Saul's camp (1 Sam. 26: 11). There was a period of time between the two episodes, showing us different traits in the personality of David. In the first one, he was respectful; in the second, challenger, because he was tired of the insane persecution of Saul.

David took refuge again in the land of the Philistines, in the court of Achish, in Gath. This one allowed him to dwell in Ziklag (1 Sam. 27: 1-12); even serving a Philistine, David still helped the Israelites, attacking those who antagonized them. He gained the trust of Achish but not of his commanders. When they planned a major attack against Israel, they objected to the presence of David in their ranks, fearing that at the last minute, he changed sides to Saul (1 Sam. 29: 1-11). So, he returned to Ziklag, which had been looted by the Amalekites. He attacked the enemy and regained all that was his and destroyed the assailants. That was when he had news of the death of Saul and Jonathan by the Philistines on Mount Gilboa. For God's guidance, he returned to Judah to Hebron, and there, his tribe anointed him king over Judah, where he reigned for seven years and a half. In the first two years of his reign in Hebron, there was civil war, when Abner commander of Saul's army anointed his son, *Ish-Bosheth* ('Man of Shame' or 'Man of Baal'; also called *Eshbaal* – 'fire of Baal' – or *Ishvi* – 'equal'), as king at *Mahanaim* (2 Sam. 2: 8). Joab, David's military commander killed Abner by having killed his brother Asahel in battle. Ish-Bosheth died at the hands of two men of Israel, who were executed by David.

After this victory, he was anointed king over the twelve tribes in Hebron. David began to reign at 30 years old and ruled 7 years in Hebron (2 Sam. 5: 4-5; 1 Chr. 29: 27-28). Then, he transferred his capital to Jerusalem (Jebus), taking it from the hands of the Jebusites. There, he reigned for thirty-three years (2 Sam. 5: 6-10; 1 Chr. 11: 1-9). He initiated a reconstruction program of the kingdom, helped by Hiram, king of Tyre (2 Sam. 5: 10-12). David continued his military campaigns to conquer the land of Israel and had victories over many peoples (the Canaanites, Moabites, Ammonites, Aramaeans and Syrians, Edomites and Amalekites), so expanding the kingdom.

He also was concerned with the restoration of religious life. He ordered that the Ark of the Covenant was brought from the house of Abinadab in Kiriath Jearim, where it was for about twenty years, since the days of Samuel (1 Sam. 7: 1) to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6: 1-11). However, he tried to bring it the wrong way, on a bullock cart, and when someone touched it, trying to prevent it from falling to the ground, the Lord intervened and killed the man (*Uzzah*). David feared the wrath of God and left the Ark for three months in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite, bringing it to Jerusalem some time later. This time, he did it the right way, carried by the Levites, and succeeded (2 Sam. 6: 12-23), but by arriving to his town, dancing, Michal despised him for thinking that his attitude was not worthy of a king. David, in turn, rebuked her and continued his plan of government, thinking in building a temple where the Ark of the Covenant could stay in the midst of his people. However, Nathan the prophet told him that this deed would be reserved for his son (2 Sam. 7: 1-29).

David also honored his covenant with Jonathan looking for Mephibosheth ('destructive shame'; 'beseth' or 'besheth' means 'shame'. Another translation for 'Mephibosheth' is 'He who took my shame'), his only surviving son and restituted him of the family property, treating him as one of his sons (2 Sam. 9: 1-13). By this time, the struggles in the kingdom had decreased and David was not going to battle with his army. On one of those days, he saw through the window of his palace a woman named Bathsheba, the wife of one of his loyal officers, Uriah the Hittite, and he delighted in her. He brought her to the palace and he slept with her. As Joab, his commander was conducting the siege on Rabbah, and Uriah was also participating in the fight, David

saw that there was only one way to have Bathsheba as wife: to put Uriah in front of the battle to be killed. He achieved his purpose, and married Bathsheba; he was also victorious over Rabbah, and its citizens, the Ammonites, were subjected to forced labor. Nathan the prophet rebuked David for his sin and told him that God forgave him, but would kill the son of that sinful union; furthermore, from the part of God, it was given him a prophecy that, because of that infamous act, the sword would never depart from his house (2 Sam. 12: 7-12, focusing on verse 10). Actually, the child died, and the sin of David came to create family disorders that extended for future generations: Amnon, his son, committed a sin of incest with Tamar, his half-sister, also a daughter of David; and another son, Absalom, to compensate the first crime, committed another, killing Amnon. Afterward, he fled and could not attend the presence of David for a long time, until he was readmitted in the palace. However, the seed of revolt and rebellion existed in his heart and he rebelled against his own father to take the reign of him. With the revolt of Absalom, David fled; Joab killed Absalom and the kingdom was returned to David. In this whole process, Ahithophel, one of the trusted counselors of the king turned to Absalom, but aware of his treachery, committed suicide. Another counselor, Hushai remained loyal to David. Another consequence of that sin was the dispute between Adonijah and Solomon for the throne. With the curse extending over several generations, the house of Judah was almost wiped out during the reign of Athaliah, being preserved a single grandson of her, Joash.

After a short time of the revolt of Absalom, the king had to suppress another riot in the kingdom, this time on the part of Sheba, Benjamite, but who was beheaded by some of his own followers (2 Sam. 20: 1-26).

One of the last acts in the reign of David was the census decreed by him to inquire about his military strength. He knew he had with him eight hundred thousand men in his army, but the Lord was not pleased with that attitude and presented him three alternatives as a punishment: three years of famine, three months of defeat by his enemies or three days of pestilence in the land; David surrendered to the choice of God (1 Chr. 21: 11-13). The plague was sent for three days on the people, and David, repenting, asked the Lord to forgive him and raised an altar on the threshing floor of *Araunah (Ornan)*, in the same place where Abraham had offered Isaac in sacrifice (Moriah). There, later, the temple was built by Solomon (2 Chr. 3: 1), who was the first son of Bathsheba, after 'child of sin' died and David consoled her.

At the end of his days, being an old man, David had to get involved in the struggle between Solomon and Adonijah for the succession to the throne. This was still the legacy of bloodshed within the bosom of the family predicted by Nathan.

David died and Solomon reigned in his place. Adonijah, his other son, was killed in the beginning of Solomon's reign by Benaiah, chief of the personal guard of David.

Important lessons from David:

- 1) *The difference between gift and inheritance:* it would be another way of saying that there is a difference between flesh and spirit, between seeking the blessing and seeking *the giver of blessings*. Here we see the spiritual and psychological profile of three men: Saul, David and Absalom. God gave spiritual gifts to Saul, but as he was not after God's heart, he couldn't have the divine inheritance, that is, to know the Lord and have all that He had to give him. He didn't have the approval of God on his life until the end. Saul fought in the flesh, lived in the flesh and, despite the

outpouring of the Holy Spirit enabling him to rule, he didn't grow spiritually because he didn't surrender to the Lord as David did. He had little contact with God. There was a big difference in God's choice with Saul and David. Saul was anointed as at the last minute to satisfy the pleas of the people, so he had no time to be trained by the Lord. He didn't have the mentality to be king; he hid among the baggage not to be found or assume the responsibility of a king. Like all who walk in the flesh, he walked in search of old and stuck things, not liable to change (donkeys). Saul only knew to be a warrior, obeying his instincts, not to God's commands (he did not wait for Samuel, offered sacrifice without being a priest and did not destroyed completely the Amalekites as the Lord had determined). He didn't control his emotions and was able to kill someone, as in the case of David, simply because the person didn't please him or because he felt jealous or envious of his success, as many people today seek only the blessings, but not *the giver of blessings* (Jesus). David had the gift and inheritance because he was after God's heart. Despite being flawed man and, often, even led by his emotions and desires of the flesh, he always repented and turned to Him because he feared Him and acknowledged His sovereignty over his life. He knew to respect His anointed ones and waited for His justice and for His answer at the right time. He knew that God would put him in the place He had reserved for him, without having to use cunning or strength to conquer it. Absalom was the third type: he had neither the gift nor the inheritance because he had not been chosen by God; he decided to choose himself and fell. He didn't sustain the power without the approval of the Lord. He had not any intimacy with Him.

- 2) *To obey is better than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15: 22-23)*: that's what Samuel said to Saul when he sinned against the Lord's orders. God is not pleased with disobedience, idolatry, religiosity or stubbornness. Saul committed the four errors and was disqualified by Him. The only thing God asks of us, even today, is the surrender to His will and the love for Him.
- 3) *Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16: 7)*: in Hebrew, the word *heart* (lebab), in this text, means *courage*; this means that the man sees the external things, the appearances, but God sees the inner of man, not only his dreams, desires and intentions, as well as his courage to fight for the things of God and for His projects. David's heart was clean and transparent; moreover, he had the courage to fight for what he believed and God honored him. He wants to see something in our heart that pleases Him, not the masks, but the essence of our being.
- 4) *To win the giants of the soul in the strength of God*: David went against Goliath in the strength of God, in his faith in Him, not in human power, so much that he refused Saul's armor; it was too heavy for him. We can write this thought in other words: *the arm of the flesh x the arm of God; to fight in the flesh x to fight in the spirit; violence of the enemy x wisdom of God*. Goliath was the expression of brute force, the carnal strength that takes into account its own talents, even using violence, if necessary. David used the spiritual strength, the strength of God, the power of His word assuring him the victory, for he did not know the Lord superficially, in a religious way as the others; he knew Him in a deeper way, had intimacy with Him; he had known Him in the dawns in the Judean desert where he fed the sheep of his father, where in the silence of the night and looking at the breadth of the sky, he could hear His voice and feel His heart. David had experienced God's strength when he fought with bears and lions to defend his sheep. God protected him and inspired him. Today, we can have much more than he had, because we have the Holy Spirit with us every day, teaching us to fight against our unseen enemies and freeing us,

through His wisdom, from our physical enemies. Today we have with us the weapons of the cross.

- 5) *Praise, a powerful weapon against the enemy*: when David played his harp the evil spirit departed from Saul, for his praise brought the power of God. Even today, we can experience great victories with the praise; when we sing from the heart our song to the Lord, He fights our battles and defeats the enemy for us. Anointed with the Power of His Spirit – and praise is a way to strengthen it in us and cover us with His presence (2 Kin. 3: 15) – we cast out demons in the name of Jesus (Mk. 16: 17).
- 6) *Friendship between David and Jonathan*: this friendship expresses the unconditional love that creates an everlasting commitment. Both of them participated in the blessing resulting from that companionship. Jonathan is the figure of Jesus, while David is the figure of the Church. In relation to Jonathan, his loyalty to the truth and friendship, as well as his pacifying character (even placing him before a hard choice, because he had to choose between David and his father) caused David to sit on the throne, as it was the will of God. David, in turn, was benefited from the friendship with Jonathan and he honored this friendship till the end, taking seriously his promise to protect and save all those from the house of Saul. For the love of Jonathan, David gave back to Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, his properties and treated him like a son. He also showed mercy to Ishbosheth, son of Saul, who Abner had placed as king over Israel, and did not intend to kill him to keep the throne, but put everything in the hands of the Lord. When Ishbosheth was killed, David executed his murderers, because he was not pleased of his death as he had not been pleased with the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, even knowing they were his competitors to the throne. Saul had done everything wrong toward him, but David mourned when he died. Today, we have a friendship with Jesus that protects us from the accusations and attacks of the devil and assures us His protection and His companionship till the end of our lives. Likewise, He expects us to honor this loyalty and this friendship so that we can always be in His presence and be winners.
- 7) *To break with religiosity to eat the best of God*: when he was fleeing from Saul, David broke the religious rules by entering the house of the priest Ahimelech and eating the holy bread (bread of the Presence) that were reserved only for priests. *Bread* speaks of *communion, intimacy with the Lord, revelation, of Christ's body*; therefore, if we want to eat the best of God and have intimacy with Him, we must often break with the religiosity, the rules, to enter freely into His presence and ask Him what we need. It's about a personal search, hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and following His guidance, even though they may seem different for everyone else.
- 8) *The leader's example changes the lives and conduct of his subordinates*: we can see this when David was in Adullam (1 Sam. 22: 2), where he had with him four hundred men difficult to handle (the bible says that joined him those who were in trouble, the indebted and the bitter in spirit) and, not worrying with this, he became an example for them, including increasing their number to six hundred men (1 Sam. 27: 2). In 2 Sam. 8: 15-18 and 1 Chr. 11: 10-47, the bible speaks of the officers of David and afterwards of his mighty men. This means that David's example transformed ordinary men into experienced warriors, people emotionally unstable and unbalanced into soldiers with self-control. Saul pursued David for several years. Throughout this journey, God worked with David, strengthening his self-confidence, capacity of leadership, authority, submission to Him, self-control, wisdom, prudence, skill in battle, military strategies and all other traits of character, in order to transform him into leader of a people. He did not worry about the amount

of work that he had ahead, nor with the apparent lack of character of those who were by his side. He influenced, but not was influenced by anyone in his decisions. He let himself be worked by the Lord and be a channel of healing and transformation in the lives of those who were with him. He did not care with the comments or the carnal and reckless suggestions of his subordinates (1 Sam. 24: 4: “The men of David said to him, ‘Here is the day of which the Lord said to you’, ‘I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you’”); on the contrary (although he had cut off a corner of Saul’s cloak), his behavior suppressed their impetuosity and increased the respect of all for his leadership [“He said to his men, ‘The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord’s anointed, to raise my hand against him; for he is the Lord’s anointed’. So David scolded his men severely and did not permit them to attack Saul. Then Saul got up and left the cave, and went on his way” (1 Sam. 24: 6-7)]. The expression ‘*Lord’s anointed*’ is used in the books of Samuel as synonym of ‘*king*.’ Who wants to be after God’s heart can not hear or accept any suggestion, can not be commanded, but learn to lead, to command; can not be afraid of work nor the size of it.

- 9) *Sin, even forgiven, has its consequences*: we can see that in the case of Uriah, where God forgave David’s sin, but the consequences lasted for generations, up to the descendants of Solomon, in Rehoboam, when the kingdom of Israel was again divided, leaving only two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, with the house of David, by divine command. The remaining tribes formed the northern kingdom and had another king. The sword did not depart from the house of David: rivalry between Absalom and Amnon, the death of Absalom after trying to take the throne from his father (David), Adonijah and Solomon competing for the throne, Rehoboam (grandson of David that didn’t know to rule with mercy and wisdom), etc. Another consequence of David’s sin was the plague due to the census which he carried out without the approval of God. The people paid for his error, until the king repented and asked forgiveness to the Lord. The Angel of the Lord has placed the sword in his sheath, but the plague had destroyed many Israelites. We must think about it. Whenever we commit a sin, God forgives us, but the consequences of it can last until they are truly broken. This is what happens with the hereditary curses due to sins occurred in the past by whom we haven’t come to know, but that can still today be acting in our families, until we actually break them by the power of God and our faithfulness to Him, changing our attitudes. In the bible, we can see similar examples in the books of Kings, where some were faithful to God, others not, causing problems for their descendants.
- 10) *Carrying the presence of God (the ark) must not be carelessly*: the first time David tried to bring the ark, he did it in human power (bullock cart), and without respecting the holiness of God (Uzzah was killed by touching the ark). Only then he remembered that the only ones who might carry the ark were the Levites (perhaps only at that moment he could have information of the priests about the Law, which is surprising, since in the Law it was written that the kings should have a copy of the Torah to be able to govern: Deut. 17: 18-20). Now yes, the ark was brought to Jerusalem. David himself acknowledged his error (1 Chr. 15: 13), for the first time the Levites were not there to carry the ark, but the people of Judah (2 Sam. 6: 2), and they were not sanctified to carry the ark (1 Chr. 15: 12). The bible does not make it clear that Uzzah and Ahio were priests indeed, for in 1 Sam. 7: 1 it says that the men of Kiriath Jearim (in Judah) consecrated Eleazar, brother of those men and son of Abinadab, to guard the ark. This means that we don’t get our spiritual goals by force of the flesh, but by the Spirit of God and by the praise, because praise

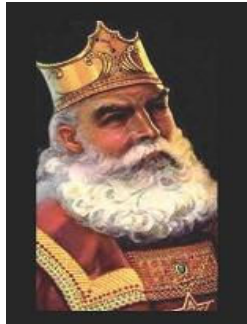
releases His power in our favor. Moreover, the praise makes joy flow, and the Holy Spirit begins to work.

- 11) *To keep the spontaneity and innocence before God*: David, once again, broke the religiosity and manifested his freedom to express the praise to God when he brought the ark to Jerusalem by the Levites. 2 Sam. 6: 14-16; 20-23 says: “David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart... David returned to bless his household. But Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, ‘How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants’ maids, as any vulgar fellow might shamelessly uncover himself!’ David said to Michal, ‘It was before the Lord, who chose me in place of your father and all his household, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord, that I have danced before the Lord. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in my own eyes; but by the maids of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor’. And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.” Years had passed since David had been anointed by Samuel, but now an adult and king of Israel he still maintained his characteristics of youth: innocence and spontaneity before God. The ephod was a short and sleeveless dress at the thighs, but it was not indecent, so Michal’s comment was not relevant. Michal symbolizes *false morality, religiosity, envy, hypocrisy*. The meaning of her name in Hebrew is: “*Who is like God?*” This means that religiosity is from the devil (Saul), and when God delivers us from his claws, there is no reason to worship the Lord dressed in it. It is no longer part of our life, of the kingdom that God has given us. Religiosity brings a false reverence and a false fear of the Lord. It acts in society through norms, rules, etiquette, outward appearances that destroy the spontaneity and true joy. It is important to highlight that Michal, not only died keeping this bitterness and this envy, but she died sterile. She never had children by David or anybody else. Religiosity generates sterility; it does not produce offspring.
- 12) *To sow for the offspring*: “With great pains I have provided for the house of the Lord one hundred thousand talents of gold, one million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond weighing, for there is so much of it; timber and stone too I have provided. To these you must add more. You have an abundance of workers: stonecutters, masons, carpenters, and all kinds of artisans without number, skilled in working gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Now begin the work, and the Lord be with you... Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God. Go and build the sanctuary of the Lord God so that the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the holy vessels of God may be brought into a house built for the name of the Lord” (1 Chr. 22; 14-16; 19). “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam. 7: 12-13). David knew he would not build the temple, but he gathered all that was necessary for it, saving for his son to build the best for God. So should be our actions; the same way that sin can lead to serious consequences for our children, good deeds will also generate blessing to the offspring.

- 13) *To be a servant*: one feature that has always remained intact in the heart of David was the desire to serve, i.e., his willingness to serve God and others. He not only placed himself as a servant of Saul, as subject he was (*'Your servant used to keep sheep for his father'*), as well as a servant of God's people. He was troubled by the affronts of Goliath on the army of Israel and he got ready to fight for his brothers. He also served his own sheep, defending them from the attacks of animals. In the Old Testament, the word *shepherd* was used to indicate *a leadership position as the king*. Serving has to do with us, man and woman after God's heart, with the unconditional love that we must exercise daily to those the Lord puts in our path. We should have in our heart the same willingness to serve that was in David's heart.
- 14) *Forgiveness is present in the Christian life*: David experienced God's forgiveness for several times, and released forgiveness in his life for many people, many times too, so God remained faithful to him and fulfilled all His promises, including freeing him from all his enemies. Forgiveness needs to be part of our life, even if it costs us, for this way the Lord assures His hand of protection, power, blessing and deliverance over us. Hatred generates ties, the pardon unties them.
- 15) *Not to accommodate*: David, even proclaimed king, did not accommodate, but expanded the kingdom. He continued to fight the battles of the Lord so that the kingdom became united. In 2 Sam. 6: 1-4, the bible speaks of the several victories of David. In chapter 10, it speaks of the victory against the Ammonites and the Syrians. In chapter 12, it speaks of the conquest of Rabbah; in the following chapters, David struggles to keep the kingdom united in the revolt of Absalom, and Chapter 22, four other giants are killed by his mighty men. Finally, in the book of 1 Kings, David does not rest until he passes his kingdom to Solomon. The important thing in man and woman who are after God's heart is that they do not accommodate with the laurels of past victories; they accept bigger challenges so that His kingdom is established. The 'Davids' have within themselves the desire to improve and perfect more their work each day to please the Lord. They do not get discouraged or seek excuses for their failures, but perform their work, recognizing their own limitations and relying on the unlimited power of God. They seek new incentives and accept the challenges to their growth. Another important feature for the 'Davids' who want to continue working in the Work of God is always to want more of Him. There is nothing that He can not give us. He owns everything and every dream is possible to Him, therefore we can ask what we want, knowing, however, that the blessing we are asking will be also to bless other children of His. When David was anointed by Samuel, he was still inexperienced; he didn't have the mentality of a king. The Lord forged him day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, until he is ready to reign and no longer lose the throne. For David it was a great responsibility because from his offspring the Messiah would be born, even if this was hidden from him. He gave himself into God's hands and let himself be led. He surrendered, was led and won.



Kings – 16th lesson



Note:

I will not describe all the kings, but some that are better known, as Solomon, Asa, Ahab, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah. At the end of the text there is a table with all of them.

Solomon:

Reference texts: 1 Kin. 1–11; 2 Chr. 1–9

Solomon's reign: 970–930 BC

Construction of the temple 966–959 BC

Divided kingdom: 930 BC

Summary:

Solomon (*Sh^elômôh*, 'peaceful'; also called *Jedidiah* by the prophet Nathan, and that means 'beloved of the Lord') began his reign, probably along with David for a while. David was already old and Adonijah, his fourth son, disputed the right to the throne. His first son Amnon was killed by his brother Absalom. The second son of David was Kileab, also named Daniel (son of Abigail, Nabal's ex-wife), and probably died while still young. The third was Absalom, killed by Joab, when he fled from the persecution of David's men, by trying to take his father's kingdom. The fourth was Adonijah; the fifth, Shephatiah, and the sixth, Ithream, all the six born in Hebron (2 Sam. 3: 2-5; 1 Chr. 3: 1-4).

David's successor had been chosen by God to be Solomon; however, Adonijah thought he had rights for being older than Solomon. He was allied to Joab and Abiathar (the priest). Zadok (the priest), Benaiah, Nathan, Shimei, Rei (probably an officer of the royal guard of David) and the mighty men of David did not support him. Adonijah arranged a coronation ceremony. Nathan and Bathsheba told David about Adonijah, and interceded for Solomon. David gave orders to anoint his son as king of Israel, and he was anointed at Gihon (Gihon Spring in the Kidron Valley, to the east of the city of David). Adonijah asked Solomon not to kill him, and Solomon sent him to his house.

David instructed Solomon on how he should proceed as king before God and men; he officially introduced him as his successor (1 Chronicles 28 and 29) and then, he died.

Solomon was crowned king by all Israel, now in formal ceremony (1 Chr. 29: 22 b-25), no longer in emergency.

Adonijah appealed to Bathsheba, trying a strategy not to lose the chance to sit on the throne; he asked the hand of Abishag the Shunammite (concubine of David), in marriage. Solomon, as a precaution to preserve his reign, sent Benaiah to kill Adonijah. He sent back Abiathar, the priest, to his field in Anathoth (1 Kin. 2: 26), not to officiate before the throne anymore. Zadok took his place. Joab, with fear, took refuge in the tabernacle of the Lord and held the horns of the altar (which meant refuge to a defendant until it was proven his innocence or guilt). Solomon, who had already been instructed by David regarding his army commander, ordered Benaiah to execute him. This one replaced him in command of the troops.

As for Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite, a kinsman of Saul, and that had cursed David in the revolt of Absalom, he was initially treated indulgently by Solomon, but this one ordered to execute him after three years for what he did to his father.

Solomon, for political reasons, married the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. This was one of his many marriages to maintain political relationships of interest to his kingdom.

The Tent of Meeting was in Gibeon (1 Chr. 16: 39; 1 Chr. 21: 29; 2 Chr. 1: 3-5), while the Ark of the Covenant was in Jerusalem, in a tent built by David (1 Chr. 15:1; 1 Chr. 16:1; 37-39; 2 Chr. 1: 3-5; 1 Kin. 3: 4; 15). There, in Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and asked him what he wanted. Solomon asked for wisdom to rule, and this pleased the Lord who not only gave him what he had sought but also riches and honor. He came to Jerusalem and offered burnt offerings before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord (1 Kin. 3: 15).

The wisdom of the king was evident when he judged the case of two women who disputed a baby; both claiming to be his mother. Yet, one of them lied. Solomon judged wisely and the people respected him.

One of the activities of Solomon was to maintain and control the vast territory left by David. The tribes were converted into administrative districts controlled by the central government. They paid a fee and were required to provide sustenance to the court of Solomon during one month a year, each of them in its turn. When the Canaanite workers became insufficient for the huge building projects of Solomon, the king was compelled to organize a force of Israelite workers, over which he imposed forced labor (1 Kin. 5: 13-18 cf. 1 Kin. 12: 1-4). These actions were unpopular.

Solomon had a defensive military force: a ring of cities located strategically near the borders of Israel and garnished with companies equipped with 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots, 4,000 horses (not 40,000; it was translation error), 1,400 coaches, 12,000 riders or charioteers (2 Chr 1: 14; 2 Chr 9: 25; 1 Kin. 4: 26; 1 Kin. 10: 26).

God gave Solomon wisdom, understanding and broad intelligence. The statement that he talked about trees, animals etc. (1 Kin. 4: 33) probably refers to the use that he made on the vegetable and animal kingdoms in his proverbs; Solomon observed nature to write his poems. Solomon is the author of Psalms 72 and 127, as well as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Songs, although Ecclesiastes does no mention of his name, only suggests it (Ecc. 1: 1; 12). He composed 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs (1 Kin. 4: 32).

Solomon made an alliance with Hiram, king of Tyre, a city of Phoenicia, in a period from 969 to 963 BC (the reign of Hiram was from 979 to 945 BC). He had been David's friend and now, having peace in the reign of Solomon, it was the right time to build the temple of the Lord. Hiram (*Hirām*, *Hirōm* or *Hurōm*, in Phoenician, probably short name of Airom = *my brother is (the god) exalted, brother of whom is exalted, consecration*) had resources to do that (the natural reserves of his land). He sent to

Solomon the cedar and cypress woods, which were brought from Lebanon to the sea and, by rafts, they came to him (2 Chr. 2: 16). Solomon, in turn, gave him provisions, wheat and olive oil annually. Between them there was a peace alliance.

To build the temple, Solomon recruited many workers, including Israelites, as previously stated, who tilled the stones to ground it; they prepared timber and stones to build the house. Solomon began to build the temple in the fourth year of his reign, around April-May. The house was about 90 feet long by 30 feet wide and 45 feet high (1 Kin. 6: 2; 2 Chr. 3: 1-9). The vestibule – NRSV – or portico or Solomon’s Colonnade – NIV – before the temple was 30 feet wide, by 15 feet deep. The chambers around the *Holy of Holies*, for the priests, were built on three floors. In the inner of the house, he prepared the *Holy of Holies* to put the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. The *Holy of Holies* (*Debir*) was 30 feet long, 30 feet high by 30 feet wide, a perfect cube, and was covered with pure gold. These measures were calculated in the NIV with the length of the cubit of 45 cm, but the Bible says that the cubit used here was the primitive measuring [‘cubits of the old standard’ – NRSV] of 51.8 cm (2 Chr. 3: 3). It was also known as Mosaic cubit. Solomon took seven years to build the House, ending it in the month of October-November.

Solomon also built the royal palaces in a period of thirteen years (1 Kin. 7: 1). The House of the Forest of Lebanon (or The Palace of the Forest of Lebanon – 1 Kin. 10: 17; 2 Chr. 9: 16; 20) was the royal house that Solomon had built for himself with wood from Lebanon (1 Kin. 7: 2) and where the shields of war and other armaments were kept. There was an armory there (1 Kin. 10: 16-17; 2 Chr. 9: 15-16; 25; 2 Chr. 1: 14).

The priests put the Ark of the Covenant in its place and when they were out of the sanctuary, the cloud of God’s presence filled the room. In 1 Kin. 8: 11 it is written that the *glory* of the Lord filled the house. The biblical word for *glory of the Lord* is *kābhôdh* (Heb.) or *doxa* (Septuagint, the Greek version of the OT) = *weight or dignity*, and which can be understood as the manifestation of God’s power where it is needed, victory, protection, abundance, wealth, dignity, reputation. It is the Jewish equivalent of the Holy Spirit. The known word *Shekinah*, often translated as ‘brightness, presence of God dwelling among His people’, does not appear in the OT or the NT. It derives from the verb *Shakhan* (שכן = *to dwell*), which appears in verses such as Gen. 9: 27; Gen. 14: 13; Jer. 33: 16. Also appears in Ex. 40: 35: “Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled upon it [*Shakhan*], and the glory of the Lord [*kābhôdh*] filled the tabernacle.” *Shekinah* (*Shekhinah*, *Shekinâ*), in fact, is a Kabbalistic concept, mystic, which considers this word as the female face of the Divine Presence. According to Kabbalah, *Shekinah* is a powerful cosmic energy, which dwells within the universe, vivifying it and being its soul or spirit.

Solomon spoke to the people that on that day was being fulfilled God’s promise made to David (the construction of the temple), and prayed to Him consecrating that place to the Lord’s dwelling among His people. Then he blessed the gifts, offering sacrifices at the altar. On the eighth day of the festival, he sent the people back to their homes. God appeared again to Solomon and answered the prayer that he made in the temple, confirming His blessing upon that place. He also renewed His covenant with the king as He had done with David.

In the 24th year of his reign, Solomon had finished both the temple and his royal palaces. Solomon gave twenty towns in Galilee to Hiram as guarantee by the financial aid that he received (1 Kin. 9: 10), which increased his unpopularity and the resentment in the hearts of Israelites. The price of his achievements was the goodwill and loyalty of his people. Solomon gave Hiram these cities as payment, but it seemed that Hiram did

not consider them valuable enough to cover the debt. He returned them to Solomon that finally reconstructed those cities (2 Chr. 8: 2).

The trade was the strong point of the government of Solomon. He kept control of the caravans of the north–south line of the kingdom. His connection with Hiram put at his disposal the fleets that enabled him to assume also the monopoly of the sea lanes. When we read in the text the term “*ships of Tarshish*”, we can translate it as “*ships of refining or mining*”, equipped for transporting molten ore (load of gold, silver), hard wood, jewelry, ivory and varieties of monkeys (1 Kin. 9: 26-28; 1 Kin. 10: 22. The word translated as *peafowl* or *peacocks* – NRSV – can refer to *baboons*). Tarshish is of uncertain location, probably in Spain today.

The Queen of Sheba (modern Yemen) also came to Solomon, for she heard his reputation with respect to the name of the Lord. Solomon made it clear that his success was the result of God’s blessings. She praised the Lord and recognized His eternal love for Israel.

Solomon loved many foreign women (probably political agreements): seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. Being old, his wives perverted his heart. The marriage to foreign women brought to Israel foreign religions, therefore, the disruption of the covenant with God. His heart was no longer as faithful to YHWH. He built sanctuaries to their gods. This contributed to the fall of his reign.

The wisdom of Solomon did not fail at the end of his life, only he failed to follow it. He did not apply it properly, so he fell. Perhaps the book of Ecclesiastes, where the author questioned the vanity and the meaning of life, refers to him for having lost the devotion to God.

The Lord did not leave unpunished the sin of idolatry. He spoke (1 Kin. 11: 9-13) that He would take the kingdom out of his hand (in the days of his son) and would give it to a servant of Solomon (1 Kin. 11: 26 – Jeroboam, son of Nebat, Ephraimite). Moreover, He said that, for the sake of David, He would maintain in the hands of his descendants only one tribe (Judah; then, Benjamin joined the other: 1 Kin. 11: 13; 1 Kin. 11: 32; 36; 1 Kin. 12: 21; 23; 2 Chr. 14: 8).

Then the Lord raised opponents for him to fight as Hadad (Edomite); in David’s time, he managed to flee to Egypt, which welcomed him. By hearing that David was dead, he decided to return to Edom.

Another opponent was Rezon who had fled from Hadadezer king of Zobah, and had gone to Damascus to escape from David. There, the people proclaimed him king of Syria. During the rest of Solomon’s reign, they fought against him.

Jeroboam (Ephraimite), chosen by God to reign over the ten tribes, had been persecuted by Solomon, therefore, he was in Egypt. He returned after the death of Solomon. This one reigned forty years and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead. Around 930 BC, the kingdom was divided, confirming the word of God to Solomon.



Asa (king of Judah):

Reference texts: 1 Kin. 15–16; 2 Chr. 14–16

Period of reign: 911–870 BC

Summary:

Asa (*'āsā, physician, healer, him who will heal*) was the son of Abijah, therefore, grandson of Rehoboam and great grandson of Solomon. The mother of Abijah was daughter (descendant) of Absalom and her name was Maacah. In the reign of Asa the kingdom stayed at peace for ten years. [Note: 'Asa' is also a Japanese name with the original meaning of 'morning'. Asa (pronounced, *asha*) is a Nigerian name with the meaning of 'falcon', 'hawk', or 'little falcon'].

He did what was right before the Lord. He built fortified cities in Judah, for there was peace on earth. His army was of three hundred thousand mighty warriors from Judah, armed with large shields (covering the entire body) and spears, and two hundred eighty thousand troops from Benjamin who carried shields (small shields) and drew bows (2 Chr. 14: 8).

Zerah the Ethiopian (Cushite), made war against Asa with an army of one million men and three hundred and twenty cars in the valley of Zephathah, near Mareshah in Judah. Asa cried out to God and had victory. The spoils were brought to Jerusalem.

The prophet Azariah was sent by God to remind Asa to maintain the fidelity to Him, because in those days wars had returned against Israel. Asa regained strength and began the religious reformations in the 15th year of his reign, removing the altar that was before the portico of the Lord. There, they made sacrifices to God who gave them peace again. However the religious reformation was partial. He abolished religious prostitution and deposed his mother (actually his grandmother) Maacah, destroying the image that she had made for Asherah. He removed some high places of pagan entirely origin, but others, Asa allowed to remain. There was no war until the 35th year of his reign (2 Chr. 15: 19). In the 36th year, Baasha king of Israel rose against Judah and built Ramah (2 Chr. 16: 1 cf. 1 Kin. 16: 8). Asa called on Syria to help him against the threats of Baasha of Israel. This was an act of unbelief that received prophetic censorship (2 Chr. 16: 7), mainly because before he had received a victory over the vast army of Zerah the Ethiopian. Hanani, another prophet of the Lord rebuked him for trusting in the king of Syria rather than trust in God, and predicted that there would be other wars against him. Asa threw him in prison and oppressed some of the people. In the 31st year of his reign, Omri became king over Israel and reigned twelve years, and Ahab his son, took his place.

In the 39th year of Asa, he had a serious disease in the feet; he did not appeal to the Lord, but he trusted in the doctors. He died two years later and Jehoshaphat his son succeeded him.

Ahab (king of Israel):

Reference texts: 1 Kin. 16: 29-34; 1 Kin. 18; 1 Kin. 20–22; 2 Chr. 18: 28-34; 2 Kin. 9: 30-37; 2 Kin. 10: 1-14

Ahab's reign: 874–853 BC

Summary:

Ahab [*'ah'ābh*, from Hebrew, and *ahābu*, from the Assyrian, '*the brother (divine) is father*'] was son and successor of Omri and reigned for 22 years. He married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal king of Sidon and priest of Astarte or Ashtoreth.

He fortified Israelite cities (1 Kin. 22: 39) and carried out extensive work in Samaria. In his reign there were frequent wars against Syria (1 Kin. 20: 1-2; 22: 1), especially against Ben-Hadad, who besieged Samaria, but was repelled (1 Kin. 20: 21). One year later his army was destroyed in Aphek (Aphekah), but his life was spared (1 Kin. 20: 26-34) by political agreement. Through this agreement, Ahab would receive back the cities taken by Omri. However, the Lord used a prophet to rebuke him for having spared the life of the enemy.

During his reign, Elijah was the prophet of God. However, the king was influenced by his wife, Jezebel, to whom he allowed to build up a temple dedicated to Baal (of Tyre) in Samaria, with its pagan altar. She encouraged the false prophets and induced open opposition against God. The true prophets were killed, and altars of the Lord were overthrown. Hundred prophets, however, were hidden by Obadiah, the pious minister of Ahab (1 Kin. 18: 3-4). Elijah faced the prophets of Baal and won, but because of the threats from Jezebel, he fled to preserve his life.

Ahab made a false judgment against Naboth, whose vineyard was annexed to the adjacent palace land in Jezreel (1 Kin. 21: 1-6). This event drew Elias again to oppose him, and God defended His prophet as in the previous encounter he had had against the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. Elijah prophesied the fate of Ahab, his wife and his dynasty (1 Kin. 21: 20-24). This reign, characterized by idolatry and the bad influence of Jezebel (1 Kin. 21: 25-26), affected successive generations for worse and was also convicted by Hosea (Hos. 1: 4) and Micah (Mic. 6: 16).

Three years later, he allied with Jehoshaphat against Syria (1 Kin. 22: 3). Although being warned by Micaiah about the fatal result of the encounter, Ahab went disguised to the final battle at Ramoth Gilead. However, he was mortally wounded by an arrow thrown randomly, and his body was brought to Samaria to be buried. Ahaziah his son succeeded him in the throne (1 Kin. 22: 28-40).

Years later Jezebel was killed by Jehu, a captain of the army who was appointed by God to take the place of Ahab's house. The prophecy of Elijah was fulfilled (2 Kin. 9: 30-37). The house of Ahab perished according to his prophecy (2 Kin. 10: 1-14, focusing on verse 10).

Jehoshaphat (king of Judah):

Reference texts: 2 Chr. 17–20; 1 Kings 22: 5-51

Jehoshaphat's reign: 870–845 BC

Summary:

Jehoshaphat (*Y^ehōshāphāt*, *YHWH has judged*) was the son of Asa. In the early years of his reign he took steps to ensure the safety of his kingdom against external aggressions. He strengthened the defenses on the border between Israel and Judah; he also built fortresses and storehouses cities in Judah. Then he decided to put an end to the long enmity with Israel, marrying his house with the house of Omri. This alliance was very advantageous to Ahab, but not to Jehoshaphat, because the marriage of his son Jehoram and Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kin. 8: 16-19), produced bad years later and led the lineage of David on the verge of extinction (2 Kin. 11: 1-3): Athaliah destroyed the royal offspring after the death of her son Ahaziah, leaving only

her grandson Joash who was hidden from his grandmother by her aunt Jehosheba (Jehoshabeath). In the land of Judah, Jehoshaphat was able administrator and zealous for the things of God. He purged the pagan worship (2 Chr. 17: 6 cf. 1 Kin. 22: 43). He took positive steps to ensure that the Mosaic Law became known and understood (he sent princes, priests and Levites to teach the Law of the Lord in Judah: 2 Chr. 17: 7-9). He reorganized the judiciary power, appointing judges to all the major cities of his kingdom. He established a court composed of Levites, priests and elders (2 Chr. 19: 5-11). Jehoshaphat made alliances with Ahab (1 Kin. 22: 1-4; 2 Chr. 18: 1-3) to defend Ramoth Gilead from the invasion of Syria. Ahab died in battle and God defended Jehoshaphat that, however, was rebuked by the prophet Jehu, son of Hanani, for having helped the king of Israel.

Years later, Moab and Ammon rose against Jehoshaphat. The king proclaimed a fast throughout the land of Judah and sought the Lord, because he was afraid. God used the priest Jahaziel to confirm prophetically the victory over their enemies. The next morning, they went out to battle and Jehoshaphat put the Levites ahead the army to praise the Lord. As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the children of Ammon and Moab and those from Mount Seir who had come against Judah and they were smitten, destroying each other. Jehoshaphat and all the people came and took the spoil that was too much (they took three days to take everything). On the 4th day they gathered in the Valley of Blessing to praise the Lord.

God gave rest to Jehoshaphat and his kingdom had peace.

In the last days of his reign he has allied with Ahaziah son of Ahab to make ships to go to Tarshish; but Eliezer the prophet from God, prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying: “‘Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the Lord will destroy what you have made.’ And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish” (2 Chr. 20: 37).

Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

Kingdom of Judah from Jehoshaphat to Hezekiah:

Reference texts: 2 Chr. 21–28

Period: 845–716 BC

Summary:

Jehoram did not walk in right ways of Jehoshaphat, but imitated the house of Israel (Ahab, his father-in-law) and yielded to idolatry. The Lord punished him with an intestinal illness and punished his offspring with a curse. Ahaziah, his youngest son, was made king in his place and ruled only one year because his mother Athaliah and the counselors of Ahab’s house advised him to proceed wickedly. He was killed by Jehu, whom the Lord had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab. Athaliah, seeing that her son was dead, destroyed all the royal seed of the house of Judah. Joash was the only survivor (saved by his aunt) who later, with the help of Jehoiada the priest, ascended the throne at seven years old and reigned for forty years. As he led the people into idolatry and killed Zechariah the priest, the son of Jehoiada, God also punished his house, which was destroyed by his own servants. Amaziah his son reigned in his place and he did what displeased the Lord, worshiping the gods of Edom. His son Uzziah took the throne and, on the days he sought the Lord, God prospered him; but by becoming strong, he got proud and he committed the same sin of Saul: he wanted to assume a priestly role he didn’t have and burned incense on the altar. God punished him with leprosy. Thus he

died and Jotham his son reigned in his stead. He did what was right before God. When he died, his son Ahaz ascended the throne of Judah. However, he did not act as David his ancestor, and made molten images for Baals. The Lord delivered him into the hands of the Syrians. He asked for help to the Assyrians, but they overwhelmed him. He sought relief in the gods of Damascus and this was ruin over Judah and Israel. He burned incense to pagan gods and burned his own sons to them and provoked the Lord to anger. He died and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

Hezekiah (king of Judah):

Reference texts: 2 Kin. 18–20; 2 Chr. 29–32; Isa. 22; Isa. 36–39.

Reign period:

1) 729 BC (as co-regent of Ahaz), being that in the 6th year (722 BC) the fall of Samaria occurred.

2) 716 (as the sole occupant of the throne) to 687 BC (in the 14th year of his reign – 701 BC – there was the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib. The reign of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, goes from 705 to 681 BC. Sennacherib means ‘The god of the moon has multiplied his brothers’ or ‘god has multiplied my brothers’.

Summary:

Hezekiah (*Hizqiyâ or Hizqiyahü, YHWH is my strength*) ascended the throne of Judah in the place of Ahaz, but because of his father’s submission to Assyria, the nation had been defiled by pagan influences, generating superstition, idolatry and spiritual blindness (Isa. 2; Isa. 8). Hezekiah tried to correct the situation in the 1st year of his reign (2 Chr. 29: 3-11). The temple was opened again and cleansed of everything that made it unsuitable for consecrated use, the true worship was restored and the old covenant between God and Israel was confirmed. The Passover celebration was conducted on a scale without precedent since the division of the kingdom in two (2 Chr. 30: 26), having been attended by many Israelites of the northern kingdom by the invitation of Hezekiah (2 Chr. 30: 5; 2 Chr. 30: 11; 2 Chr. 18-20). The Passover of Hezekiah speaks about protection, revival and to open the door to the Word (he opened the doors of the temple). The reform was carried out beyond the boundaries of Jerusalem and the high places throughout Judah and Benjamin, as well as those of Ephraim and Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Issachar were destroyed (2 Kin. 18: 4; 2 Chr. 31: 1). Hezekiah showed courage by getting rid of the bronze serpent that was made in the time of Moses, but that became an object of idolatrous worship (2 Kin. 18: 4) and was called Nehushtan [NIV footnote says: ‘Nehushtan sounds like the Hebrew for bronze (nehushah) or copper (nchosheth), snake (nachash) and unclean thing.’ It also says that, in the original, the phrase ‘it was called’ can be ‘He called it’, referring to Moses as him who called it by this name].

In the 6th year of his reign, the northern kingdom was taken (2 Kin. 18: 10-11) and the people were exiled.

In the 14th year of his reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria rose against all the cities of Judah and took them. To try to escape the invader, Hezekiah chose to make a peace agreement and pay him tribute. Thus, he gave him three hundred talents of silver (22,487 pounds or 10,200 kg) and thirty talents of gold (2,250 pounds or 1,020 kg), besides all the silver that was found in the House of the Lord and in the treasures of his house. He stripped the gold that covered the doorposts and the gates of the temple and gave to the enemy (2 Kin. 18: 16). This one, however, sent messengers, who were also received by

the envoys of King Hezekiah. Through lying words, the messengers of Sennacherib sought to take Hezekiah's trust in the Lord and threatened to destroy the city, putting fear in people and diminishing their confidence in the king. The royal messengers came to Hezekiah and told them the words of the enemy. The king sent them to the prophet Isaiah who gave them words of consolation and strength, urging them to trust in the Lord's deliverance and prophesying to them a word that spoke to their hearts (2 Kin. 19: 6-7).

Hezekiah was troubled by the Assyrian yoke. By preparing for the invasion, he built the defenses of Jerusalem (2 Chr. 32: 3-5) and safeguarded the city's water supply, building the tunnel of Siloam (2 Kin. 20: 20; Isa. 22: 9). Siloam (*Shilôah, sent*, in Hebrew) was one of the major sources of water supply of Jerusalem, linked to the Gihon Spring, to southeast of the city, which, in turn, poured water in it through an open channel. From Siloam, the canal flowed into the *old pool or lower pool* (*Birket el-Hamra*). When Hezekiah was faced with the threat of Sennacherib, he stopped all the fountains, streams and all subsidiary channels that led to the river that flowed through the land (2 Chr. 32: 3-4). The king then sent the waters of the upper Gihon through an aqueduct or tunnel two meters high to a cistern or *upper pool* or pool of Siloam (*Birket Silwân*) at the west side of the city of David (2 Chr. 32: 30). He defended the new source of supply with a ramp (2 Chr. 32: 30).

Hezekiah got very sick and was warned by the prophet that he would die. But when he learned, he prayed to the Lord with tears, asking for healing. God answered him and said to the prophet, who was almost out of the house, to go back and give the good news of healing to the king, ordering him to put a lump of figs on the ulcer to be healed. As a sign to Hezekiah, God performed a miracle, bringing the shadow back ten degrees, by which the sun had declined on the dial of Ahaz, his father (2 Kin. 20: 1-11).

The king of Babylon sent letters and a present to Hezekiah because he knew he was sick. The king of Judah, in turn, showed the foreign messengers the wealth of Jerusalem. Probably, it was interesting for the king of Babylon having Judah as a political ally against Assyria, and Hezekiah thought convenient that temporary perspective of peace and security, although he later considered foolish his act of showing his wealth to the king of Babylon (because of the reprimand of Isaiah the prophet). He did not think the probable horror that his descendants would suffer at the hands of the Babylonians, just thanked God for peace in his reign. Hezekiah died and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead. Manasseh was succeeded by his son Ammon and this, by his son Josiah.

Josiah (king of Judah):

Reference texts: 2 Kin. 22; 2 Kin. 23: 1-30; 2 Chr. 34-35

Reign period: 640-609 BC

Summary:

Josiah (*yô'shiyyāhū, YHWH maintains, YHWH protects*) ascended the throne at the age of eight years and walked uprightly before God. In the 12th year of his reign he began a religious reformation (2 Chr. 34: 3) and in the 18th year he directed the works of restoration of the temple. He took six years to cleanse the house of the Lord (2 Chr. 34: 8), destroying the idolatry of his predecessors. Hilkiah the high priest found the Book of the Law in the temple and this episode can be considered as the apex of the religious reform of Josiah, for thenceforth the people and the Levites were aware of their sins and

the Passover was celebrated (2 Chr. 35: 18-19). The Passover of Josiah talks about healing the soul; about the Levitical ministry and the revelation of the Word (the Book of the Law was found). The reform itself was more complete than that of Hezekiah (2 Kin. 23: 13) and more extensive. Josiah not only destroyed all the high places of Judah and Benjamin, but his zeal for the things of God led him to cross Ephraim and Benjamin, having reached as far north as Naphtali, in Galilee. Everywhere, he exterminated every vestige of pagan worship (2 Kin. 23: 19-20; 2 Chr. 34: 6-7). The celebration of Passover was greater than that of Hezekiah, having no parallel since the days of Samuel (2 Chr. 35: 18). Nevertheless, however much comprehensive that the reform has been, it never made any real change in the hearts of the people, what is clear by the prophecies of Jeremiah (Jer. 1: 1-3), which belong to this period, as by the reversion almost immediate to idolatry, after the death of Josiah.

In 609 BC, Necho II of Egypt rose to bring help to Assyria. Josiah didn't want to give way to his army for fear of the land of Judah being pressed by the two superpowers. He died from an arrow (2 Kin. 23: 29) at the battle of Megiddo by the soldiers of Necho. Jehoahaz (or Johanan ou Shallum – Jer. 22: 11-12) reigned in his stead (2 Kin. 23: 31-34; 2 Chr. 36: 1-4), but Pharaoh took him to Egypt and put Eliakim his brother in his place and changed his name to Jehoiakim.

Important lessons from the kings:

We can say that the most important lessons with the kings of Israel and Judah are grounded on two teachings found in the bible in the books of Deuteronomy and Ezekiel regarding the correct *behavior of a king and the personal choice given by God to each child, that is, the free will*. In the book of Kings we have an example of what happens, for instance, in a family where parents and children behave differently, obeying to their personal choices that surpass the transmission of hereditary tendencies, for each character in this book of the bible is a member of a large family, the royal family of God. We can see here the mistakes and successes of the anointed of the Lord, both in relation to the political leadership and regarding the spiritual behavior before His commandments. Their mistakes and successes generated consequences to their offspring, for they released both blessing and curse of God upon their lives.

In the book of Deut. 17: 14-28, we can see the divine commands as to the choice of a king. This one should be chosen by Him, should not multiply horses to himself (to make people err and return to Egypt because the Lord said they would never return that way), nor women, nor silver, nor gold. In the first place, the fact that God said that the king should be chosen by Him means that one should not trust the world to choose a leader, but in His wisdom. Israel should not choose their king, as they did years later with Saul, but they should rely on the divine choice, using the prophet sent by Him. It is obvious that a country needed horses as a necessary equipment for its defense in the event of war or for use of government, but what God said in Deut 17: 16 was not to multiply horses, leading the king to make certain mistakes like, for example: the increase in interchange with foreign nations (especially Egypt), the establishment of military despotism, the ostentatious power of the king and his army before the subjects (military parades) and even a dependence on Egypt in time of war, leaving aside the trust in God. At the time, Israel had no horses, only mules, and Egypt was the largest exporter of them. David could not win in his military campaigns with mules alone. Jesus, like the ancient patriarchs, kings and prophets, entered Jerusalem this way, on a donkey. The text of Deut. 17: 17 also gives other guidelines to a king: "And he must not

acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; also silver and gold he must not acquire in great quantity for himself.” This was to avoid the practice of polygamy of neighboring countries, whose kings had numerous harems. A king should restrain his passions, unlike an ordinary man of the people. The bible writes “or else his heart will turn away”, this is because the woman has a great power of influence over the man; many women would negatively influence a king in the performance of his duties. And the guideline not to acquire silver and gold in great quantity means that the kings were forbidden to accumulate money for private purposes. This would demonstrate that he also behaved differently than a wicked man, who was greedy; if he misused his money, he could be a bad example for his subjects.

Metaphorically speaking, the word ‘*horses*’ means that a king should not rely on human strength. God did not want Israel to make alliance again with Egypt, from where He had rescued them, but wanted His people to trust in Him alone, not on their own strength. *Horse* is symbol of *war, hurry, attitudes toward our neighbor*. The king should not multiply *wives (women)* to himself, which means that *he should not be under influences*, because woman symbolizes *influence*. The clearest example of this was Solomon who, with seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, ended his reign in idolatry, under the displeasure of God. The king should not multiply to himself *gold or silver*, which means that there *he should not stay beneath the world’s values*. What the Lord gives us is to bless other people, because He is the source of supply, not to be used for selfish ends.

Therefore, we can see that the kings of Israel and Judah after David didn’t fulfill, in large part, those guidance because they depended on the political coalitions with foreign nations to help them against attacks of invaders; they didn’t keep their loyalty to God as expected and, with this, they made the people sin even more and fall into idolatry (go back to Egypt). They did not rely on Him to solve their particular problems; they let their own interests for power overcome His choice and His project, which often deserved prophetic rebuke. They let themselves be carried away by the many influences around them, instead of just looking for the Lord and just follow His guidance. Being king, as David was, is very difficult because despite all the fighting and intrigue that surrounded him, he never stopped being after God’s heart, that is, he resisted the influences that surrounded him and didn’t deviate from the divine plan for him or the nation. He put the love of God and His work above personal interests, so there was no king like him, even today a model for the nation of Israel. Not even his son managed to repeat his deeds or have the purity of his father’s heart. In all the kings described in the books of Kings and Chronicles, we can recognize that the weaknesses of the flesh opened gap for disobedience and greater sins.

We can see other biblical texts also relevant about the kings in particular, and that are found in Ezek. 18: 19-20 (cf. 1 Kin. 9: 4-9, when the Lord talk to Solomon), Ex. 20: 5-6; Num. 14: 18; Deut. 24: 16; 2 Chr. 25, 4b; Jer. 31: 30 and talk about responsibility being personal, that is, on the free will of God for His children and that can be summarized in few words: “Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death.” So we can say that God punishes us for sins that we actually committed. Nowhere in the bible the justified believer pays forever for the sins of his parents. Every one shall die for his own sin. This does not mean, however, that nothing passes along the family tree. The patterns of sinful behavior are often transmitted to family members. However, children will give account to God for their lives, not by the parents’. Hezekiah, son of the wicked Ahaz, broke the cycle when he turned to the Lord, so as Josiah, son of the tyrant Ammon. Whenever children counter the pattern set by sinful

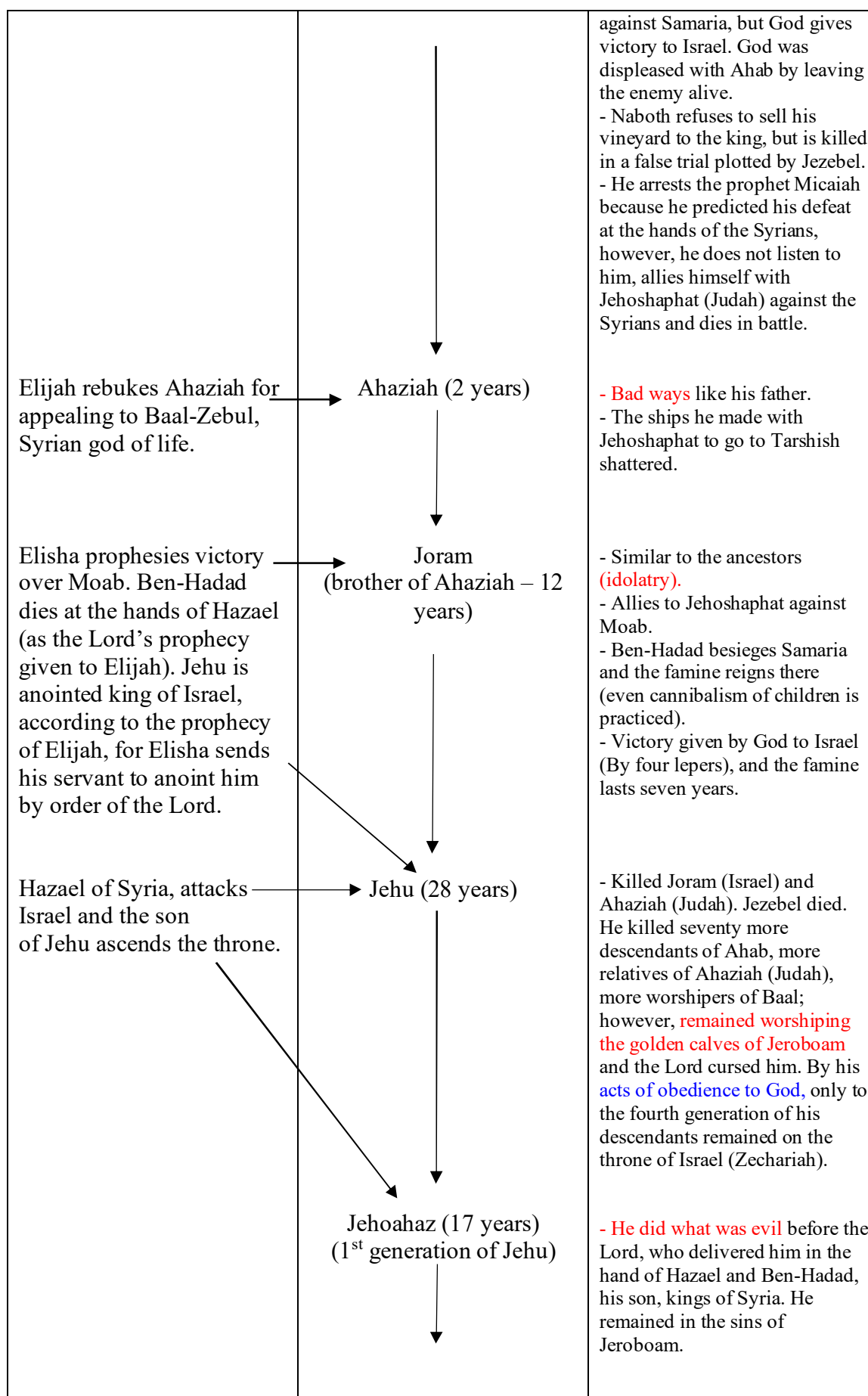
parents, they can receive God's blessings. In other words, some kings like Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah made religious reforms, that is, they had the courage to make changes and correct the mistakes of their ancestors and, thereby, they broke the family curse and the divine judgment on the progeny. It is unfortunate that many of them had children who did not follow their godly steps and turned back into sin of the grandparents, provoking again the wrath of the Lord upon those who came after them.

One good thing that we can learn from the kings is that many of them *fortified their cities*, that is, they raised defenses against the enemies: Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah (2 Chr. 32: 5) and Ahab. This means that we must worry about building our walls, that is, to heal our soul.

Another important learning is the religious reforms that Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah made as a way to restore the worship to God, and that symbolized their attempt to make changes in the standards imposed by their predecessors. Hezekiah and Josiah reestablished the Passover as a sign of healing, liberation of the word of God, revival of the covenant with the Lord and an awakening of the priestly ministry. This means that when we are willing to restore our spiritual life and our relationship with Him in order to break the curses of the past, we can enjoy His best for us, that is, we can experience a personal Passover, which symbolizes healing, revival and liberation from all bondage that devastated us.

KINGS OF ISRAEL

External actions	Kings (years of reign)	Acts during the reign
	<p>Jeroboam (22 years)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Baasha (son of Ahijah) from Issachar killed Nadab and reigned in his stead → Nadab (2 years)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Baasha (24 years)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Zimri, commander of half the cars killed Elah and reigned in his stead → Elah (2 years)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>The people elected Omri, the captain of the army of Israel, as their king. → Zimri (7 days)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Omri (12 years)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Elijah challenges the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 of the Asherah Pole of Jezebel. After the case of Naboth, Elijah prophesies the defeat of the house of Ahab. → Ahab (22 years)</p> <p>↓</p>	<p>- Ephraimite the servant of Solomon, idolatry from Dan to Beersheba (2 golden calves), Asherah pole, made priests but not Levites; established a feast like the Feast of the Tabernacles, but for the calves. He made the people to err and led them astray from the Lord.</p> <p>- Idolatry like his father</p> <p>- Killed all the descendants of Jeroboam, according to the word of the Lord by the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh.</p> <p>- Idolatry. The prophet Jehu, son of Hanani, foretold his fall and his descendants'.</p> <p>- He smote all the descendants of Baasha and killed himself.</p> <p>- Bought from Shemer the mount of Samaria for two talents of silver; he remained in the sins of Jeroboam (idolatry).</p> <p>- Idolatry like Jeroboam.</p> <p>- He married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidonians (Phoenicia); therefore, he served Baal and made Asherah Poles.</p> <p>- Hiel, the Bethelite, rebuilt Jericho, but lost his two sons, according to the prophecies of Joshua (1 kin. 16: 34; Josh. 6: 26).</p> <p>- Ben-Hadad of Syria makes war</p>

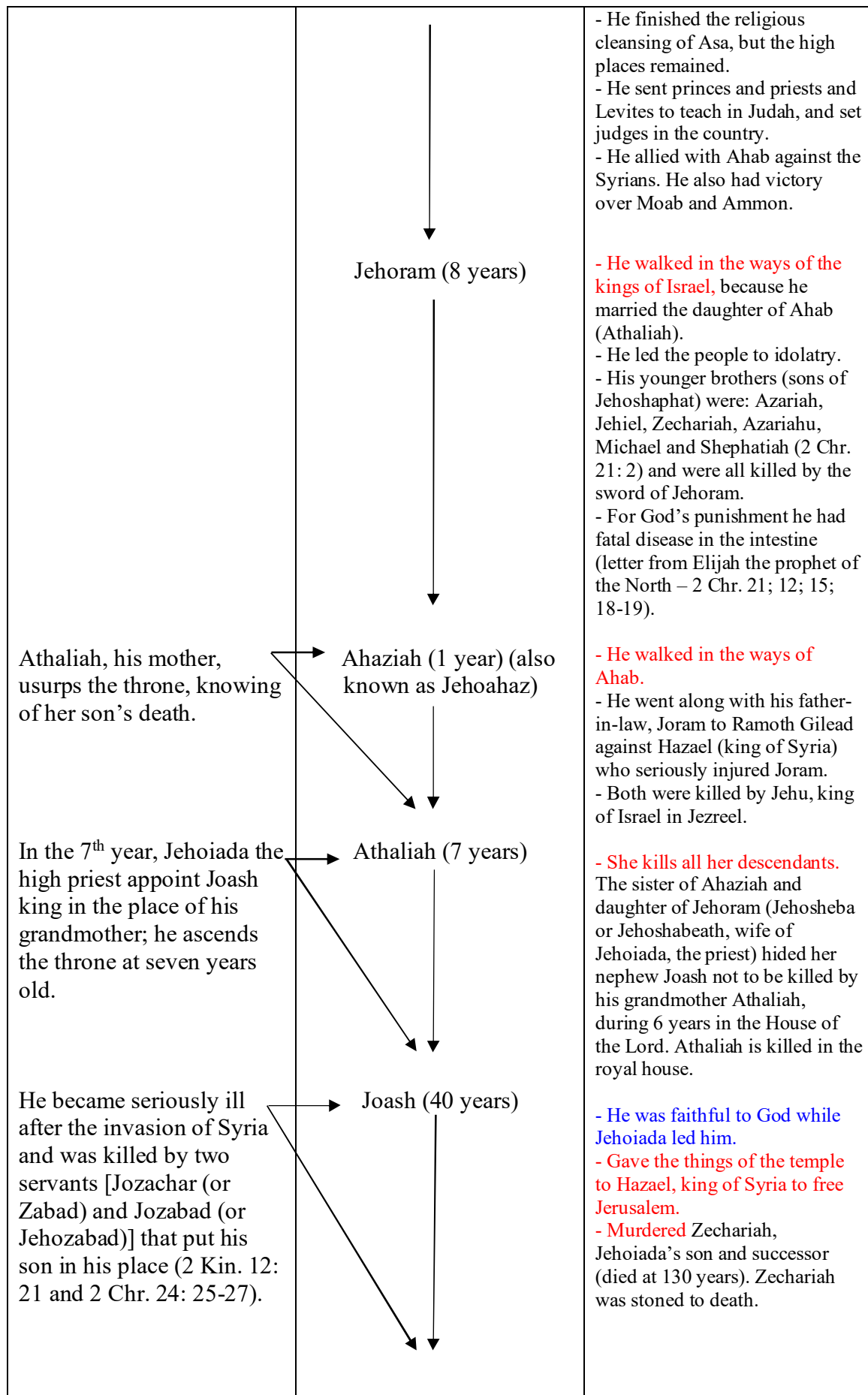


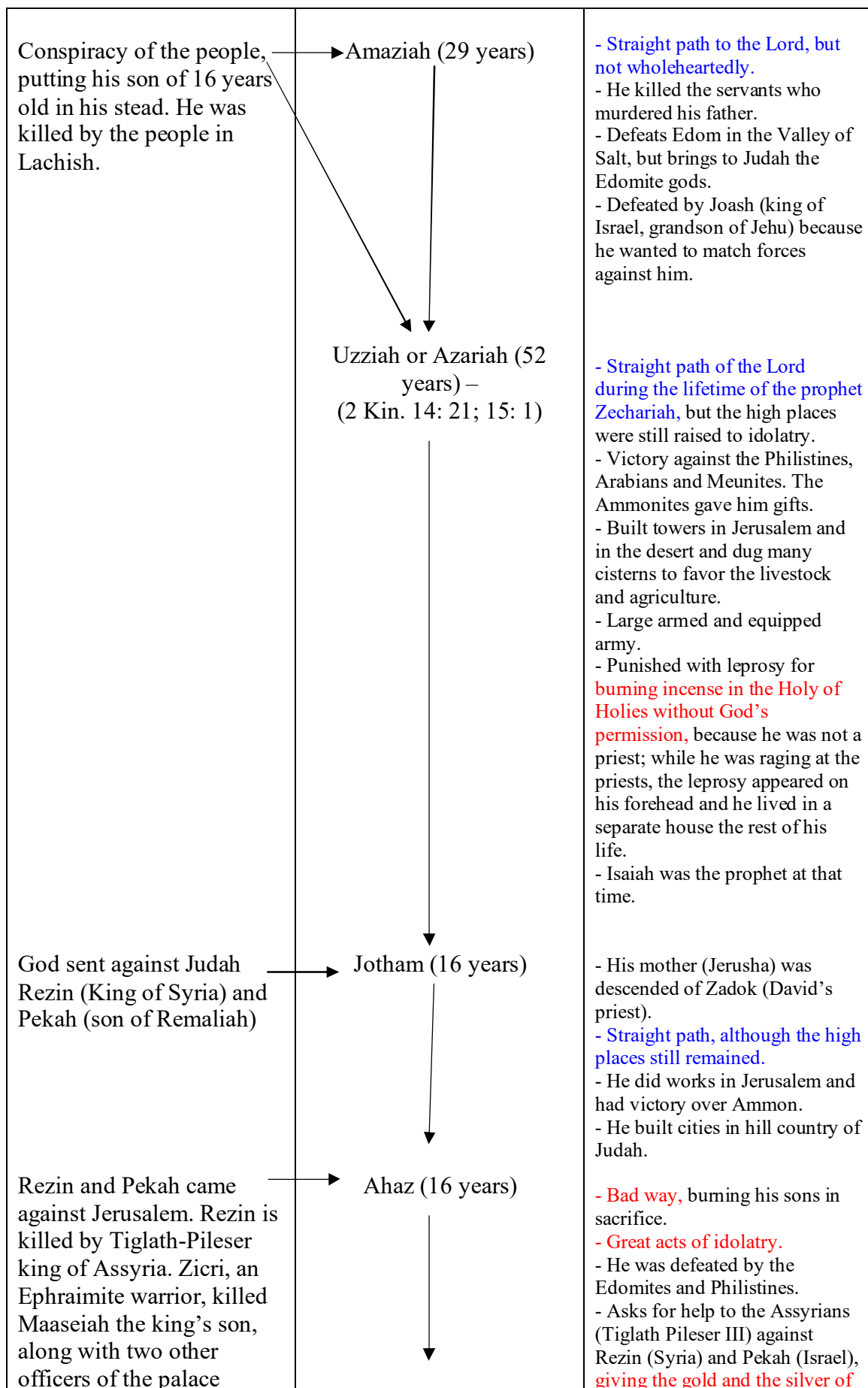
	<p>Jehoash (16 years) (2nd generation of Jehu)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Jeroboam II (41 years) (3rd generation of Jehu)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Salum, son of Jabez, smote Zechariah, and reigned in his stead. → Zechariah (6 months) (4th generation of Jehu)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Menahem son of Gadi, killed him. → Shallum (1 month)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Menahem (10 years)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Pekah, the captain, son of Remaliah, killed him. → Pekahiah (2 years)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Hoshea, son of Elah, killed him. → Pekah (20 years)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Hoshea (9 years) Fall of Samaria in 722 BC</p>	<p>- Same sins of Jeroboam.</p> <p>- Death of Elisha.</p> <p>- Took again the cities taken by Hazael, who was succeeded by Ben-Hadad.</p> <p>- Same idolatry of Jeroboam, son of Nebat.</p> <p>- Recaptured Damascus and Hamath, according to the prophecy of Jonah.</p> <p>- Bad ways as the ancestors.</p> <p>- Bad way to the Lord.</p> <p>- Bad way to the Lord</p> <p>- Pul (or Tiglath-Pileser), king of Assyria, came against Israel, but accepted 1,000 talents of silver of Menahem and left the land.</p> <p>- Bad way to the Lord.</p> <p>- Tiglath-Pileser III (also called Pul) of Assyria comes against Israel and takes its inhabitants to Assyria.</p> <p>- It was established the worship of other gods, which made the Assyrian king bring back a priest to teach the people the true worship, but the Samaritans remained with mixed cult. Very few Israelites remained; they were not exiled.</p>
--	---	---

KINGS OF JUDAH

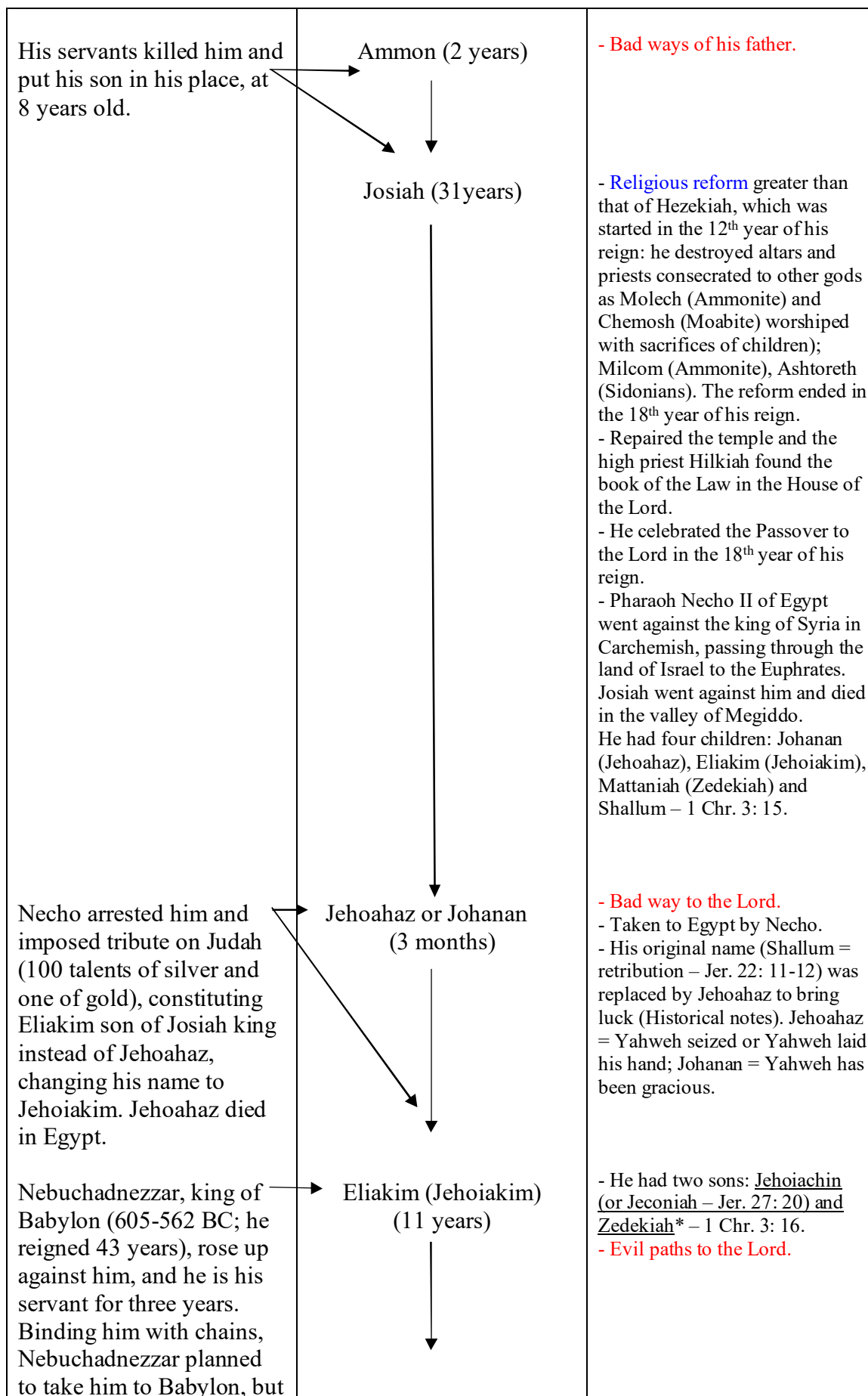
External actions	Kings (years of reign)	Acts during the reign
	Solomon (40 years)	<p>- Construction of the temple and the royal palaces; God gave Solomon wisdom, understanding and intelligence. Solomon is the author of Psalms 72 and 127, as well as the books: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Songs. 1 Kin. 4: 32 → 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs.</p> <p>- He made alliances with neighboring countries.</p> <p>- He loved many foreign women (probably political agreements). He had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Being old, his wives turned away his heart. The marriage to foreign women brought to Israel foreign religions, therefore, breaking the covenant with God. His heart was no longer so faithful to Him. He built sanctuaries to their gods. This contributed to the fall of his reign. The Lord did not leave unpunished the sin of idolatry. He spoke (1 Kin. 11: 9-13) that He would take the kingdom out of his hand (in the days of his son) and would give it to a servant of Solomon (1 Kin. 11: 26; 31). Jeroboam (Ephraimite) was chosen by God to reign over the ten tribes. He also spoke that for love of David He would maintain in the hands of his descendants (Judah) only one tribe (Benjamin: 1 Kin. 11: 13; 32; 36; 1 Kin. 12: 21; 23). Then the Lord raised enemies to fight him, as Hadad (Edomite), Rezon and Hadadezer king of Zobah. Around 930 BC the kingdom was divided, confirming the word of God to Solomon.</p>
Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem and took away the treasures of the temple, of the king's house and the shields of gold which Solomon had made	→ Rehoboam (17 years)	<p>- His mother (Naamah) was Ammonite.</p> <p>- He fortified cities in Judah.</p> <p>- Priests and Levites of all Israel called on to Rehoboam because of Jeroboam of Israel.</p> <p>- Throughout his reign there was</p>

		<p>war against Jeroboam.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having strengthened his kingdom, he fell into idolatry, therefore God delivered him into the hands of the king of Egypt. - He had 18 women and 60 concubines who gave him 28 sons and 60 daughters (2 Chr. 11: 18-23): Jeush, Shemariah and Zaham (by Mahalath – 2 Chr. 11: 19); and Abijah, Attai, Ziza and Shelomith (by Maacah)
	<p>↓</p> <p>Abijah (3 years)</p> <p>↓</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Idolatry. - His mother, Maacah was daughter of Absalom. He was not the firstborn, but was placed on the throne because his father loved Maacah more than his first wife (Mahalath), daughter of Jerimoth son of David and half-brother Absalom. He had 14 women who had given him 22 sons and 16 daughters (2 Chr.13: 21). - Wars against Jeroboam.
	<p>↓</p> <p>Asa (41 years)</p> <p>↓</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Took away the male shrine prostitutes and removed the idols. He abolished the worship in the high places and cut down the Asherah poles. - Deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen-mother. - Built fortified cities in Judah and had victory over the Ethiopians (Zerah). - He allied with Ben-Hadad (Tabrimon's son, the son of Hezion), king of Syria against Baasha, king of Israel, giving them the silver and gold of the House of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house. He threw the prophet Hanani in prison for having reprimanded him about the alliance with Ben-Hadad and for not having trusted in the Lord. - He had a disease in the feet and appealed to the doctors, not the Lord, so he died.
	<p>↓</p> <p>Jehoshaphat (25 years)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He walked uprightly before God. - He built fortresses and store cities in Judah.





<p>In the 14th year of Hezekiah (701-702 BC), Sennacherib (705-681 AC) successor of Shalmaneser V of Assyria rises against Judah. He sends his supreme commander (Tartan), his chief officer (Rabsaris) and his field commander (the Rabshakeh) to threaten to Hezekiah, who gave him 300 talents of silver and 30 of gold to the king of Assyria and stripped the doors and the doorposts of the temple, covered with gold, to appease the fury of the enemy. Eliakim (palace administrator), Shebna (secretary), and Joah (recorder) go to Isaiah the prophet who prophesies victory. So the Lord sent His Angel who defeated 185,000 of the Assyrian army. Sennacherib is killed in his land by his own sons Adramelech and Sharezer.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hezekiah (29 years)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>the House of the Lord to Assyria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Damascus he sees an altar and asks the priest Uriah to make an equal in Judah. He changed the furnishings of the temple in favor of his altar. - Right ways of the Lord. - Religious reform in the 1st year of his reign shattering the bronze serpent (Nehushtan) made by Moses. - He opened the doors of the House of the Lord and repaired them. Cleansed the temple and restored the worship to God. - He celebrated the Passover, calling their brothers of Israel and Judah, but only some of Ephraim, Asher, Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun accepted the invitation. - Established the divisions of the priests and Levites and their livelihoods (tithes and offerings of the people). - Hezekiah got sick of deadly disease and was healed by the Lord, because he asked for mercy. However, revealed to the king of Babylon all he had saved in the Palace and in the House of God. Isaiah rebuked him and prophesied the exile of Judah, as well the fade of the royal lineage at the hands of the Babylonians. - Construction of Siloam pool by Hezekiah to protect the city's water supply during the attack of Sennacherib.
<p>Assyria came upon him as a punishment from God and took him enchained to Babylon. There, he repented and humbled himself before the Lord, returning to Jerusalem and removing his own deeds of idolatry.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Manasseh (55 years)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bad ways, returning to idolatry (Baal, host of heaven), and resorting to the magic arts. He was soothsayer, sorcerer and was associated with necromancers. He burned his sons as a sacrifice, shed innocent blood (2 Kin. 21: 16 – according to historical sources, he sawed in half the prophet Isaiah).



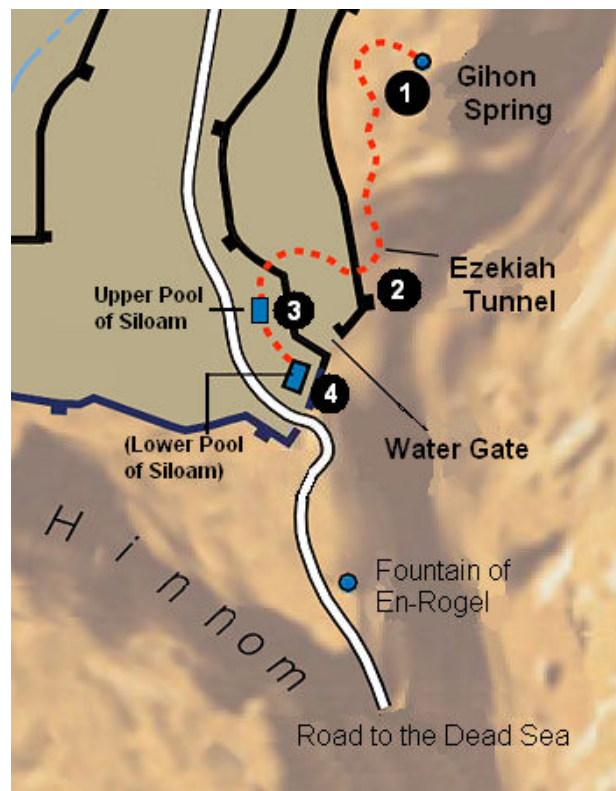
<p>it seems that he died before this (598 BC). The treasures of the temple were taken in 605 BC, the 1st stage of the exile. Prophet Daniel was taken to the exile in this year – Dan. 1: 1.</p> <p>Taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar (597 BC – 2nd stage of the exile), who established the uncle of Jehoiachin, Mattaniah, as king, and changed his name to Zedekiah (2 Kin. 24: 17). In 2 Chr. 36: 10 is written on Zedekiah*, the brother, not the uncle of Jehoiachin (Jeconiah). Nebuchadnezzar took the most precious utensils of the temple.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Jehoiachin or Jeconiah (3 months and 10 days)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Mattaniah (Zedekiah) (11 years)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Captivity of Judah (586 BC – 7th day of the 5th month)</p>	<p>- Evil paths to the Lord.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Released in the 37th year of his captivity by Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon, in the 1st year of his reign. - He had several children, born in captivity: Salathiel (Shealtiel), <u>Zerubbabel</u>'s father, who after the exile, returned to Jerusalem as governor to rebuild the temple, along with <u>Joshua</u>, the priest, the son of Jozadak; other children: Malkiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama and Nedabiah (1 Chr. 3: 17-18 and the following verses). <p>- Bad ways to the Lord.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the 9th year of his reign (on the 10th day of the 10th month) Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar until the 11th year of Zedekiah (9th day of the 4th month). In Riblah (in the province of Hamath, on the way to Assyria) his sons were killed before his eyes and put out his eyes, taking him captive to Babylon (2 Kin. 25: 7), along with all the utensils of the temple (2 Kin. 25: 13-17; Jer. 52: 11), including the two bronze pillars. Seraiah (the chief priest) and Zephaniah the priest next in rank and the three doorkeepers went along with them (2 Kin. 25: 18). Jeremiah was the prophet at that time. - Only the poorest of the land were left to work the vineyards and fields. Gedaliah (son of Ahikam, Shaphan's son) stayed as governor, and was later slain by Ishmael (captain of Judah). The remaining people fled to Egypt, forcing the prophet Jeremiah to go with them.
---	---	--

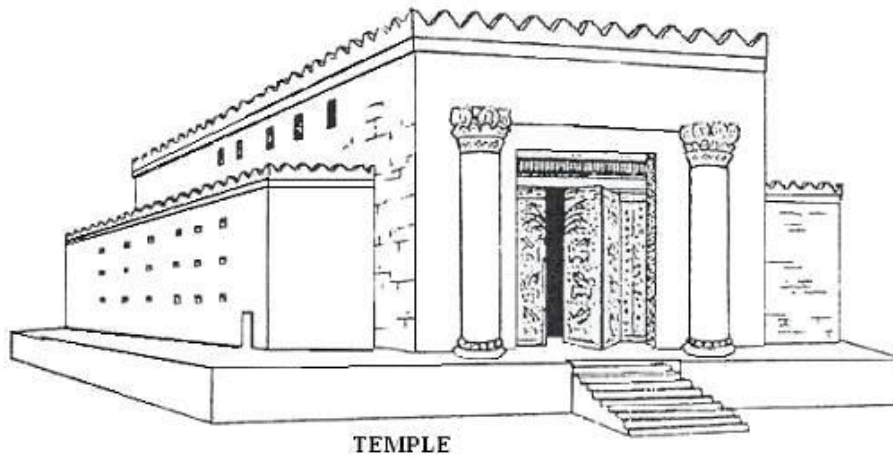


THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

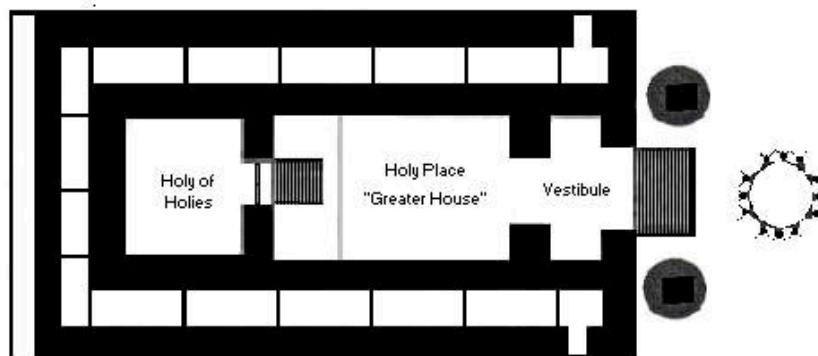


SILOAM





TEMPLE



The columns were loose and did not support the ceiling of the Portico, but were in front of it as part of the furniture, not the building of the temple. Their names may be the first words of the oracle (= what was written) that gave power to the Davidic dynasty: “YHWH will establish (*Jakin – Yakhin – the right – south*) your throne forever” and “in the strength (*Boaz – be’ōz = strength – the left – north*) of YHWH the king shall rejoice” – 1 Kin. 7: 15-22; 2 Chr. 3: 15-17 cf. Jer. 52: 21. The height of each was 9.32 meters, besides the capitals above them, 2.59 meters and a circumference of 6.21 meters. 1 primitive cubit used for sacred purposes = 51.8 cm.

Elijah – 17th lesson



Reference texts: 1 Kin. 17–19; 1 Kin. 21: 29-40; 2 Kin. 1: 1-18; 2 Kin. 2: 1-14

Prophetic period: 875–848 BC, covering the reigns of Ahab, Ahaziah and Joram.

Summary:

Elijah (*'līyyāhū* and *'elīyyā*, from Hebrew; *Eleiou* (Septuagint) and *Eleias*, Greek, NT, *YHWH is God*) was the prophet of the northern kingdom.

The birthplace of Elijah is uncertain; the bible talks about Thisbe in Gilead, eight miles to the north of Jabbok River.

In this lesson I intend to emphasize the episode of Elijah against the prophets of Baal; however, I'll talk about all the important episodes of his ministry:

- 1) His prediction of drought and his subsequent escape to the Kerith stream and Zarephath.
- 2) The battle on Mount Carmel (three years after the 1st event – 1 Kin. 18: 1).
- 3) The escape to Horeb.
- 4) The incident of Naboth.
- 5) The oracle of Ahaziah.
- 6) His rapture.

When the bible speaks of his struggle against Baal, it refers to *Baal-Melcart*, the official protective deity of Tyre, which was connected to nature.

Elijah came to Ahab and predicted a drought. Then, according to the Lord's guidance, he fled across the Jordan River, near the Kerith's stream (Cherith). Thus, when the nation was hungry and thirsty, Elijah had the water of the brook, and the ravens brought him food (bread and meat), in the morning and in the evening. In the course of time, for it was not raining, the stream also dried up. Then the Lord sent His prophet to Zarephath in the territory of Sidon, outside the boundaries of Israel and there, miraculously, a widow sustained him because she believed in his prophetic word that there would be no shortage of food for him, for her or her son. For a long time, they lived through that miracle (1st) of supply from God; meanwhile, the nation was dying for its sin of having moved away from the Lord. Then the widow's son died. Once again God used His prophet, who made the second miracle (2nd) before the woman, resurrecting her son. Her faith in the Lord was strengthened and she believed that His word in the mouth of Elijah was true. Although being foreigner, she trusted in the God of Israel.

Three years after the onset of drought, the Lord commanded Elijah to return to Israel and present himself before Ahab, because there would be rain on the earth. Jezebel, wife of the king, had exterminated all the true prophets, but his butler Obadiah, who feared God, hid a hundred of them and fed them with bread and water. Elijah

presented himself before Ahab and ordered him to gather together all the people of Israel on Mount Carmel and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, as well as the four hundred prophets of the Asherah Pole. Elijah asked the people in what God they believed: if YHWH or Baal. He proposed a test with a burnt offering upon the altar; he on one side and the four hundred and fifty prophets on the other. The god who answered with fire, this was the true God. They dug a trench around the altar and filled it with water, and it was poured on the two bulls too. The four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal invoked his god until noon, without response. Elias ordered that they shed water three times on his burnt offering. When he invoked the name of the Lord, fire fell from the sky and consumed everything that was on the altar, including the water that was spilled into the ditch. The people recognized the miracle (3rd miracle of God using Elias) and prostrated before the Lord. Elijah then ordered them to kill the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal on the Kishon River. Probably, the other four hundred prophets of Asherah were also executed by order of the prophet. He also told Ahab to go up in the car because there would be rain. Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel and bowed with his face between his knees; he said to his servant to climb higher on the hill and look to the sea side. He did so seven times. The seventh time the servant saw a cloud with the size of a man's hand. Then Elijah sent a word to Ahab that the rain would come. A great storm came as the prophet had predicted (4th miracle of God using Elijah). The king climbed into the car and went to Jezreel. The hand of the Lord came upon Elijah, who ran ahead of Ahab twenty miles down the mountain along the road to the entrance of Jezreel (the distance between Mount Carmel and the valley of Jezreel). It was the 5th miracle of God through the prophet.

The king told Jezebel all that had happened and she sent a messenger to Elijah, threatening him with death. Elijah, afraid of what he had heard, fled to save his life, and went into the wilderness. He asked God to kill him. Overcome by weariness he fell asleep, then an angel touched him saying to get up and eat, because by his side there had been put bread and a jar with water. He ate, drank and slept again. For the second time, the angel of the Lord woke him and told him to eat. With the strength of that food he walked forty days and forty nights to *Horeb* (= *dry, desert*), known as '*The Mount of God*.' Horeb was the sacred mountain where God made a covenant with Moses. Elijah, figuratively, was returning to the very source of faith for which he had struggled. There, he entered a cave where he spent the night. God asked him what he was doing there. Elias justified himself talking about his faithfulness to the Lord, on Israel's idolatry and the threat of death by Jezebel. He was feeling very lonely. God told him to leave the cave. There was a strong wind and an earthquake, then a fire, but the Lord was not there in anything of that. After all, in a soft sound, like a whisper, He spoke to the prophet. Elijah stood at the entrance of the cave with his face wrapped in the mantle. Then the Lord asked him again what he was doing there. The Prophet gave the same answer he had given in the beginning. Then, God sent him back to the desert of Damascus to anoint Hazael king over Syria in the place of Ben-Hadad and to anoint Jehu king over Israel. Elisha would be separated as a prophet in his place. He also revealed that He had preserved seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed down to Baal (1 Kin. 19: 18). Elijah went and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was tilling the land. Elijah threw his cloak over him, showing that he was commissioning him to the prophetic ministry. Elisha said goodbye to his family and followed Elijah.

Ben-Hadad of Syria fought against Ahab and was defeated in two battles with one year of interval, being killed by Hazael (2 Kin. 8: 14) who had been one of the men chosen by God, along with Jehu and Elisha (1 Kin. 19: 17), to destroy the house of Ahab.

Afterwards, there was the incident with Naboth, described in the lesson on Kings, when Ahab annexed the land of his subject to the royal palace (1 Kin. 21: 19). According to the Israelite thinking, the land owned by a family or clan was understood as a gift from God and everyone should respect that right. Therefore, this incident was considered a violation of rights, moving Elijah once again to Samaria by the Lord's command to prophesy the fate of Ahab, Jezebel and their offspring (1 Kin. 21: 17-29). Ahaziah, son of Ahab, reigned in his stead. Ahaziah depended on the Syrian god of life, *Baal zebul*, or *Beelzebul* (*lord or master, the prince*), whom God's people ridiculed calling *Baalzebub* (*the lord of the flies*), to see if he would live or die, because he was ill for having fallen through the bars of a high room in Samaria. Elijah was sent by God to rebuke the king and to confirm his death. Ahaziah sent to Elijah two companies of soldiers, but God used again His prophet with fire from heaven, killing one hundred and two of them (6th miracle of God through Elijah). The third troop was sent; so, the Lord commanded the prophet to go with them. Ahaziah died, as it had been prophesied, and Joram, his brother, reigned in his stead, because Ahaziah had no children.

Elijah did not die but was caught up by God in a whirlwind. Before crossing the Jordan River he struck the waters with his mantle and the waters divided (7th miracle of Elijah). Elisha assumed his place as prophet of Israel.

Important lessons from Elijah:

- 1) *There is a time of God for our refuge and to be fed:* Elijah had made the prediction of drought and God knew it would bring a period of difficulty, both to his life and the nation as a whole, and that His Prophet needed to be strong to face the fight. Therefore, He directed him to leave Samaria and go to the Jordan River, to the stream of Cherith where the ravens (symbolizing the angels of the Lord) would feed him and where he would drink the waters of the stream. This was a privilege, because while the rest of Israel suffered the effects of the drought, the anointed of God was supplied. The waters symbolize the *Word and the Spirit*. For us, this means that when we are under the Lord's will for us, He provides our sustenance, even if others around us don't have it. In the second place, He separates a time for us to fortify ourselves in His word, filling us with His Spirit so that we can do greater works later. He sends His messengers, His anointed (*angels, in Hebrew means, messengers, name by which the prophets were also known*), to give us water and to cleanse us with His Word. He also increases His strength in us (bread and meat).
- 2) *When something ends, it is time to experience something new:* when the stream of Cherith dried up due to lack of rain, God sent Elijah to Zarephath to the house of the widow. Elijah would have, now, another source of food. We should always be free in the hands of God to be led where He wants and to depend on Him for our sustenance.
- 3) *When we have been already fed by the Lord, we are able to feed others with His word:* Elijah had been fed by God in the stream of Cherith. Figuratively, he was filled with the Spirit, so he was ready to overflow of this Spirit on the needy of life. Elijah was sent to a widow in Zarephath. In Hebrew, in the OT, *widow* had the meaning of *silence*, while in the NT it means *destitute, devoid*. This means that the woman was in "*silence*", she had not heard the Word yet; therefore, she was "*devoid (destitute) of life*." The prophet was being sent by God to redeem that soul, besides He would also be using her to give a *lesson of faith to His people*, because

she lived in Zarephath, in Philistia, region outside Israel. She was a foreigner, foreshadowing what Jesus came to do on earth, bringing His salvation to us, the Gentiles. In the NT it is written (Acts 10: 34-35): “Then Peter began to speak to them: ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.’” The woman believed the prophetic word released by Elijah and experienced the miracle of God. Like the centurion whose servant was healed by Jesus and was commended for his faith bigger than the Israelites’, the testimony of this widow was an example of faith for the people of Israel, who had abandoned the covenant with their God.

- 4) *God is faithful and true to His Word; His truth always defeats the lie:* we can see this when God answered Elijah’ prayer by sending fire from heaven to destroy the altar of Baal, erected by his prophets. This means that the light of the Word destroys every lie of Satan, breaking the chains of idolatry and religiosity. Jesus said: “and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” This word was acting through Elijah, showing the people the true God.
- 5) *To believe in order to see:* when Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel and sent his servant to observe the sky to see if the rain was coming, both he and the boy had to believe in a miracle before seeing it accomplished. The boy went up seven times; only the seventh is that he saw a cloud as small as a man’s hand. Again, he had to exercise faith to believe that a cloud of that size could form a pouring rain. Thus, we need to keep watching the sky, that is, to keep looking at God until we can recognize the visible resources He puts in our way and that will turn into great blessings. Jesus said: “you have been trustworthy in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.” This means that when we believe in what the Lord promised us and in the seemingly small He shows us, we shall see Him transforming that into something big and plentiful.
- 6) *Receiving the anointing of the Power of the Lord makes us do the impossible:* Elijah received a special anointing of *power* (NIV, *might* – Isa. 11: 2), to run alongside the Ahab’s car and arrive before him in Jezreel. This means that when God enables us with His strength, we can accomplish what seems impossible to men; we can accomplish in His power, something greater than human strength (*horses*) can accomplish.
- 7) *To be attentive to the spiritual exhaustion that can happen after a great battle:* Elijah had done great deeds, but he was human, and his body felt the effects of the spiritual war that had fought. So, he fled when he heard the threat by Jezebel, and had that reaction similar to depression, asking God to kill him right there in the desert, under a solitary broom tree (NIV, *giesta*). His vision, now human, was distorted by weariness. When we leave a great spiritual struggle, our body will feel the effects of the battle, so we must be careful not to fall in the foul game of the enemy, listening to his lying words, because he is opportunist. Even knowing he had lost the fight, he will still try to take advantage of our weakness to steal from us what has been achieved. Elijah did not have a depression; he suffered the effects of physical, emotional and spiritual exhaustion. So God did not rebuke or criticize him, but sent His angel to feed him with bread and water so that he could regain his strength and continue his ministry. The Lord also let him sleep to balance himself again.
- 8) *Not to be afraid to tell the truth to God, to confess our weakness:* Elijah said to God a ‘half-truth’ when He asked him why he was hidden in the cave. The prophet told Him about his loyalty, on the people’s idolatry and the threat of the enemy, but was not able to confess to the Lord his weakness, his fear and doubt at that moment,

shaking his faith. We should not give Him religious answers or religious justifications, however, we must open our hearts, honestly speaking; so, He will mend our ways and make us strong again. He will take away our distorted view of the facts and put in its place the right vision.

- 9) *To get out of the cave or leave the tent to see the true project of God:* the Lord said to Elijah something very similar to what He said to Abram: “Get out of the tent, Abram! “Get out of the cave, Elijah!” Abram had to leave the tent and look at the stars to understand the divine promise; he had to leave his limited and human vision to have the broad vision of God. Elijah also had his vision blurred and distorted by the exhaustion of the struggle. That’s why God commanded him to get out of the cave so that he could have the broad vision of Him and His plan. It is interesting to remember that this situation was also similar to that of Moses. Elijah was on the same mount that was Moses when he asked God to see His glory, for he needed to have his faith increased. The Lord put him in a cleft in the rock and satisfied his desire. Elijah was also a cleft in the rock (symbol of the coziness of God’s heart) and all he had to do was to get out of his limitation to look at the manifestation of the divine power and hear His voice.
- 10) *God’s consolation:* He does not need big manifestations to appear to a child, neither talks in a so frightening nor threatening way, but softly and gently. That’s what happened to Elijah, after the strong wind, the earthquake and the fire passed. A gentle whisper came and in it God spoke to His son. He wants to speak to us in a gentle and comforting manner so that our hearts can calm down after so much struggle and suffering, when the soul seems to be afraid of everything. His voice brings restoration, healing and a new time in our lives.
- 11) *God preserves those who are His; we are not alone:* Elijah had done something bold and defiant, facing alone the prophets of Baal, without the help of anyone besides God. So he felt alone in his beliefs; it seemed that nobody else thought like him. Then, the Lord consoled him and told him that there were still others that He himself had preserved alive and who had not bent to idolatry. Seven thousand in Israel remained faithful to the covenant with Him.
- 12) *The unusual attitudes of God are to generate faith in the people:* the different way of God to take Elijah to Himself in a whirlwind, instead of letting him die like any mortal, had the purpose to generate faith in the hearts of the Israelites and avoid that the tomb of the prophet became the object of pagan worship. He did something similar to Moses, another great man who was buried secretly by God Himself to avoid the idolatry of Israel. Elijah was a symbol of *prophecy* and Moses, also a prophet, represented the *Law* (cf. the transfiguration of Jesus: Mk. 9: 2-8).

Elisha – 18th lesson



Reference texts: 1 Kin. 19: 19-21; 2 Kin. 2-9; 2 Kin. 13: 14-25

Prophetic period: 848–797 BC

Summary:

Elisha (^e*lishā*, *God is salvation*) was a prophet of the northern kingdom and contemporary of Ahab, Ahaziah, Joram, Jehu, Jehoahaz and Joash, therefore, his ministry covered about fifty years of the history of Israel.

We can say that the ministry of Elijah was reproduced by John the Baptist, as the ministry of Elisha was a shadow of the future ministry of Jesus.

Elisha was called when he was still a young man and his calling was not through an anointing with oil as the kings of Israel received, but it was an *ordination* when Elijah threw the prophetic mantle on him (1 Kin. 19: 19-21). From then on, he served his master.

Some years passed and when the Lord was about to take Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, Elisha accompanied the master from Gilgal to Bethel, then to Jericho and the Jordan River, where the waters were divided at the touch of the mantle of Elijah. Fifty disciples of the prophets followed them, trying to dissuade Elisha to follow Elijah. When they crossed the river, Elijah asked Elisha what he wanted before being taken by God. Elisha requested a double portion of the spirit that was upon his master, that is, the double of his spiritual power, as the eldest son inherited a double portion of his father's property (Deut. 21: 17). Anyway, Elisha wanted the divine power to fulfill his new mission as spiritual leader of the nation (2 Kin. 2: 15). Elijah then told him he would have it, if he saw him when he was caught. They continued walking until a chariot of fire (symbol of God's authority), and horses of fire separated them from each other; and Elijah ascended to heaven in a whirlwind. Then, Elisha said out loud what he was seeing. He tore his clothes in two and took the mantle that Elijah let fall. As his master had done, he struck the waters and they were divided, and Elisha passed (1st miracle performed by God using His anointed). The disciples of the prophets saw it and recognized the authority of Elisha as prophet of the nation (2 Kin. 2: 15).

The men of Jericho commented with Elisha that the city was good, but the water was bad, and the land, barren. Elisha asked to bring him a new bowl and they put salt in it. Then he made his 2nd miracle before them, throwing salt in the spring of the waters, which became wholesome (2 Kin. 2: 19-21). The salt symbolizes the covenant (Lev. 2: 13; Num. 18: 19), the fidelity of the promise, the non-perishable nature of the covenant, God's unchanging love, a sign of purification and holiness.

Elisha left Jericho and went back to Bethel and, on the way forty-two boys mocked him because of his baldness. He cursed them in the name of the Lord and they were killed by two bears. It was not a case of revenge against harmless guys but a judgment

of God against a generation that showed increasing disrespect to Him and His laws. Their insult was not really a mockery against Elisha's baldness, but a mockery against the God that the prophet represented, a rejection of his prophetic authority. It was the 3rd miraculous attitude occurred in his recent ministry (2 Kin. 2: 23-25).

Moab paid taxes to the king of Israel. When Ahab died and Joram his son ascended the throne, the king of Moab rebelled; therefore, Joram asked for help to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and they allied with the king of Edom (2 Kin. 3: 1-7). After seven days' march, there was no water for the army and for their cattle. The king of Israel complained, but Jehoshaphat asked for a prophet who they could see in the name of the Lord. One of the servants of Joram told him about Elisha, son of Shaphat and the three kings came to him. Elisha was angry with the king of Israel, but because of Jehoshaphat he asked to bring him a harp player. The music brought the power of God upon him, and he prophesied that they should make many holes in the valley and the Lord would fill them with water, not only to quench their thirst and the cattle's, but He would also deliver Moab into their hands. The next morning the waters came (2 Kin. 3: 20) by way of Edom (4th miracle of Elisha), waters that were probably caused by a heavy rain that the Lord had sent over the mountains of Edom and flowed to Moab. The Moabites were expecting to find water tanks and mistook the red glare of the morning sun with blood (2 Kin. 3: 22). They thought that the kings had destroyed each other and went to the camp of Israel. There, the Israelites defeated the enemies and pursued them to their cities, which were also destroyed according to the prophecy of Elisha. The king of Moab, seeing that he could not win, took his firstborn son and offered him as a sacrifice on the city wall. This attitude made that the Moabites fought with greater intensity and fury, causing the Israelites to withdraw, because they had already achieved their goal.

With Elisha it happened the similar miracle to that Elijah did to the widow of Zarephath (1 Kin. 17: 8-16). This time it was with a woman also widow of the disciples of the prophets (2 Kin. 4: 1-7), who was in debt, and feared that the creditors took their children as payment (they would be slaves). Elisha gave her detailed instructions on how to make money, putting oil in jars. She obeyed the orders, saw the miracle of God (5th through His prophet), she paid her debt and her faith in the Lord increased.

There was a town in the region occupied by the tribe of Issachar, to the north of Israel, and in the NT corresponding to the Galilee, named Shunem (*shūnem, resting place*). There, lived a rich woman who offered him bread. Whenever the prophet passed there, he entered her house to eat. It was she who suggested to her husband that made a small room to the prophet, furnished in simple way, so that when the prophet returned, he could take refuge in it. So it happened. The servant of Elisha was called Gehazi and the prophet asked him what he could do for the woman to reciprocate her hospitality. Gehazi suggested that perhaps God could do a miracle to give her a son, since she had none and her husband was old. Elisha called her again and told her that about that time in the next year she would bear a son. And the miracle happened as he had promised (2 Kin. 4: 15-17, 6th miracle of God through him). The boy grew up and one day he fell ill and died. The mother put him on the bed of Elisha and went looking for him. She found him on Mount Carmel. She told the prophet of her pain and he ordered Gehazi to put his staff (Elisha's staff) on the boy's face. The mother did not want anyone except the prophet, so he went along with her. Gehazi even put his staff as he was told to, but nothing happened. So Elisha prayed to the Lord and laid himself upon the child (his eyes, his mouth and his hands on the dead boy); the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes (7th miracle). Elisha took the boy and gave him to his mother. Later, there was a famine in the land and the Shunammite sought relief in Philistia, losing all her possessions. After seven years she came back and her goods were restored to her (2

Kin. 8: 1-6). I am describing this episode now to show that the relationship between Elisha and the Shunammite did not end there with the resurrection of her son.

After having resurrected the boy, another episode that is placed in sequence also seems related to the period of seven years of famine in Israel, described in 2 Kin. 8. This episode is about the brotherhood of prophets in Gilgal. Elisha told Gehazi to put the large pot on the fire and cook a stew for the prophets. Something in the food, however, did not please the men; probably it was poisoned by the herbs that were placed there. Elisha put flour in the pot and made the food wholesome. It was his 8th miracle. The 9th miracle anticipates the miracle of the first multiplication of loaves and fish performed by Jesus (Mk. 6: 35-44). Here, Elisha multiplied twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears to feed one hundred men.

In 2 Kin. 5: 1-27, the bible describes the story of Naaman, which has no precise date. Perhaps it has occurred during a period when the Assyrians tried to dominate Syria, perhaps a period of truce between Syria and Israel. Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Syria and esteemed by his master. Through him, God gave victory to his people, but Naaman thought that it came from his military skill. He was a war hero, but a leper. Syria's troops had made captive an Israelite girl who was in the service of Naaman's wife. It was she who spoke to her mistress about Elisha, who was in Samaria, and was able to heal Naaman from leprosy. He spoke to his king, who sent him to Israel. He stopped at the door of the prophet, who sent him a messenger with the instruction for Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan River to be healed. Naaman was furious, because he expected another answer and another way of being healed. Yielding to the advice of his officers he did what the prophet had commanded, and was free from leprosy (10th miracle). Naaman wanted to reward Elisha, but he rejected the gift. So Naaman asked him that he could bring a bit of land from Israel to Syria because, from that moment, he was willing to worship only the Lord. The prophet sent him away in peace. Gehazi didn't understand the refusal of Elisha and found fair to receive a reward from the Syrian officer; he lied to him, talking to him in the name of his master. Naaman gave him two talents of silver and two changes of clothing. When the man of God asked him for an explanation about where he had gone, Gehazi lied again. The prophet rebuked him and told him that the leprosy of Naaman now would be on him and his descendants forever.

The next miracle of Elisha (11th) concerns having made an ax to float (2 Kin. 6: 1-7), which probably occurred around the same time of the other miracles in the dwellings of the prophets.

Elisha had a remarkable political participation, especially in the wars between Syria and Israel (2 Kin. 6: 8-24). He warned the king of Israel several times about the enemy's camp, freeing the nation from a disaster (2 Kin. 6: 10) and this disturbed the enemy king, who thought there was a spy in their midst. Informed about the existence of the prophet, he tried to arrest him, but God deviated the troops to Samaria toward the army of Israel (12th miracle). However, by order of Elisha, the king of Israel offered them a banquet and sent them back to his master. The Syrian attacks ceased.

Some time later, Ben-Hadad king of Syria returned to besiege Samaria (2 Kin. 6: 24-25). It was the famine period of seven years foretold by Elisha to the Shunammite (1 Kin. 8: 1) and described previously. Donkey's head and dove dung were sold. The circumstances in Israel were so critical that even cannibalism of children was practiced. This enraged the king Joram who turned against Elisha to have someone to blame for that situation. He sent him a messenger, but Elisha prophesied that the next day there would be supply. The captain who had been sent by the king as envoy to the prophet doubted the prophecy and received another word from him that he would see the

prophecy fulfilled; however, he would not live to eat the food. The prophecy was fulfilled (13th miracle) when four lepers who were at the city gate risked their lives to seek food in the camp of the Syrians. At twilight that day, they put their plan into practice, but when they arrived there they found the camp empty, because God had made the Syrians hear the noise of an army and of war chariots and they thought that Joram had asked for help to Egypt and the Hittites; they panicked and fled leaving everything behind. The lepers ate and drank and saw the robes and gold. They hid the spoils and returned to Samaria to tell the king and the citizens the miracle of the Lord. King Joram doubted at first; then, he sent soldiers to confirm. Confirming the miracle, he looted the enemy camp. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Elisha. The captain of the king that doubted of the words of the prophet was run over by the people and died at the city gate as the man of God had said.

Ben-Hadad got sick and Elisha went to Damascus. The Syrian king asked the man of God, through a messenger, if he would be healed. The messenger and assistant of the king was Hazel, who had been anointed by Elijah at the behest of the Lord to exterminate the house of Ahab. When Elisha saw him, he wept, because God showed him that he would kill the king of Syria and would decimate the nation of Israel. On the next day Hazael murdered Ben-Hadad and took the throne. At the behest of Elisha, one of the disciples of the prophets went to Jehu, captain of the Israelite's army who was at Hamot Gilead, and anointed him king, because Joram, king of Israel, had joined with Ahaziah, king of Judah, against Hazael king of Syria, and had returned to Jezreel wounded.

As the Lord commanded, Jehu wiped out the house of Ahab killing Joram, king of Israel, and Ahaziah, king of Judah. Jezebel, Joram's mother and wife of Ahab, was thrown from the window of the palace and also died as the Lord had said by the prophet Elijah. Jehu also killed the seventy sons of Ahab and all his counselors, priests and all their acquaintances. All priests of Baal were killed.

Being Elisha sick, Joash (son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu), king of Israel, came to visit him. The Prophet made him a promise of victory over the Syrians; unfortunately, he did not give much credit to it.

Elisha died about eighty-five to ninety years old and was buried. Bands of Moabites used to invade the land. When the Israelites who were burying a man saw them, they threw the body in the grave of Elisha and, when the corpse touched the bones of the prophet, the man came to life. In relation to Elisha, this was the 14th miracle performed by God and that, although not made by His power over the Prophet or on his bones, it was a sign that the God of Elisha lived.

We can see from all this that Elijah held seven miracles throughout his ministry. Elisha had asked for a double portion and held fourteen miracles.

Important lessons from Elisha:

- 1) *Similarities with the ministry of Jesus:* the ministry of Elisha anticipated that of Jesus, it was a shadow of what would happen to the Lord. The calling of Elisha was very similar to the call of the apostles. Elijah passed by the plantation where Elisha was plowing the ground and called him. Elisha said goodbye to his family and followed him. So it was with the disciples of Jesus. The bible says that they left what they were doing and followed Him. The old life was left behind and a new life was beginning with Jesus. Another similarity with the ministry of Jesus and what

happened in the life of Elisha was the resurrection of the son of the Shunammite. The first similarity relates to her trust in the prophet, not specifically on his authority through another person. When he sent his servant Gehazi and guided him to extend the staff on the boy's face and nothing happened, the woman didn't move away from Elisha, that is, she thought that nobody else could resurrect her son besides the prophet. This episode was very similar to the one that Jesus healed the boy who had epilepsy (because of demons), but that could not be healed by His disciples because his father thought that only the Lord could heal him. When Jesus came to him, He did not mind with the possessed boy at first, but with his father, restoring his faith not only in His physical presence there, as well as showing him that He was the living word and it was also in the mouth His followers to perform the miracles that were necessary. Just as the father's faith had to be worked, the woman's faith was also treated by Elisha. Another episode where we can find facts alike with the gospel is the most intimate and lasting relationship with the Shunammite, by the fact of Elisha coming back there often and even have a room built for him where to take shelter. Elisha, first, won the friendship of the woman and her husband, became like a family member and, surely, he spoke of the God of Israel to them, ministered the word of the Lord to them; only then he did the miracle of the resurrection of their son. His relationship with this family did not end there, but continued when, after seven years of drought, the goods of the Shunammite were restored because Gehazi interceded for her with the king. Jesus, likewise, was a close friend of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. He attended their home and stayed there, He had several opportunities to be with them, ministering the Word, and resurrected Lazarus to show them that He was their best friend. When He was crucified and spent three days in the tomb, it was a resemblance with the period of drought faced by Shunammite, for she felt far from the fountain of living waters coming from the prophet. Lazarus, Martha and Mary were without the "*Water of Life*" there with them, but had their hope restored when Jesus was resurrected and returned to them, until ascend to heaven after forty days. The same happens to us: Jesus calls us to Him, begins to fill us with His word, and suddenly, for some tribulation in our life, we feel dry and dead, seeming that He walked away just at the time of our desolation and loneliness; however, after our learning from that situation, He revives our hope again, restoring us from what was stolen from us. Another miracle of Elisha that had the likeness with that of Jesus was the multiplication of the twenty barley loaves and the ears to one hundred men, similar to the multiplication of the loaves and fish to five thousand and to four thousand men (two miracles of multiplication of loaves and fish). The episode that occurred after the death of Elisha, when the corpse of the man who had been thrown into his grave went to life by touching his bones, can be another way to show the resurrecting power of Jesus over all dead things. When Jesus died and rose again, He took the keys of death from the hands of the devil. When He died on the cross, the bible says that many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised and after his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many (Matt. 27: 52-53). The miracle performed by God with the case of the bones of Elisha was to show His people that the God of Elisha was alive; He would never die and had the power of life and death with Him. The fact that Jesus resurrect conveys us the same message: *He lives forever as well as all those who believe in Him and touch Him.*

- 2) *The prophet must overcome all the tests placed in his way to be recognized as an authority from God:* that's what happened to Elisha just before being a successor of Elijah. First, he followed his master to *Bethel*, which means '*the house of God.*' This

means that the prophet must always be in the presence of God to have revelation and authority. In second place, Elisha followed Elijah up to Jericho. This means that *the walls of impossibilities must be overcome* to conquer the prophetic anointing. It is an act of faith put into action so that the prophet discovers the power of God's word in his mouth. The third step is to go to the Jordan River, which symbolizes *the change of mind, the watershed, that is, the separation of God's mind from the mind of man*. The prophet lets the Spirit come, separating his mind from God's in order to have a greater degree of faith and a higher vision of the situations and, thus, can be a channel of miracles for the Lord. Elisha overcame all these tests to win the double portion of Elijah.

- 3) *To look at the spiritual, not the natural*: Elijah told Elisha that he would have what he had asked if he could see the exact moment of his rapture, which was a spiritual experience. The horses and chariots of fire, symbol of God's authority in the spiritual world, were the visualization of the angels bringing the glory and power of God to take His anointed. The Lord was doing something unusual, because nobody had had that kind of death, except Enoch, before Elijah. All His other servants, including Moses, were buried like all mortals. Thus, what was happening was something spiritual that showed Elisha that, for him to have the mantle and the power of God that he wanted to lead the nation he needed always to look with spiritual eyes, not with the natural eyes. If he was not 'in spirit' at that moment, he could not have seen what he saw. The natural eyes of men did not allow them to see the miracle. This means that the prophet must have his eyes turned upward, to spiritual things, not to the flesh's.
- 4) *Those who despise and envy will have to recognize the authority of God over His anointed*: the disciples of the prophets who had previously tried to hinder and dissuade Elisha to follow Elijah had to recognize the authority of God over His prophet, when they saw the prophet coming back alone from the other side of the Jordan and after having sought in vain for Elijah, without finding him.
- 5) *The new covenant brings life and blessing*: the episode that Elisha asks for a new bowl and puts salt to make the waters of Jericho wholesome exemplifies this. The dish (or bowl) symbolizes our spirit. The salt symbolizes the covenant (Lev. 2: 13; Num. 18: 19), the fidelity of the promise, the non-perishable nature of the covenant, God's unchanging love, a sign of purification and holiness. By making Elisha throw salt in the new bowl, the Lord was showing with this that His promise had not died and He was willing to make a new covenant with His people. Nothing can remain sterile with Him around. Another interesting feature of the salt is that it melts the ice. This means that God's true word melts hearts that are cold and hardened by sin and human barriers.
- 6) *The immutable commandments of God prevail over the irreverence and lack of fear*: when Elisha was mocked by the forty-two boys because of his baldness, in fact it was God who was being mocked and despised by the people of Israel. Two bears came out of the woods and destroyed them. The bear is an animal that has greater strength than the lion and its actions are less predictable. As we saw in the lesson about Samson, the lion represents the action of forces and spiritual powers over us. So we can imagine that the bear is also a force of these, however, much greater, like the strength of God that is able to do justice against all that affronts His holiness and His word, and can catch the enemy by surprise in any situation. The number two for the Israelites symbolizes the Law and the Commandments inscribed on the two tablets that Moses brought down from Sinai; in other words, symbolizes God's unchanging covenant with His people. With this act of God's judgment over the

disobedience and lack of fear, performed through Elisha, He wanted to show that His power is greater to destroy all sin and oppression. His word remains faithful.

- 7) *Praise brings the presence of God:* in the war of the three kings against Moab, Elisha asked for a harp player. When the music brought the presence of God upon him, he could prophesy and reveal the divine strategies to His people. So, praise draws us to His throne and makes us know His secrets. Moreover, as happened with Jehoshaphat in the war against the inhabitants of Seir, praise makes God do battle for us against what we can not solve, and brings us deliverance.
- 8) *To make room for God to act:* when the Lord directed them to make holes in the valley so that He filled up with water, this meant to make room (holes) in the heart so that situations seemingly ancient and unresolved (valley) can be flooded by His life and His word. His blood (red color of the water under the glare of the morning sun, seen by Moab) moves away the enemy and brings victory and renewal.
- 9) *Miracle of supply comes from God and not from men:* we can see this in the case of the widow in debt that was about to had over their children as slaves in order to pay the debt. With this thought and with this attitude, she was making use of human solution, namely, to sell what one has to pay debts. In fact, she was more than selling something to get rid of the charges; she was giving 'on a silver platter' in the hand of the enemy the more precious she had that was her children. *Son or child* represents *the dream*. Thus, when we are pressed by the enemy, we tend to give him what is precious to us, to the point of selling our material goods and even give up our dreams because we found in this human solution an immediate relief to our situation of misery. When we listen to the word of God (represented here by Elisha) and welcome it with faith in our hearts, we can see that He has a spiritual solution, which is more effective than the one we have. The jars or vessels are we, the vessels that can carry the anointing of the Lord; therefore, when we find ourselves in a situation of shortage and lack of supply in any area of our lives, God tells us to ask Him to bring us jars (His children) so that He can fill and carry out, through them, the miracle we need. The more the vessels, the more the anointing of God will be poured, and the greater will be the victory. Another learning here under God's point of view is that, when we think we have nothing, we still have a portion of His anointing to be poured over others and multiply His word of salvation on earth. Others need to be filled with His power.
- 10) *To fill ourselves with the Spirit:* returning to the case of the resurrection of the son of Shunammite, we can see some important topics. Often, not only the Word cures, but the right vision and the right action (together): 'mouth, eyes, hands.' That's why Jesus touched some people. Sneezing, here in the text, symbolizes a perfect divine liberating action (seven times) on the spirit of the boy. In Genesis, the bible says that the breath of life of God (Spirit) was placed in man (Adam). When Elisha laid his eyes, his mouth and his hands on the boy, the Lord was symbolically removing from his spirit what prevented him from flowing and live (the boy sneezed seven times). The Lord made the prophet to lie down on the boy in order to show us that He wanted to rest His Spirit upon him (Matt. 12: 18). There is also some resemblance to the healing of the possessed deaf and blind that Jesus healed (Matt. 12: 22-23; 28), when the bible speaks that Jesus "cast out demons by the Spirit of God" (finger of God – Lk. 11: 20 – "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you"). The son of the Shunammite might not be possessed by demons, but needed the restorative and enlivening Spirit of God. The act of Elisha also put his eyes on the boy symbolizes that he needed a new vision in his life to be able to walk properly, free from death (sin). Laying his hands on the

boy's hands represented a new way of acting. The boy was released from death (sin) by the word of God (the mouth of the Spirit through of the prophet), receiving the correct view of life (eyes) and a new way of doing things (hands, the way of God). Elisha had elements to perform the healing: the word (mouth), the sight of God to believe that the boy would be resurrected (eyes) and right action (hands). We can say that he also learned from this experience.

- 11) *God has the ability to save and transform*: in three miracles of Elisha, God used symbols of this power: *salt* on the barren waters of Jericho, *flour* in the pot containing poisoned food to the prophets, and the *oil* in the widow's jars. The salt symbolized His covenant, His love and His faithfulness to His promises; the flour, the truth of His word and His restorative power (through His body, symbolized by the bread eaten at supper, for it is with flour that one makes bread) bringing redemption from death; and the oil, symbolizing the power of His Spirit that transforms us, multiplies our anointing and saves our souls.
- 12) *To heal the leprosy*: the word leprosy in the bible can have the meaning of leprosy (skin disease), sin (spiritual leprosy) and emotional wounds. It talks of physical, spiritual and emotional illness. Naaman was a war hero; apparently, a victor in the eyes of men, but totally deficient in spiritual level, for he was devoid of God. In Prov. 16: 32 it is written: "One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty and one whose temper is controlled than one who captures a city." This exemplifies the case of Naaman. Outwardly he was a successful person, but his inside was defeated and needy of the divine healing. We can see by the attitude of Elisha and by the reaction of Naaman that one of the biggest obstacles to his healing was pride, which God removed changing his way of thinking (the diving in the Jordan River. *Jordan = change of mind, a watershed, the separation of God's mind from the mind of man*). The healing was gradual, showing that He gradually changes our thinking, bringing the healing of the soul, the deliverance from sin and physical restoration. He does this in a perfect and complete way (seven times). Other learning from Naaman is that the Lord heals in the way He wants because He knows all things, not the way that man expects. Naaman expected to hear a word of healing from the prophet, but he gave him a task, as showing to Naaman that the responsibility of the cure was in his hands, not in the hands of others; his right choices, as well as a new way of thinking, would bring the solution to the problem. God has power to cleanse us from all leprosy.
- 13) *To seek the glory of God, not men's*: Elisha did not accept the reward from Naaman, because he knew that the merit of the healing was not his, but God's. Gehazi, however, claimed the glory for himself, accepting a gift from Naaman. This generated death in his life, for he incurred in sin of pride, lie and disobedience. Disobedience, because he didn't respect the prophetic authority of Elisha; lie, because he spoke in the name of Elisha to Naaman when the prophet had told him nothing, besides that he lied to his own master not saying where he had gone; and pride, because he wanted to get a honor that was not his, he would like to receive a reward from Naaman that theoretically belonged to another. As a consequence of these sins God's curse manifested on him and his seed. The stain (leprosy) left by the sin marked him forever, as well as his children. Here we can see here a tremendous similarity with what happened in Eden to Adam and Eve. The sin of pride, wanting to put himself in the place of God, holding His wisdom and wanting His glory, brought God's curse to man, leaving in him a mark, a stain, which was the sinful nature of the devil in his flesh.

- 14) *It's necessary to find the error:* the ax that was in the hand of the disciple of the prophets had fallen in the river. But he had to say exactly where this had happened for Elisha to throw the piece of wood and make the ax float. This means that when we pray sincerely to the Lord, placing before Him what afflicts us and telling Him exactly where we feel uncomfortable, He brings a liberating word that brings the problem to the surface and removes it once and for all. Another lesson we can draw from this is that when we don't have more resources to our problems, the word of God comes finding what seemed to be lost and bringing light and solution. Ax is a tool that cuts off, which means that the Word is an ax that we mustn't let be lost within us, but always active to cut the evil things out of our lives and separate what is from God to us and what is not.
- 15) *To pay the evil with good to finish the war:* when the Syrian army was diverted by God to Samaria and the king wanted to kill them, the prophet gave him a command that seemed absurd: to serve them a banquet and return them to their king. The strategy was effective and the attacks ceased. It is the same teaching that Jesus gave us so that the enemy has nothing to accuse us of.
- 16) *Not having attachments or fears assures us the conquest of the blessing:* the lepers had nothing to lose in the case of famine that reigned in Samaria, they had no attachments; they had also daring to take risks to seek food in the enemy territory. So God helped them and got the victory. The fearful and 'prudent' stayed just looking; they did not have the birthright of the blessing. As they took an attitude of courage, they were the first to enjoy the spoils. God expects of us a pro-active attitude, not passive, because this attitude of courage and determination makes us kings and conquerors, not poor things or powerless.

Esther – 19th lesson



Reference texts: Est. 1–10

Summary:

Esther (*Ishtar*, in Persian, *as beautiful as the moon*, related to the Babylonian goddess of love and fertility, *Ishtar*; *Stara*, Persian = *star*; *Hadassah*, Hebrew, *myrtle*) married Xerxes (Ahasuerus; *Achashverosh* in Hebrew = *prince, head, chief, lion*, equivalent of Persian *Khshayarshan* = *king lion*; *Xerxes* in Greek, *great warrior, warlike, bellicose, lion*; *Xerxes* is a Greek transliteration of his Persian name after his ascension, *Jshāyār Shah*, meaning ‘*ruler of heroes*’), who reigned 486–465 BC and was the successor of Darius I (522–486 BC), during whose reign occurred the restoration of the temple of Jerusalem (516 BC). History talks about the wife of Xerxes or Ahasuerus, Amestris, identifying her with Vashti, an overbearing, despotic woman. Wilson, the historian who identified Ahasuerus with Xerxes and Vashti with Amestris suggested that Amestris and Esther are Persian names derived from the Akkadian words: Ammi-Ishtar or Ummi-Ishtar. Hoschander, another historian, suggested alternatively as origin of both names the expression *Ishtar-udda-sha* (“*Ishtar is your light*”) with the possibility of -udda-sha being linked to the sound similarity of the Hebrew name *Hadassah*. Because of this the bible says that Esther and *Hadassah*, both names, are related to the same person. Note: Sumer was one of the names given to the southern half of Iraq, more or less to from Baghdad to the south, in contrast to the north, which was known as Akkad, so the word, above ‘Akkadian.’ Another Hebrew meaning for Esther is ‘*secret*’, ‘*hidden*.’

Esther rose to the throne in 479 BC (Est. 2: 16).

In the third year of his reign, Ahasuerus made a feast in the citadel of Susa (Current archaeological site near Shush, a city in the southwestern province of present-day Iran, called Khuzestan) to all his princes and servants.

Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal house. On the last day of the celebration the king requested the presence of queen Vashti, wearing the royal crown, to show the people and the princes her beauty, for she was extremely beautiful. But queen Vashti refused to come and the king got very angry. By guidance of the wise men of kingdom it was, then, promulgated a royal edict inscribing into the law that Vashti could no longer enter the presence of king Ahasuerus and her place would be given to another. Vashti might have political reasons for not attending the banquet of the king, or had foreseen an uncomfortable situation. According to Jewish historians, Vashti should appear wearing only the crown without any clothes; and the possibility of being coveted by drunken people certainly explains her reluctance, regardless of what she had to wear.

After a while, the king remembered Vashti and the young people who served him suggested that beautiful and good-looking virgins were brought to Susa, and the one who pleased the king reigned in the place of Vashti. The king agreed. In Susa there was a man named Mordecai (*'small man'*), from the tribe of Benjamin, a descendant of Kish, what linked him to the tribe and the family of king Saul. This explains the conflict between Mordecai and Haman, the Agagite, friend of king Ahasuerus and who was a descendant of Agag, king of Amalekites, who was spared by Saul against the orders of God and then killed by the prophet Samuel. Mordecai's ancestors had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon after the fall of Judah under the dominion of Nebuchadnezzar. Mordecai was born in Babylon. In Est. 2: 5-6 there was probably a mistake in the translation and the date, by stating that Mordecai was taken captive in 597 BC (with Jehoiachin, king of Judah; the bible also call him Jeconiah). It was probably his great-grandfather who was exiled with Jehoiachin king of Judah in 597 BC (2nd stage of Israel's exile). History describes three stages of exile of Judah: 605, 597 and 586 BC. His cousin, Hadassah, known among the Persians by Esther, was raised by him as a daughter when her parents died. Esther was born in Babylon (under Persian dominion).

Many girls were assembled in the citadel of Susa, and Esther among them, being brought to the king's house under the care of Hegai, keeper of the women. Esther obtained favor before Hegai, who hastened to give her the ointments and the proper food, as also to the seven young women chosen from the king's house.

In Ancient times, the city gate was the center of business activities and legal matters. Probably, Mordecai had a post at the service of the king that forced him to stay at the gates. Ancient records show that there was a secondary official in the administration of Ahasuerus with the name of Mardukaya.

Mordecai forbade Esther from declaring her nationality, because he wanted to preserve her from the hostility against the Jews. Every day Mordecai walked before the court of the king's house and asked the guards about Esther. The women were treated for twelve months for their beauty treatment, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices, perfumes and ointments. Then they could come to the king, being allowed to the women to carry with them whatever they wanted from their house to the king's. After this, they would come back to the house of the concubines and only would return to the king if he desired so.

When Esther's turn came, she asked for nothing; she obtained favor of those who saw her. She was taken to the king in the seventh year of his reign, in the tenth month (December-January), the month of Tebeth. The bible says that the king loved Esther more than all women and she was crowned queen instead of Vashti.

On one of those days, while Mordecai was sat at the king's gate, two eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh [Est. 2: 21; Est. 6: 2 (the Hebrew word translated as *eunuch* can mean: *officer, castrated man or both*)], officers that guarded the doorway of king Ahasuerus' palace, plotted to kill him. Mordecai discovered the plot and revealed it to Esther who, in turn, told the king in Mordecai's name. The case was investigated, confirmed the guilt of the officers and the two were hanged.

After these events, Ahasuerus aggrandized and exalted Haman over all the princes of the kingdom, and all the king's servants who were at the door of his house bowed and prostrated themselves before him; Mordecai, however, did not bow or prostrate. Haman was enraged by this and, knowing that Mordecai was a Jew, also plotted against the entire people of God in the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. In the 12th year of his reign they cast the *Pur*, that is, *the lot*, before Haman, from the 1st (*Nisan, March-April*) to the last month of the year (*Adar, February-March*). Dice were used to cast lots, and thus, to determine the date of important events of the year in the ancient Middle East.

Haman cast the dice to mark the day that the Jews would be executed in the kingdom. He bribed the king with a large sum (Ten thousand talents). Xerxes didn't mind the bribe and gave his ring (a sign of his royal authority) to Haman, and the Jews under his jurisdiction to do what he wanted with them. The lot fell on the 13th day of the 12th month (Adar) for the execution of all Jews in the kingdom. The decree was irrevocable because it had been sealed with the king's ring.

Mordecai showed deep grief with the decree, as well as all of his people.

Esther also knew, and Mordecai asked her to intercede with the king for the life of the people of God. Esther was afraid, because she knew she could not appear before the king without being summoned, but for the insistence of Mordecai she proclaimed a fast among the Jews for three days; after this time, she would go to the king, whether with the permission of the law or not.

After three days, Esther went to the king, who extended to her the golden scepter. Esther touched the tip of the scepter and he asked her what she wanted. Then, she invited the king and Haman to a banquet. At night, during the feast, the king asked her again what she wanted. She invited him again for a second dinner. Haman, by hatred of Mordecai, had built a gallows of fifty cubits high, that is, seventy-five feet, on the city wall (a symbol of personal exaltation and open demonstration of power) in order to hang him on it. The night before the second banquet, the king could not sleep and ordered to bring the book where there were registered the memorable deeds of the kingdom and it was found written in it that Mordecai was who had denounced the conspiracy against Xerxes. The king was surprised that had not been given any honor to Mordecai for this. Haman was in the yard, ready to talk to him about the gallows. The king asked him what should be done to whom the king wished to honor. Haman, thinking that was about him he was talking, suggested that the king should put on the man the royal robes and the royal crown and he rode the horse of the sovereign. Then the king called Mordecai and made to him as Haman said. So dressed, he was taken to a city tour and proclaimed before him the honor given him by Xerxes.

Haman, furious, returned to his home and, later, he attended the second banquet of Esther. Ahasuerus asked her again what she wanted and she asked him to spare her life and the live of her people. Thus, she revealed her nationality before everyone and told him about the decree of Haman. He was arrested and hanged on the same gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

That same day the king gave Haman's house to Esther and his royal ring to Mordecai, placing him as the second in the kingdom (Chancellor); above him it was only valid the king's authority. The previous decree concerning the Jews could not be revoked according to the law of the Persians. Then the king gave authorization to Mordecai who issued a second decree in which, in the name of the king, was granted the Jews to fight for their lives, killing their oppressors. The letter was sent to Jews of all provinces of the kingdom. On the 13th day of Adar, in which would be fulfilled the decree of Haman, the Jews fought against their enemies and prevailed. The ten sons of Haman were killed, but the Jews did not touch the spoil, for it was a holy war. Esther asked the king to hang the corpses on gallows. So it was done. This meant a sign of vengeance from the Lord and that God's curse against the Amalekites had been fulfilled by the descendants of Saul.

On the 14th they rested and made feast. It was a day of joy. Jews in Susa did feast on the 15th. So Mordecai commanded that the 14th and 15th of the month Adar (February-March) were celebrated every year to remind the people about the victory over their enemies. They called those days *Purim*, because of the name *Pur* (the lot).

Mordecai maintained his authority as the second in the kingdom and worked for the welfare of his people.

Important comments:

I) Before entering the learning, we must notice that the Book of Esther is the only one in the bible in which God's name is not mentioned openly, perhaps so that the manuscript was not destroyed, because of the persecution of the Jews during Persian captivity. But God certainly had an indirect participation in the events, leaving no doubt about the authenticity of the story:

- 1) Affirmation of Mordecai that the deliverance would come from elsewhere (Est. 4: 14), that is, God would intervene on behalf of His people.
- 2) Request of Esther that all fasted (Est. 4: 16), what made a reference to the prayer to the Lord for her sake.
- 3) Refusal of the Jews to plunder the enemy (Est. 9: 10; 16), which means that they fought for the Lord, not for themselves.
- 4) Choice of Esther among many women to become queen.
- 5) Mordecai, 'by chance', discovers the plot against the king.
- 6) Esther defies the law and tries to gain access to the presence of Ahasuerus without a previous request or invitation.
- 7) Mordecai receives the post of Haman, with which he could invalidate an irrevocable law and free the Jews.

II) Martin Luther questioned the canonicity of the book of Esther, and other theologians, both Christian and Jewish, doubt its veracity, for some historical details and events are incompatible with the biblical account. In the case of Amestris being identified with Vashti, for example, historians argue that this could not occur, since Amestris had a great participation in the reign of Artaxerxes I, son of Xerxes, and therefore, was not banished from the court. No documents bearing the name of Esther, Mordecai or Haman have been found in the annals of Ahasuerus (Xerxes I), and no fragments of this book have been found at Qumran nor was it mentioned by Ezra or Nehemiah. Therefore, some Bible scholars consider that it is not a historical narrative itself, but a kind of short story (a historical novel) that analyzes the situation of the Jewish community scattered among foreign nations after the exile in Babylon. It would be a common genre of literature during the Persian and Hellenistic periods to which the book of Esther was dated. Some maintain that the narrative was intended to provide an explanation for the feast of Purim.

What is known from History is that Xerxes I was murdered in 465 BC along with Darius, the crown prince, by Artabanus, the commander of the royal guard. Xerxes was succeeded by his third son, who took the throne as Artaxerxes I.

My question is: if this biblical book was not found in Qumran, how was it copied and transmitted? Even with questioning and contesting human rationality and little understanding of spiritual things in its entirety, how, then, would God allow it to be included in the Canon if it was not true in its content?

We seek historical data to improve our understanding of the Word, but not to doubt or question the truths written there by the Spirit of God. That would be tempting God.

In my studies during all my years of walking with the Lord there has not been a biblical book whose authorship has not been questioned or whose content has not been permeated with doubts by theologians and 'experts' and 'scholars'. The bible continues, from my point of view, the supreme authority, the truth of God, where He left His laws and teachings for humanity so that we can know who we are, where we came from and where we are going. If we question everything the bible writes, looking for proof and

evidence, where is faith? This is one of the biblical books, not to say, the one that stands out most of all the writings, which must be understood from the point of view of faith so that we can know the majesty and sovereignty of God above human circumstances. If everything in the bible is only accepted from the point of view of archeology and human deduction, where is our faith? Jesus well said that only those who accept the kingdom of God like a child can enter it. And the object of the whole bible is to know God and His eternal, omniscient, omnipotent purposes in a spiritual, not a rational way; otherwise, the bible would be just another historical compendium, just another book to keep on the shelf to consult from time to time.

God's message here is: Don't let the devil steal your faith, leave doubts in your mind, or steal your salvation.

Important lessons from Esther:

- 1) *Preparation to reign:* Esther was prepared according to the Persian custom with oil of myrrh for six months and with other spices and ointments for another six months for her beauty treatment, before being taken to the king. *Myrrh* symbolizes the *anointing of healing and ransom, inner strengthening and preparation time, purification and life changing*. Then her beauty treatment was completed with other spices. This means that in order to take our place as kings and priests, we must be prepared, receiving the healing of Jesus, the inner strengthening and a real transformation of life through the change of our way of thinking. After the myrrh, Esther was prepared with spices and ointments, which means gifts that the Holy Spirit pours upon us after having been healed so that now in His strength we can carry out our calling and exercise His authority on earth.
- 2) *Our good deeds are recorded in the book of the King (Jesus) and the reward comes at the right time:* just as the attitude of Mordecai denouncing the conspiracy against Ahasuerus was recorded in the books of the kingdom and had, at the right time, the reward on the part of the king, our attitudes of faith, perseverance and dedication to the Lord are recorded on His altar and, at the right time, He will exalt us before the enemy. Mordecai, like Joseph and Daniel, had an authority only inferior to the king's (Dan. 6: 2; Gen. 41: 41-44).
- 3) *Divine justice and restitution:* Haman was hanged on the same gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. The restitution of God came over Esther. This means that even if the enemy tries to put traps in our path, God undoes them and hangs him with his own rope, on his own gallows. The Lord brings us the restitution and gives us back what was ours. *Haman* means, in Hebrew, *fortress* and, in Persian (*Hamayun*), *magnificent, regal, illustrious and well disposed*. There is another meaning originated from the Persian word *heyman*: *noise, tumult*. By giving the house of Haman to Esther, God was symbolically returning to her the fortress, the magnificence and the power, the welfare and the disposition, for she would no longer feel threatened or pressured by the enemy, but would enjoy her status of queen.
- 4) *Jesus breaks the decree of Satan on our lives:* Mordecai is the figure of Jesus (Protector of Esther) and it was He who issued a new decree preventing the murder of the Jews. Likewise, Jesus takes us to Him and breaks the death sentence on our lives, giving us a new decree of eternal life and right to His inheritance.
- 5) *Curse turns into a blessing when we are under the will of God:* God's hand was upon Esther, Mordecai and His people, so the 13th of the month Adar, which was

separate to the death of Jews, became days of blessing and gladness, because the Lord delivered them. Likewise, when something seems to be a curse in our lives, God turns it into a blessing, because we are under His guidance and we are sure that everything belongs to Him and is under His government.

- 6) *Resemblance between what happened before the creation of man, between God and Satan:* if we look at the biblical reports from the spiritual perspective and on the symbolism of the characters, we may notice a certain resemblance to what happened in the spiritual world before the creation of man, when Satan exalted himself above God and was overthrown. In wanting the praise and honor to him, he caused his own downfall (Ezek. 28: 11-19; Isa. 14: 12-15). Isa. 37: 29 may be a veiled reference to this theme as well. Mordecai is the figure of Jesus and Haman, the figure of the enemy. Haman tried to take to himself the glory that belonged to Mordecai, but fell like Satan. Haman means fortress, magnificent, illustrious, regal and well disposed. It is a way of saying that he wanted to himself a quality that belongs to Jesus. The names of his children are another way to say that his fruit, his dreams and seeds are as good as those of God:
- a) Dalphon = who makes an effort, who strives, diligent. This can be interpreted as determination and perseverance that are qualities granted by God and belonging to Him.
 - b) Parshandatha = noble birth, which means for us: to be children of king.
 - c) Aspatha = horse, symbol of strength and military power. The bible says that God is also known as the Lord of Hosts, the Lord of War.
 - d) Adalia = nobility, noble. The bible says we are kings.
 - e) Poratha = who has many cars and ornaments, which speaks of wealth and sign of power. The owner of gold and silver is God (Haggai 2: 8).
 - f) Aridatha = noble birth. As we said: to be children of king.
 - g) Pharmashta = very great. Who can be greater than God?
 - h) Arisai = like a lion. Jesus is the Lion of Judah, a symbol of leadership, strength and power.
 - i) Aridai = great, brilliant. Jesus is the light. The light and the brightness belong to the kings.
 - j) Vaizatha = strong as the wind, that is, symbol of power and spiritual strength. Wind (Ruach) = Spirit, in reference to the Holy Spirit.

Job – 20th lesson



Reference texts: Job 1–42

Summary:

Job (*Hebrew, 'iyyôbh = always turning to God, the persecuted, object of hostilities, who withstands the adversities*), according to the bible, was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. He lived in the land of Uz, an uncertain location. It is thought to be close to Bashan (north of Canaan), near the borders of the desert that separates the east and west arms of the Fertile Crescent. It was a region of cities, farms and migrant herds. The land was named after Uz, son of Naor, brother of Abraham (Gen. 22: 21), or Uz, of the children of Seir the Horite, in the land of Edom (Gen. 36: 28), if we take into account the proximity with the places of origin of Job's friends and the mention of the Sabeans (Job 1:15), who lived in Sabah, in 'Arabia Felix' or Fertile Arabia, south of the Arabian Peninsula. Job had great wealth and high social position, but was not king. He offered sacrifices to God for his children. He had seven sons and three daughters.

The book of Job is a book that deals with human suffering and what happens beyond our knowledge, even with those who are fair and that often are misunderstood even by friends, whose carnal wisdom, limited, can not understand the reason of their suffering, causing them to act in two ways: accepting without questioning, and helping the other to overcome the test, or acting as judge, as Job's friends did, accusing the brother of sin, without acknowledging their own ignorance on the subject. For the mentality of that time when someone was suffering was a sign of God's wrath on him for having sinned; they did not understand the different ways of the Lord and that someone can suffer, even without divine condemnation upon him. To Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar the case of Job was an event completely different of anything they had ever seen. Here, what was hidden was the attack of Satan against God himself, using Job as a weapon. He showed God that Job was faithful because he had everything; if He took away His hand of him and all the things he had, he (Satan) doubted that Job could remain loyal.

Thus, Job lost wealth and children in only one day. At first he conformed to God's judgment and did not sin against Him. Not satisfied with the situation, Satan also demanded of God the health of Job and He allowed he was touched in his body in order to have one more reason at the end to shame the devil. God allowed everything to show that the loyalty between Him and Job would never break for anything.

The bible speaks of Job's three friends: Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Naamathite and Elihu, son of Barakel, the Buzite. Teman was the son of Eliphaz, the first son of Esau and Adah (Gen. 36: 11; 1 Chr. 1: 36) and perhaps gave his name to the district north of Edom (Jer. 49: 20; Ezek. 25: 13; Am. 1: 12; Obad. 9). Its

inhabitants were famous because of their wisdom (Jer. 49: 7; Obad. 8 et seq.). Although the exact location of Teman remains unknown, there is strong evidence in favor of the Jordanian city of Ma‘ān. There were many water sources in the region, and this made it attractive for caravans between the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant (a geographical term that comes down to Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and Cyprus). As for Bildad the Shuhite we can say that the tribe of the Shuhites (Gen. 25: 2; 6) were the descendants of Shuah, sons of Abraham and Keturah, and who lived in the east, in ‘Arabia Deserta’. And the Naamathites were located in the eastern lands, a region of wise men (cf. 1 Kin. 4: 30). Zophar the Naamathite may have come from Naaman, a mountainous region in northwestern ‘Arabia Deserta’ (or Arabia Magna, a region occupied by the interior desert of the Arabian Peninsula). In Job 32: 2 the bible mentions Elihu, son of Barakel, the Buzite, of the family of Ram. It is likely that he was a descendant of Buz, the 2nd son of Nahor, brother of Abraham (Gen. 22: 20-21); or he had come from the city of Buz, mentioned together with Dedan and Tema (Jr 25: 23), places in Edom or in Idumea. As for Ram, it most likely refers to Aram (Gen. 22: 21), son of Kemuel, brother of Buz, son of Nahor.

Job cursed the day of his birth and his wife told him to curse God and die. At first, his three friends sat with him to console him and grieve because of his pain; for seven days and nights they did it. Until his friend Eliphaz reminded him that he was an example for the people and should seek God.

The story continues with his friends beginning to accuse him, saying that his sufferings were caused by sin. By distorting the truth, they only increased his pain.

The narrative goes on in an almost endless sequence of complaints against God and discussions of words and theological knowledge between Job and his friends. He still had moments of faith and trust in God, even not understanding what was happening, even revolting against what happened, demanding an explanation from the Lord and even being falsely accused by his friends of having sinned. He began to remember his first happy state and declared his integrity. In no time Job began to think that had sin or guilt for something; he did not let be seduced by the accusations of his friends because he knew how he walked before God.

From a certain moment, comes into play another character: the young Elihu, who rebukes both Job and the other three men and justifies God, trying to explain all His attitudes toward men. Job begins to seek revelation in Him. After that, the Lord rebukes him, what goes working his inner bitterness and explaining many things, ending up for supporting him and rebuking his friends because they did not say what was right about Him. Job intercedes for them and forgives them for falsely accusing him. God restores him twice as much as he lost. However, He gave him the same number of children: seven men and three women. Apparently, Job dealt properly with wealth and it never impaired his relationship with God, so the Lord gave him back double, materially speaking. With this He wanted to show that material goods can be returned, but not children.

The bible speaks of the daughters of Job, but not about the sons. Speaking of the beautiful daughters of a hero was a sign of divine blessing. Their names were: *Jemimah* (pigeon, dove), symbol of peace; *Keziah* (cinnamon), symbol of the restoration of the personal things, not to make again the same mistakes of the past, fear of God and ransom; *Keren-Happuch* (*Pükh* = glow of colors, source of beauty), symbol of color, joy, life, light and understanding.

Important lessons from Job:

- 1) *God allows everything for a purpose:* God allowed all things to show Satan and men that His faithfulness is unchanging and that there are some of His children who are able to withstand everything to keep it too, even without fully knowing Him or even having a limited and distorted view of Him. He also shows that the sincere relationship with Him can never be broken by anything. Another reason for allowing something may not be the case of Job, because of Satan's claim, but to show men that they don't know or understand all things; that He is the Lord acting as He wants in order to express several purposes in the middle of His people and to show that His creation is infinite and different, never repeating in any child of His. Another reason is to awaken in man attitudes that may be asleep such as: love, tolerance and respect for his fellow men, leaving judgment to God. This is to work the pride, prejudice and human haughtiness that often hinder the revelations and the pure work of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) *Listening to false wisdoms, accusations and human opinions can lead us to misinterpret the motives of God, until we turn against Him:* one of the strategies used by the devil is the distortion of truth, making God bad and him, good. Everything that goes bad is assigned to God and everything that brings pleasure and joy is assigned to the devil. We cannot forget that the devil is a liar; he is the father of lies, as Jesus said. All that matters is to be sure that He knows all things and His righteousness exists, as well as His love and mercy. Job, to some extent, was not impressed by false accusations from friends about having sinned, but was influenced by a feeling of animosity towards God.
- 3) *Lonely struggle against the evidence presented by those who see the 'scene' from outside:* Job felt alone before all the evidence against him and before all the ways of thinking, different from his; everything around him seemed to prove that they were right and that he was wrong. When he remembered to praise the Lord, his strength seemed to be renewed within him.
- 4) *To abandon the revolt and the justifications; to seek truth and God's revelation:* After Job truly sought God's presence he could hear Him and know what was happening inside him. The Lord didn't tell him about Satan, because the target of the enemy was God Himself, but revealed to Job His sovereignty and His righteousness above all things. Thus, He decreased the force of evil within him and exalted His benign force in the heart of Job. So, filling our minds with the explanations of the devil and what concerns to him defiles our temple, because we fail to exalt the name and the power of God. We should not listen to the explanations of others, when the 'owner of the explanations' is already within us. When God supported Job and rebuked his friends for having accused him falsely, He restored Job's faith and his relationship with Him. From there, the understanding and revelation came, and Job could declare that he now knew the Lord not only by hearing of Him, but by seeing Him in His essence. When the bible says: "*therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes*", it means that Job was apologizing for his lack of knowledge and wisdom.
- 5) *Forgiveness and intercession complete the healing:* when Job forgave his friends and interceded for them, his cure was completed, because he saw the approval of God receiving his prayer. He felt exalted by Him.
- 6) *The glory of the second house is greater than the former:* God worked the soul and the spirit of Job and restored him twice as much, not only the spiritual but the material. His knowledge of Him grew, and he had materially more than he had

before. When Job remembered what he had in the past, he could never imagine that the Lord would give him much more.

- 7) *Blessings represented by the daughters: Jemimah (pigeon, dove) symbolizes the double restoration of peace on his life; Keziah (cinnamon) symbolizes the restoration of the personal things, not to make again the mistakes of the past, fear of God and ransom; Keren-Happuch (Pükh = glow of colors, source of beauty), symbolizes that his life would be no more 'blue', without life, but colored with the joy, the true life of God, a different vision of things and the light of divine understanding.*

Paul – 21st lesson



Reference texts: Acts 8: 1-3; Acts 9: 1-30; Acts 12: 20-25; Acts 13-28; all the epistles of Paul

Summary:

Saul (*Shā'ül, Saul*, the Jewish name of the Apostle, means *asked of God, desired of God*) has the Greek-Roman name of *Paul* (*small*, Acts 13: 9). He was from the tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11: 1; Phil. 3: 5) and a zealous member of the party of the Pharisees (Acts 23: 6; Acts 26: 5; Phil. 3: 5). He was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, as a Roman citizen (Acts 16: 37; Acts 21: 39; Acts 22: 25). Tarsus was a center of culture where Paul became acquainted with the various Greek philosophies and religious services during his youth. He was educated in Jerusalem by Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22: 3; Acts 26: 4-5). While still young (Acts 7: 58; Gal. 1: 13; Acts 22: 5; 1 Cor. 15: 9), Paul received official authority to direct the persecution against Christians and authority in the synagogue or council of the Sanhedrin, as he himself writes: “but I also cast my vote against them [*he was referring to the Christians*] when they were being condemned to death” (Acts 26: 10b). Other references to this are in Acts 8: 3; Acts 9: 13-14; Acts 26: 11; Acts 8: 1 (in relation to Stephen).

In Acts 9: 1-18; Acts 22: 4-21; Acts 26: 9-18, the bible speaks of Paul's conversion. He came with instructions from the authorities of Jerusalem to repress the manifestations of Christians in Damascus when in the middle of the road he saw a bright light, and from its midst, Jesus spoke to him and called him to be His disciple. The others who were with him saw the light, but did not recognize the meaning of the voice (in other texts, the bible speaks that they heard the voice and saw the light, but they saw no one neither understood what that event meant and they were troubled). Paul, as a result of the meeting, became blind during three days and was taken to the house of Judas at Damascus. After three days, God sent His servant Ananias who, laying his hands on Paul's eyes, restored his sight. Paul was baptized, became stronger and began to preach about Jesus in Arabia and Damascus in the following three years of his conversion (Gal. 1: 17-18; Acts 9: 19-20). Because of the Jews who wanted to kill him (2 Cor. 11: 32), he was tied to a rope and lowered by the city wall, and he fled to Jerusalem where Barnabas, one of the disciples, introduced him to the apostles. After a few days with the brothers (Gal. 1: 18-24; Acts 9: 20-30) they took him to Caesarea, from where he boarded back to Tarsus. Paul stayed for ten years in Tarsus, a period of silence in his ministry, perhaps being instructed by God Himself about the gospel. Barnabas then asked him to come to Antioch to help him on a mission among the Gentiles (Acts 11: 20-26) and, after one year, he returned to Jerusalem (46 AD – Acts 11: 29-30), which puts his conversion and the beginning of his ministry around 35 AD,

according to the historical date (Apocryphal Books) for Stephen's death – between 33 and 36 AD, more frequently placed in 34 AD.

Let's take a look at what was written above: "he began to preach about Jesus in Arabia and Damascus in the following three years of his conversion (Gal.1:17)."

The Arabia to which the bible refers here is not what we know today as Saudi Arabia, in the Arabian Peninsula. In the days of Paul, Arabia Petraea or Petrea, Arabian Province or simply Arabia was a strip of land that included the Nabataean kingdom in Jordan, the Sinai Peninsula and the Northwest of the Arabian Peninsula. It was later incorporated by the Roman Empire in the beginning of the second century (106 AD) during the government of Trajan. Its capital was Petra. Its northern border was Syria; Egypt and Judea, to the west, and which later in 135 AD was merged with Syria to form the Province of Syria Palaestina by the Emperor Hadrian. To the south and east, it was limited by the so-called 'Arabia Deserta' (or Arabia Magna, a region occupied by the interior desert of the Arabian Peninsula) and by the 'Arabia Felix' or Fertile Arabia, a name given to the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula, corresponding to the current states of Yemen and Oman. The region was occupied by sedentary tribes of agricultural and mercantile economies in the coastal regions of the Peninsula. Currently, the Arabian Peninsula is composed by seven countries: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain (A small archipelago), the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar. Part of Iraq and Jordan are part of the peninsula.



The first missionary journey of Paul (Acts 13–14 – In 46-48 AD) began in Cyprus, taking him to the cities of Salamis (where the proconsul Sergius Paulus was converted), Paphos, and then to the south of Galatia, to Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra (where he healed a paralytic and where he was stoned*), Derbe and Perga of Pamphylia.

(*) As for the fact reported in Acts 14: 19-20: "But Jews came there from Antioch and Iconium and won over the crowds. Then they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples surrounded him, he got up and went into the city. The next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe," it's a bit

difficult to state with certainty that Paul died and was resurrected, for he himself doesn't know, as he writes in 2 Cor. 12: 1-4: "It is necessary to boast; nothing is to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a person in Christ [*he was speaking of himself*] who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows—was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat." What we can say with certainty is that there was a powerful physical restoration from God in the body of the apostle, for hardly a person survived a stoning. It was a sentence provided by the Law of Moses for the punishment of several crimes, such as heresy or adultery.

The Jews had a language of their own when speaking of heaven. The first heaven refers to what we see, where birds fly, that is, the sky, the Earth's atmosphere. The second heaven was related to outer space, with the sun, moon and stars. And the third heaven refers to the spiritual heaven, the Paradise, where the throne of the Lord is, and where many prophets were caught up or had an experience of ecstasy and received visions and revelation from God Himself.

Paul returned to Jerusalem, fourteen years after meeting Peter for the first time (Gal. 2: 1), to the Conference in Jerusalem (50-51 AD), before his second journey.

There was a big factor of division in the ministry of Paul and Peter; among the believers, arose the discussion among the Christians Jews who insisted that Gentiles should be circumcised. Paul opposed and publicly rebuked Peter (Gal. 2: 11-21, with emphasis on verse 14). James took a position in relation to the Gentiles (Acts 15: 19-22) that was accepted by the Council of Jerusalem and sent a letter to Antioch where the only recommendations to the Gentiles was not to eat meat of strangled animals, or consecrated to idols, or blood, and that they abstained from sexual immorality.

In the second missionary journey (50-53 AD), Paul had Silas as his companion (Acts 15: 40 to Acts 18: 22), in the place of Barnabas. This one stayed as a companion of John Mark, who had quarreled with Paul in the previous voyage. From Antioch, they traveled to the south of Galatia and then to Lystra where he met Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman and Greek father and who became his disciple. To avoid discussions in the synagogue, Paul circumcised him (Acts 16: 3). They went then to the north of Galatia to Troas and then to Greece (Macedonia), establishing missions in Philippi, where Lydia was converted and was baptized (Acts 16: 14-15) and a young woman fortune-teller was freed (Acts 16: 16-18); this last episode took Paul and Silas to prison. But God also used this fact to convert a few more lives, including the jailer and his family (Acts 16: 19-34). After leaving Philippi they went to Thessalonica, Berea and to Achaia at the south of Greece. There they visited the cities of Athens and Corinth. In this city, Paul spent almost two years, founding a Christian community there. In Corinth he met Priscilla and Aquila and instructed them, leaving them there in his place when he went to Ephesus. In Ephesus he stayed a short time, returning to Antioch, passing through Jerusalem.

Soon after, he began his third journey (53-57 AD), heading for to Ephesus and had the desire of evangelizing the whole Asia. In Ephesus, he faced conflicts with the followers of Diana. He stayed in Asia for three years (54-57 AD – Acts 20: 31), returning to Troas, in Macedonia. In Macedonia, Paul wrote his second epistle to the Corinthians. From Troas he went to Corinth, where he wrote a letter to the Romans and then to Miletus and Jerusalem.

He had returned to Jerusalem in order to celebrate Pentecost there, but faced a charge of having violated the temple (Acts 21: 20-29, not fulfilling the rituals of

purification and, perhaps, by walking with the Gentiles as Trophimus, who, probably, was seen with Paul in there). The Jews stirred the crowd to disorder. Paul was arrested (around 57 or 58 AD), but allowed to speak to the crowd and the Sanhedrin. Not being understood or supported there; on the contrary, threatened with death, he was removed to Caesarea, where he met Mark Antony Felix, the Roman governor (Felix ruled from 52 to 60 AD), and was imprisoned for two years (58-60 AD – Acts 23: 26-35; Acts 24-25). The successor of Felix was Porcius Festus (60-62 AD; He ruled the Roman Province of Judea as Procurator), and said that he could deliver Paul to the Jews to be judged by them (Acts 25: 9). As he already knew his people, as a Roman citizen Paul appealed to Caesar (Acts 25: 11). Before being taken to Rome, still in Israel (in the city of Caesarea), with Festus and his wife Drusilla, Paul was in the presence of the governor and his guests: King Agrippa and his sister Bernice. “You so quickly almost persuaded me to become a Christian” said Agrippa, after hearing Paul’s speech. If he had not appealed to Caesar, he could be released because they did not see anything that could incriminate him. However, it was being fulfilled the word that the Lord had given him in a vision that it was necessary for him to appear before Caesar. So Paul was sent to Rome under escort.

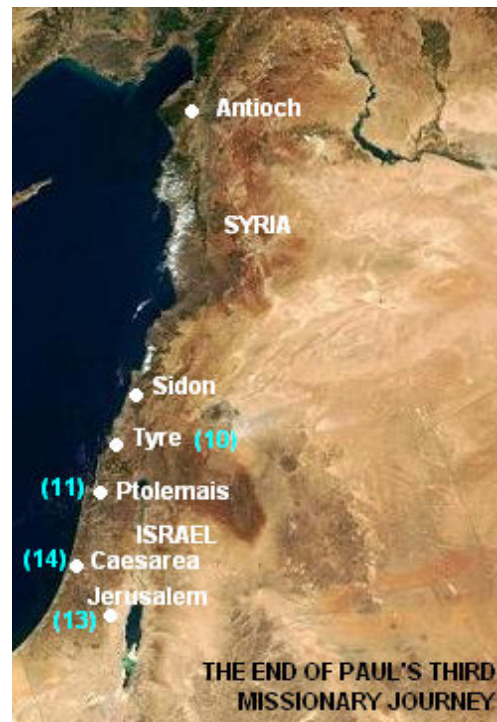
The voyage was stormy, culminating in a shipwreck, forcing him to spend the winter on the island of Malta (Acts 28: 11). This occurred around 60-61 AD. He arrived in Rome in the spring and spent the next two years (61-63 AD) under guard in his own rented house (for he came as a hero prisoner), where he taught about Jesus without any hindrance (Acts 28: 16; 30-31). Paul was killed by the Romans in the government of Nero (63 AD), beheaded.

In 2 Cor. 11: 22-27, the apostle speaks of his sufferings: five times he received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one, three times beaten with rods, once stoned, three times he was shipwrecked, a night and a day he was adrift at sea, on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, in dangers from bandits, in dangers in the hands of the Jews, in danger among Gentiles, in danger in the city and in the wilderness, in danger at sea and from false brothers and sisters, in toil and hardship, without sleep, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked; in addition, the concern about the churches that he had founded and that did not behave as he expected.

We can see that some points are relevant in the teaching of Paul:

- 1) He defended his belief in Christ and in the life by grace instead of works and rituals of the Law (Gal. 2: 16; Gal. 6: 12-15; Eph. 2: 8-9; Acts 13: 38-39), which gave the right to a new life (Rom. 6: 3-4; 14), making the believer a new creature in Christ. He preached about Jesus and the resurrection, basically (Acts 9: 20; Acts 13: 30; Acts 17: 31; Acts 23: 6; Acts 26: 8).
- 2) He was against idolatry, showing that the truth was in Christ: Col. 2: 8; 14-15; Acts 17: 16; Acts 17: 18; 24-31.
- 3) He reinforced the law of love preached by Jesus: Rom. 13: 8-10, even exhorting believers to broaden their way to love, because love was limited in them (2 Cor. 6: 11-13).
- 4) He set the example of having the ability to surrender and the boldness to go over anything to carry the gospel: 1 Cor. 9: 19-23.







Co-workers of Paul:

- Ágabus: Acts 21: 10; Acts 11: 28
- Achaicus: 1 Cor. 16: 17
- Apphia: Phlm. 2
- Alexander: Acts 19: 33; 1 Tim. 1: 20 (fell in faith)
- Alexander (the coppersmith): 2 Tim. 4: 14
- Ampliatus: Rom. 16: 8
- Andronicus e Junias: Rom. 16: 7
- Apelles: Rom. 16: 10
- Apollos: Acts 18: 24-28; 1 Cor. 3: 4-5; 1 Cor. 16: 12; Tit. 3: 13
- Aquila e Priscilla: Acts 18: 2; Acts 18: 18; Rom. 16: 3; 1 Cor. 16: 19; 2 Tim. 4: 19
- Aristarchus: Acts 19: 29; Acts 20: 4; Col. 4: 10; Phlm. 24
- Aristobulus: Rom. 16: 10
- Archippus: Col. 4: 17; Phlm. 2
- Artemas: Tit. 3: 12
- Asyncritus: Rom. 16: 14
- Barnabas: Acts 9: 27; Acts 11: 25; 1 Cor. 9: 6; Gal. 2: 1
- Caesar: Phil. 4: 22
- Carpus: 2 Tim. 4: 13
- Chloe: 1 Cor. 1: 11
- Claudia: 2 Tim. 4: 21
- Clement: Phil. 4: 3
- Crescens: 2 Tim. 4: 10 (abandoned Paul)
- Crispus: Acts 18: 8; 1 Cor. 1: 14
- Damaris: Acts 17: 34
- Demas: Col. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 4: 10 (abandoned the faith and Paul); Phlm. 24

- Dionysius: Acts 17: 34
- Epaphras: Col. 1: 7; Col. 4: 12; Phlm. 23
- Epaphroditus: Phil. 2: 25; Phil. 4: 18
- Epenetus: Rom. 16: 5
- Erastus: Acts 19: 22; Rom. 16: 23; 2 Tim. 4: 20
- Eubulus: 2 Tim. 4: 21
- Eunice: 2 Tim. 1: 5
- Euodia and Syntyche: Phil. 4: 2-3
- Eutychus: Acts 20: 7-12
- Fortunatus: 1 Cor. 16: 17
- Gaius: Acts 19: 29; Acts 20: 4; Rom. 16: 23; 1 Cor. 1: 14; 3 Jn. 1
- Hermas: Rom. 16: 14
- Hermes: Rom. 16: 14
- Hermogenes: 2 Tim. 1: 15 (abandoned Paul)
- Herodion: Rom. 16: 11
- Hymenaeus: 1 Tim. 1: 20 (fell in faith); 2 Tim. 2: 17
- Jason: Rom. 16: 21
- Jesus (Justus): Col. 4: 11
- John Mark: Acts 12: 25; Acts 13: 13; Acts 15: 37-40; Col. 4: 10; 2 Tim. 4: 11; Phlm. 24; 1 Pet. 5: 13
- Julia: Rom. 16: 15
- Lydia: Acts 16: 11-15; 40
- Linus: 2 Tim. 4: 21
- Lois: 2 Tim. 1: 5
- Lucius: Rom. 16: 21
- Luke: Col. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 4: 11; Phlm. 24
- Mary: Rom. 16: 6
- Mnason: Acts 21: 16
- Narcissus: Rom. 16: 11
- Nereus and his sister: Rom. 16: 15
- Nympha: Col. 4: 15
- Olympas: Rom. 16: 15
- Onesimus: Col. 4: 9; Phlm. 10
- Onesiphorus: 2 Tim. 1: 16; 2 Tim. 4: 19
- Patrobas: Rom. 16: 14
- Persis: Rom. 16: 12
- Phoebe: Rom. 16: 1
- Phygelus: 2 Tim. 1: 15 (abandoned Paul)
- Philemon: Phlm. 1
- Philetus: 2 Tim. 2: 17 (fell in faith)
- Philip: Acts 21: 8-9
- Philologus: Rom. 16: 15
- Phlegon: Rom. 16: 14
- Pudens: 2 Tim. 4: 21
- Quartus: Rom. 16: 23
- Rufus and his mother: Rom. 16: 13 (Son and wife, respectively, of Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus' cross on His way to Calvary: Mk. 15: 21)
- Secundus: Acts 20: 4
- Silas: Acts 15: 40; Acts 16: 19-40; Acts 17: 4; 10-15; Acts 18: 5

- Silvanus: 1 The. 1: 1; 2 The. 1: 1; 1 Pet. 5: 12 (Silvanus may be the Greek variant of Silas)
- Sopater (son of Pyrrhus): Acts 20: 4
- Sosipater: Rom. 16: 21
- Sosthenes (who probably wrote the Epistle of 1 Cor. for Paul): 1 Cor. 1: 1
- Stachys: Rom. 16: 9
- Stephanas: 1 Cor. 16: 15-17
- Tertius (wrote the Epistle of Paul to the Romans): Rom. 16: 22
- Timothy: Acts 16: 1-5; Acts 18: 5; Acts 20: 4; Rom. 16: 21; 1 Cor. 4: 17; 1 Cor. 16: 10; 2 Cor. 1: 1; Phil. 1: 1; Phil. 2: 19; Col. 1: 1; 1 The. 1: 1; 1 The. 3: 2; 6; 2 The. 1: 1; 1 Tim. 1: 2; 2 Tim. 1: 2; Phlm. 1; Heb. 13: 23
- Titius Justus: Acts 18: 7
- Titus: 2 Cor. 2: 13; 2 Cor. 6: 6; 13-14; 2 Cor. 8: 16-24; Gal. 2: 3; 2 Tim. 4: 10; Tit. 1: 4
- Trophimus: Acts 20: 4; Acts 21: 29; 2 Tim. 4: 20
- Tryphena e Tryphosa: Rom. 16: 12
- Tychicus: Acts 20: 4; Eph. 6: 21; Col. 4: 7; 2 Tim. 4: 12; Tit. 3: 12
- Urbanus: Rom. 16: 9
- Zenas: (interpreter of the Law or lawyer) Tit. 3: 13

Important lessons from Paul:

- 1) *Surrender and courage to withstand any obstacle for the work of God:* he himself described in his epistles all dangers he went through (2 Cor. 11: 22-27) and what he was willing to do (1 Cor. 9: 19-23) to carry out the mission that the Lord had given him. He had *courage and boldness* to enter where others had not entered yet to take the truth of the Word, overthrowing all the false knowledge that opposed Christ (we can see Paul among the Gentiles facing this type of situation); for example at Ephesus, in the case of the devotees of Diana, and in many other parts of Asia where idolatry prevailed. More than that, he had the courage to withstand the rejection of his own countrymen who criticized him for the innovation that he was bringing. Paul had courage because he was sure of his calling and the strength of God's love for him. So it is with us, when the Lord gives us a call to His Work; we must be ready to face any kind of difficulty and opposition.
- 2) *Loyalty and perseverance to achieve victory:* in 2 Tim. 4: 6-8, Paul speaks that he fought the good fight of faith and that he was sure of the crown that was reserved for him by his struggle and his victory. He also speaks on 2 Tim. 4: 17 that his strength came from God Himself to fulfill his ministry and that was He who freed him several times until the mission is complete. Faithfulness to God is important lest to give in to temptations and seductions of the enemy, and perseverance will lead us to victory.
- 3) *Powerful revelation of God:* once Paul speaks about himself, when he describes his stoning and the powerful revelation that he received from God (2 Cor. 12: 1-6), but that could not yet be passed on to men, for they still were not prepared to receive it. Often, he reported the visions and lessons that he had from Jesus Himself directing him where to go and giving him strategies to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Everyone who has a call from the Lord for a mission must have some important revelation that can be a landmark from which a new structure will be erected. This

revelation is unique and particular; it does not come for others, only for whom God set aside to have it.

- 4) *He built where there had not yet been built (Rom. 15: 20-21)*: Paul did not build his ministry over what Peter and the other Apostles did, that is, among Jews, but among the Gentiles so that something new might arise where there was need of light. Thus, he searched for something new, following the direction of the Holy Spirit in him, “*not taking counsel with flesh and blood*”; he did not copy what had been already created, but let God use him in a new revival, creating innovative things and that, thanks to his courage and faithfulness to Jesus, brought later a great benefit to mankind. He “*saw the future*” and differently from others, so he was successful in everything he did. God is constantly *creating* and using His children differently from each other in order to cover all the needs existing in the hearts of those who do not yet know Him.
- 5) *He neither feared responsibility nor was he afraid to use the spiritual gifts that God had placed on him, nor did he refuse to use the authority given him from heaven*: Paul was a living witness of the word given by Jesus in Jn. 14: 12 to His disciples when He said that whoever believed in Him would do the same works and greater than He had done. Paul’s ministry was geographically larger than that of Jesus and can be compared to His in miracles performed, what surely impacted that generation. He bore witness to the Lord, performed healings and miracles (he even showed them in himself: for instance, nothing happened to him when he was bitten by a snake on the island of Malta), he raised the dead (Eutychus), he cast out demons, converted many to Jesus and overthrew a centuries-old tradition to show the simplicity of the gospel of Christ, dethroning the dead deeds generated by religiosity. That’s what Jesus expects of His Church.
- 6) *He was transformed from a “religious zealous” in a “real zealous” of the Work*: the love and mercy of God joined to His sovereign choice changed Paul into a zealous man of the things of the Lord, but completely free from the yoke that, previously, weighed on him; his character was changed and the weight of traditionalism, rules, laws, accusations and of personal perfectionism, generated by his past sins was transformed by Jesus into a dynamic, living and loving force and determined to change structures and to enliven the heart of God’s children of that generation, aiming to launch a powerful seed for all believers of the coming generation. May our hearts be deeply transformed and our seeds may be left for our offspring.

MONEY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- The **shekel**, the **mina** and the **talent** were pieces or bars of metal (silver, gold) used as a way of payment (2 Kin. 18: 14).
- As coin appears the **daric** (1 Chr. 29: 7; Ezra 2: 69; Ezra 8: 27; Neh. 7: 70), a coin of gold that weighted 8.4 gr., ‘gold’ in our version, although Hebrew translates as ‘drachma’.
- The **piece of silver** or ‘**money**’ – NRSV (Gen. 33: 19, **kesitah**) is a unit of Money of unknown weight or value.

MONEY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (1 = Basic Unit)

Biblical unit	Origin – type	Biblical correspondent	Proportion
Lepton or mite (Mk. 12: 42 or ‘2 small coins’)	Greek (lepta) or Jewish (mite) coin of copper or bronze	$\frac{1}{2}$ kodrant or $\frac{1}{128}$ denarius	1/128
Kodrant (Mk. 12: 42 or two leptas or mites)	Greek coin of bronze Roman (quadrans)	$\frac{1}{4}$ assarion or $\frac{1}{64}$ denarius	1/64
Farthing or Assarion *** (Matt. 10: 29; Lk. 12:6)	Greek coin of copper Roman (assarion)	$\frac{1}{16}$ denarius	1/16
Denarius Matt. 20: 2	Roman coin of silver	wage for a day’s work **	1
Drachma (Pound) Lk. 15: 8	Greek coin of silver	Equal to 1 denarius	1
Didrachma or Two drachmas (Matt. 17: 24)	Greek coin of silver	2 drachmas or 2 denarius	2
Four drachma	Greek coin of silver	4 drachmas or 4 denarius	4
Stater (Matt. 17: 27)	Greek coin of silver	4 drachmas or 4 denarius	4
Mina * or Maneh (Lk. 19: 13)	Greek coin of gold	100 denarius	100
Talent (Matt. 25: 15)	Silver and gold	6000 denarius	6.000

* Three month's wages or ½ kilogram of silver

** In Jn. 12: 5 this valuable ointment was worth 300 pence or denarii, which would be the average wage for 300 days of labor (almost what an average worker would earn in one year).

*** It is known that during the 1st century, one *as* (Matt. 10: 29; Lk. 12: 6: 'Penny', 'Pennies') bought the equivalent of half a kilogram of bread or one liter of cheap wine or, then, two sparrows (Matt. 10: 29). *As* was a Roman coin, first of bronze and then, of copper.

• Farthing (KJV) was a Portuguese currency created during the reign of D. Afonso V (1438-1477 and 1477-1481), king of Portugal and Algarves. Its designation comes from the name sextile, that is, a sixth.

• Lepton (Mk. 12: 42) – today (lepto) is 1/100 of all Greek coins

• In Matt. 26: 15 – 'thirty pieces of silver' – the word is not drachma, but 'argurion' (ἀργύριον – Strong # g694), which means 'silver, a piece of silver, a shekel; money in general', especially silvery (i.e., drachma or shekel).

WEIGHTS (1 = Basic Unit)

Units of weight	Biblical Correspondent	Proportion	Current Equivalent	American Equivalent
Gerahs Ex. 30: 13	1/10 beka or 1/20 shekel	1/20	0.571 g	1/50 ounce
Beka Ex. 38: 26	10 gerahs or ½ shekel	½	5.712 g	1/5 ounce
Shekel Gen. 24: 22	20 gerahs or 2 bekas	1	11.424 g	2/5 ounce
Mina*	50 shekels	50	571.2 g	1 ¼ pounds
Talent** 2 Sam. 12: 30	3000 shekels or 60 minas	3000	34.272 kg	75 pounds

* The **mina** in Ezek. 45: 12 is equivalent to 60 **shekels** or 685.44 g

** The **talent** in Rev. 16: 21 is equivalent to 40 kg.

• Shekel (often known as 'the holy shekel' or 'shekel of the sanctuary') is equivalent to 11.5 g

MEASURES OF CAPACITY – DRY MEASURE (1 = Basic Unit)

Biblical unit	Biblical Correspondent	Proportion	Current Equivalent	American Equivalent
Cab (2 Kin. 6: 25)	1/18 ephah *	1/18	1 liter*	1 quart*
Omer (Ex. 16: 36)	1/10 ephah	1/10	1.76 liter	2 quarts
Seah or Choinix ** (2 Kin. 7: 1; Gen. 18: 6)	1/3 do ephah	1/3	5. 87 liters	7 quarts
Ephah (Lev. 19: 36)	10 Omers or 1/10 homer	1	17.62 liters	3/5 bushels
Lethek (Hos. 3: 2)	5 ephas or ½ homer	5	88.1 liters	3 bushels
Cor (Ezra 7: 22) or homer (Ezek. 45: 11)	10 ephas	10	176.2 liters	6 bushels

* Some tables show 1/18 ephah or ½ pint and 0.3 liter

** In Rev. 6: 6 choinix is equivalent to 1 liter

MEASURES OF CAPACITY – LIQUID MEASURE (1 = Basic Unit)

Biblical unit	Biblical Correspondent	Proportion	Current Equivalent	American Equivalent
Log (Lev.14: 10)	1/12 hin	1/72	0.29 liter	1/3 quart
Hin (Lev. 19: 36)	1/6 bath	1/6	3.47 liters	4 quarts
Bath * (Isa. 5: 10); batous (Lk. 16: 6)	1/10 ephah	1	20.82 liters*	6 gallons
Cor (1 Kin. 5: 11; 2 Chr. 2: 10)	10 baths	10	208.2 liters	60 gallons

* Some consider the bath equal to the firkin (Greek, **metretes**, Jn. 2: 6), but probably, the metretes had 30–40 liters or 20–30 gallons.

MEASURES OF LENGTH (1 = Basic Unit)

Biblical unit	Biblical correspondent	Proportion	Current Metric Equivalent	American Equivalent
Finger (Jer. 52: 21)	1/12 span or ¼ Handbreadth	1/24	1.8 cm	3/4 inches
Handbreadth* (Ex. 37: 12; Ex. 25: 25; 1 Kin. 7: 26; 2 Chr. 4: 5)	4 fingers + 1/3 span or 1/3 span or 1/6 cubit	1/6	7.4 cm	3 inches
Span** (Ex. 28: 16; Ex. 28: 16; 1 Sam. 17: 4; Ezek. 43: 13; Isa. 40: 12)	½ cubit	1/2	22. 2 cm	9 inches
Cubit*** Gen. 6: 15; 1 Sam. 17: 4)	2 Handbreadth	1	44. 4 cm	12 inches
Fathom (Acts 27:28)	4 cubits	4	1. 80 m	2 yards

* This was the width of the four fingers closely pressed together, between three and four inches.

** This was the width from the end of the thumb to that of the little finger, when these are extended, which for an adult is about nine inches.

*** **Cubit** (Hebrew, ammah) is the length of the arm from the point of the elbow to the end of the middle finger. There is also the Mosaic cubit or Primitive cubit or Ezekiel cubit (Ezek. 43: 13 used for sacred purposes and whose measure is different: 51.8 cm or 18 inches or a cubit plus a handbreadth. Consequently, the ‘Measuring reed (kanah)’, for measuring buildings was to 6 cubits (3.11 meters). It occurs only in Ezekiel (Ezek. 40: 5-8; 41: 8; 42: 16-29). It’s also called in the bible, ‘six long cubits’.

MEASURES OF AREA

Acre (1 Sam. 14: 14): in Hebrew ‘half a yoke’ that means the land plowed by a yoke of oxen in one day, about a city square with 50 meters each side, which is equivalent to 2.750 m²

MEASURES OF DISTANCE

Biblical unit	Biblical correspondent	Current Equivalent	American Equivalent
Stone's throw (Lk. 22: 41)		20–30 m	32.81 yards
Bowshot (Gen. 21: 16)		100–150 m	164.04 yards
Sabbath Day's Journey* (Acts 1:12; Ex. 16:29)	2000 cubits	888 m	971.13 yards
A Day's Journey** (Gen. 31: 23)		30–40 km	24.85 miles
Furlong (Roman Stadion) (Lk. 24, 13; Jn. 6: 19)		185 m	600 feet
Roman mile (Matt. 5: 41)	8 stadion	1,479 m	1618 yards

* This was based on Ex. 16: 29b (“Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day”) which did not allow excessive travel on the Sabbath day of rest. An exception was allowed for the purpose of worshipping at the tabernacle; also 2,000 cubits was the prescribed space to be kept between the ark and the people as well as the extent of the suburbs of the Levitical cities in the 4 cardinal points (Num. 35: 5); this was taken for the length of a Sabbath-day's journey measured front the wall of the city in which the traveler lived. Jewish legislators determined that the Sabbath day's journey would be 2,000 cubits or 5 furlongs (or stadion – more than ½ miles).

** This was the distance a person could normally travel in one day, ordinarily 20 to 30 miles, but when traveling in a large company (with women and children), only ten miles. See also: Gen. 30: 36; Ex. 3: 18; Ex. 5: 3; Num. 10: 33; Num. 11: 31; Num. 33: 8; 1 Kin. 19: 4; 2 Kin. 3: 9; Jon. 3: 3; Lk. 2: 44.

• American mile = 5,280 feet or 1,760 yards or 1,609 meters.

MEASURES OF TIME

Hour: the length of hour varied with the season of the year. The hours of the day were counted from sunrise (6:00 a.m.) and of the night, from sunset sun (6:00 p.m. – Matt. 20: 3).

Vigil: the Israelites divided the night into three watches, each of four hours (Judg. 7: 19); the Romans divided it into four watches, each of 3 hours (Matt. 14: 25).

Night: 12 hours, from sunset until the sunrise (Gen. 7: 4).

Day: 12 hours, from sunrise to sunset (Gen. 7: 4); 24 hours of a sunset to another (Ex. 20: 8-11).

Week: 7 days, ending with the Sabbath (Ex. 20: 10).

Month: 29–30 days, starting with the new moon (Num. 28: 11; Numb. 28: 14; 1 Sam. 20: 5; 18; 24; 2 Chr. 8: 13; Isa. 66: 23).

Year: 12 lunar months (354 days, 1 Chr. 27: 1-5). Every three years it was added one month (by the repetition of the last month) to take the difference between the 12 lunar months and solar year.

OTHER INFORMATION

- **Lunar Calendar:** organized on specific base in the lunar revolution around the Earth. It was started by nomadic peoples, probably the Babylonians.

- **Solar Calendar:** organized specifically on Earth's revolution around the sun. It was the Egyptians who initiated the time counting based on the solar calendar.

- **Roman Calendar:** alternated years of 12 months with 365 days and years of 13 months with 377 days. Thus, it differed in relation to the seasons. So Julius Caesar in 45 or 46 BC, made a few changes, as we see below:

- **Julian Calendar:**

Reform of the Roman calendar introduced by Julius Caesar (102-44 BC) in the year 45 or 46 BC in which every four years there is a leap year of 366 days. Also, the Julian year was of 12 months (365 days) starting on January 1st. The months were of 30 days, interspersed with months of 31 days, being that in July/August the 31 days repeated in honor of Roman emperors (Julius and Augustus). The Julian calendar prevailed for about 1,600 years.

- **Gregorian Calendar:**

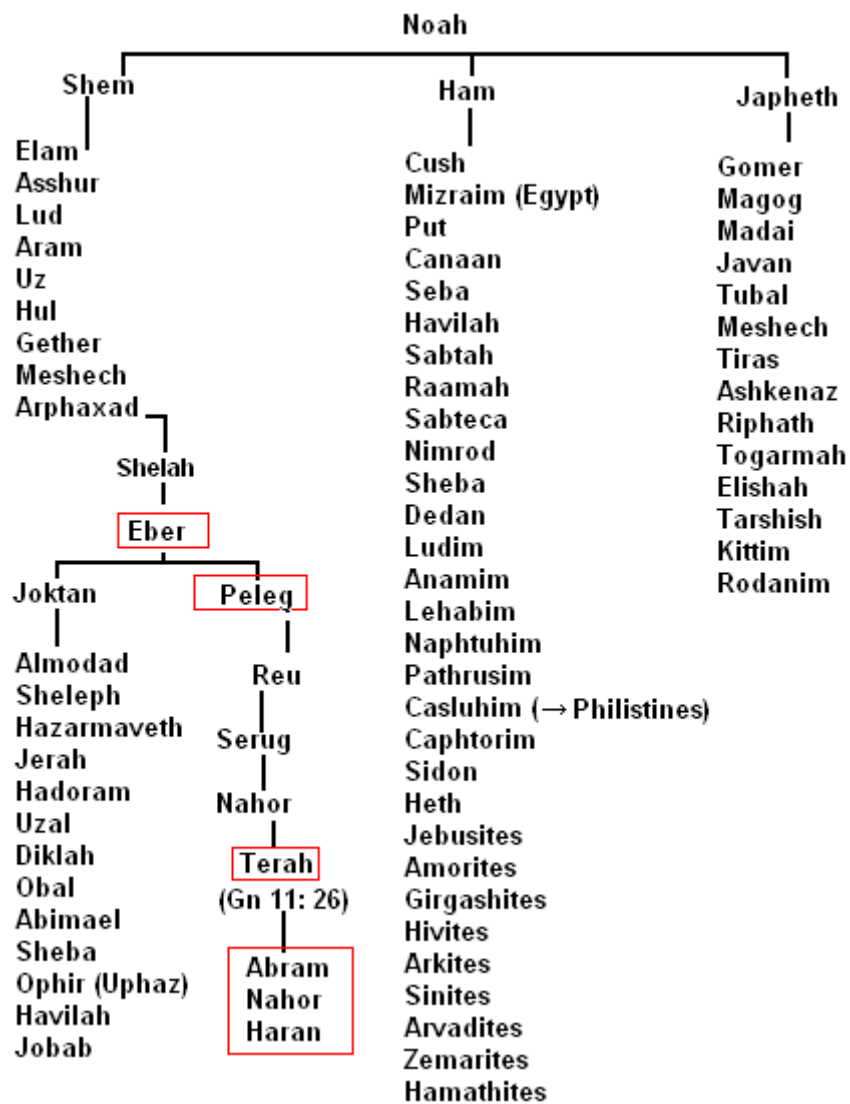
Resulting from the reform of the Julian calendar introduced by Pope Gregory XIII (1502-1585) on Febr.24th, 1582 and in which every four years there is a leap year (solar), with the exception of the secular years in which the number formed by algorisms of hundreds and thousands is not divisible by four. Ten days were omitted (5th to 14th October, 1582), it was corrected the measurement of the solar year estimating that this lasted 365 solar days, 5 hours, 14 minutes and 12 seconds. It was accustomed to start the year on January 1st.

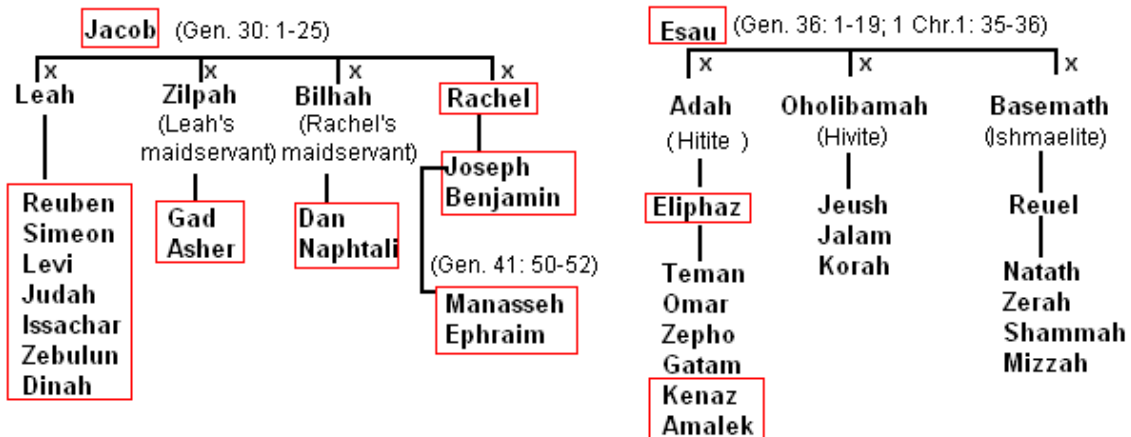
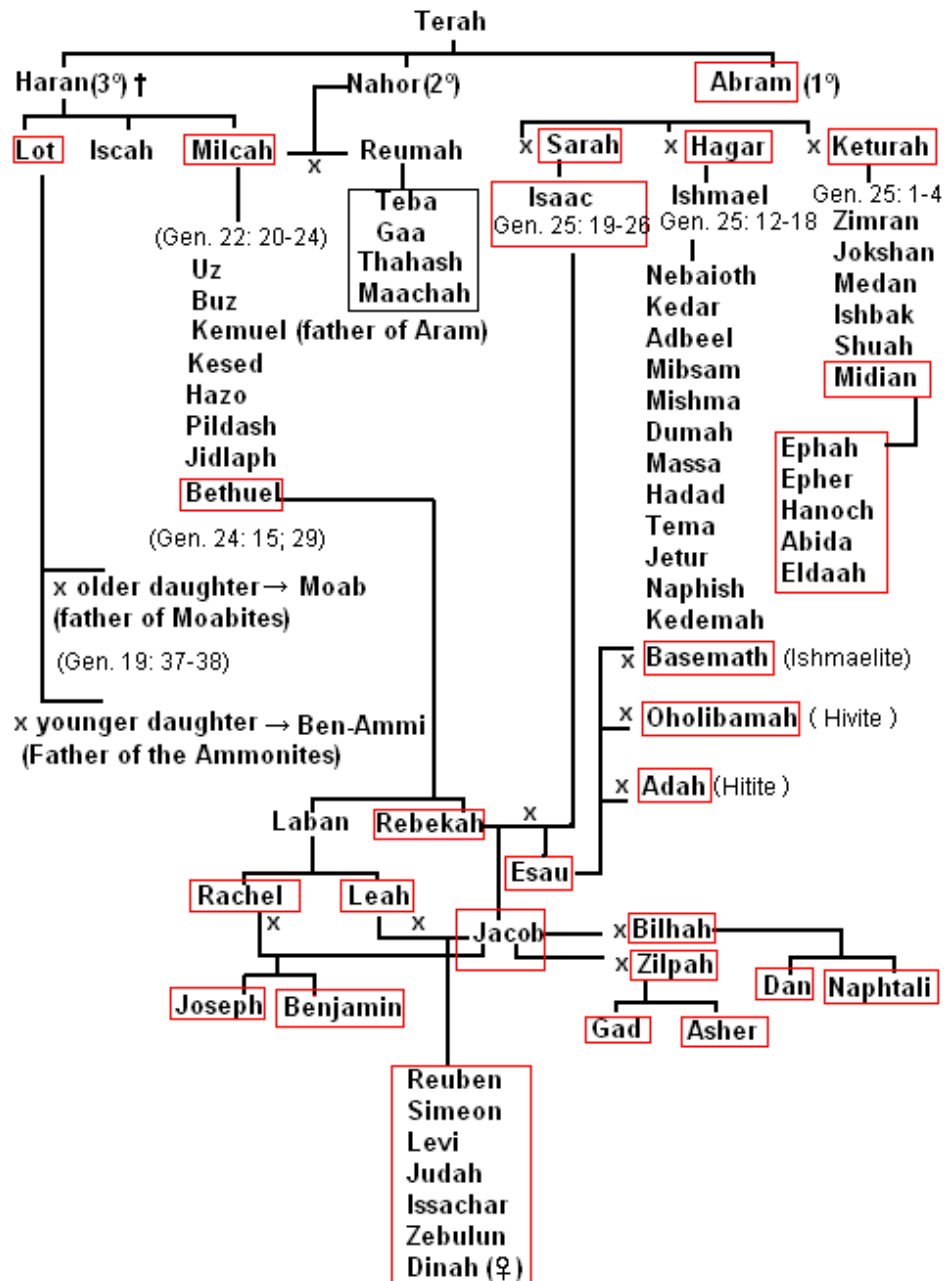
- In the **New Testament** dates were eventually computed by reference to Gentiles rulers according to the markings retained in the former Seleucid kingdom (Greek dominion – 198-63 BC), where each New Year should start in September / October. Mostly, the writers of the NT measured time in terms of current Jewish calendar (so until 70 AD).

- **Anno Domini** (the Year of the Lord, in Latin): first introduced in Western Europe in the eighth century. From there, there was a separation between the events before and after Christ (BC and AD, the latter also called CE – Common Era).

GENEALOGIES

Adam → Seth → Enosh → Kenan → Mahalalel → Jared → Enoch → Methuselah → Lamech → **Noah** (70 descendants to repopulate the earth after the flood – Gen. 10: 1-32; 1 Chr. 1: 1-27; sons, grandsons, great grandsons):





The sons of **Kenaz** (1 Chr. 1: 36) joined the Jews by the tribe of Judah. His descendant was **Jephunneh** the Kenizzite, who begot **Caleb** (Num. 32: 12; Josh. 14: 6; 14; 1 Chr. 4: 13-15). Amalek was the father of the Amalekites.

Descendants of Jacob (Gen. 46: 26-27) who came to Egypt:

- From Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi.
- From Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar and Shaul (son of a Canaanite woman).
- From Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari.
- From Judah: Er († in Canaan), Onan († in Canaan), Shelah, Perez and Zerah;
From Perez: Hezron and Hamul.
- From Issachar: Tola, Puah (or Puvah, Masoretic text), Jashub (or Iob, Masoretic text) and Shimron.
- From Zebulun: Sered, Elon and Jahleel.
- Dinah (they were all sons of **Leah**, who had died in Canaan – Gen. 49: 31); total of **33 people** (including Jacob).
- From Gad: Zephon (Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch or Ziphion in Masoretic text), Haggi, Shuni, Ezbom, Eri, Arodi and Areli
- From Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah and Serah (their sister). Beriah begat Heber and Malkiel (they were all sons of **Zilpah**, Leah's maidservant); **total of 16 people**.
- From Joseph: Manasseh and Ephraim.
- From Benjamin: Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim and Ard. They were all sons of **Rachel**, who had already died in Canaan – Gen. 35: 19), **a total of 14 people**.
- From Dan: Hushim
- From Naphtali: Jahziel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem (they were all sons of **Bilhah**, Rachel's maidservant); **a total of 7 people**.

The wives of Jacob's sons were not counted

Total: 33 + 16 + 14 + 7 = **70 people**.

Descendants of Levi [1 Chr. 6: 16-30; 31-48; 1 Chr. 15: 17-19; 1 Chr. 23: 1-32 (musicians of David *)]:

1) **Gershon:** Libni → generated offspring

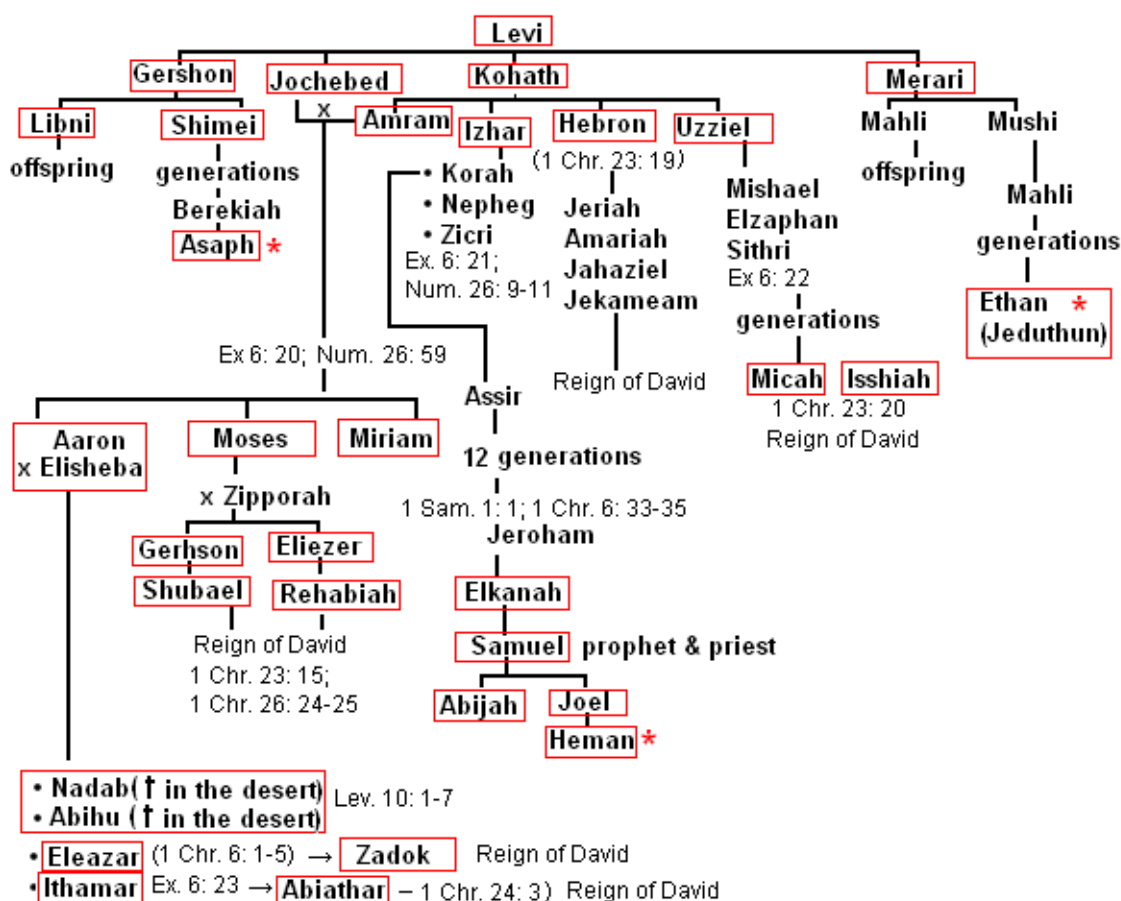
Shimei → generations → Berekiah → Asaph*

2) **Kohath:** Amram, Izhar, Uzziel, Hebron. Heman* is a descendant of Izhar.

3) **Merari:** Mahli → generated offspring

Mushi → Mahli → generations → Ethan* (Jeduthun): 1 Chr. 15: 19; 1 Chr. 25: 1; 3.

Kohath's family took care of the tabernacle's furnishings, after Aaron and his sons cover them; then they carried them, including the Ark of the Covenant. Aaron and his sons took care of the priesthood itself, serving in the Holy of Holies and in the Holy Place, therefore, they took care of sacred objects, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (The leadership was Eleazar's, 1st son of Aaron: Num. 3: 31; Num. 4: 3; 16-20). **Gershon's** family took care to carry the curtains and the outer covering, as well as other utensils of the tabernacle, not the sacred objects; and the family of **Merari** was responsible for the objects, the stakes and everything else that was on the outside court the tabernacle. These last two families were under the command of Ithamar, 2nd son of Aaron: Num. 3: 25-26; 36-37; Num. 4: 21-28; 29-33.



A descendant of **Eleazar** gave his name to eighth among the twenty-four divisions of priests (1 Chr. 24: 10), of which **Zachariah** (Lk. 1: 5), **John the Baptist's** father, was part.

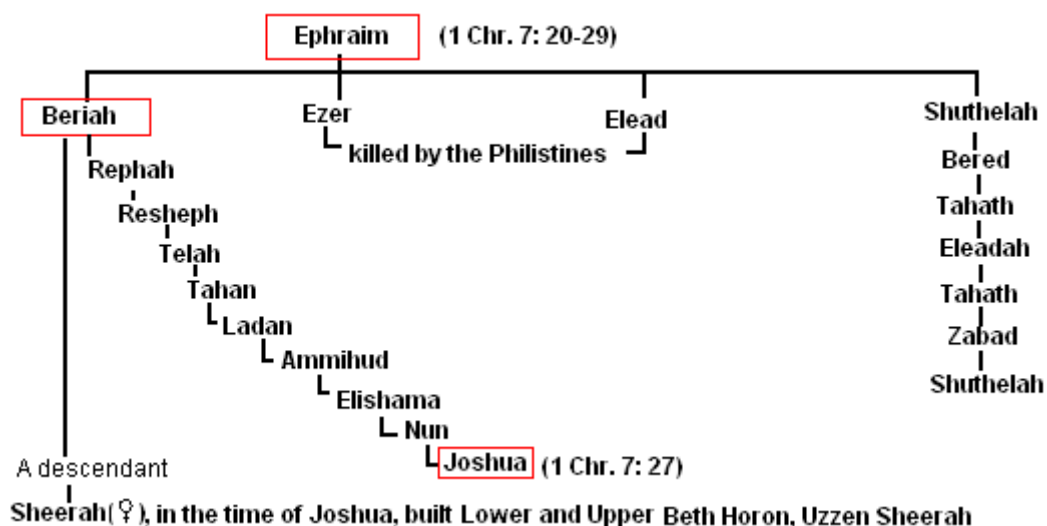
High priests (1 Chr. 6: 1-15; 49-53): Aaron → Eleazar → Phinehas → Abishua → Bukki → Uzzi → Zerahiah → Meraioth → Amariah → Ahitub → Zadok (in the time of David) → Ahimaaz → Azariah → Johanan → Azariah (in the time of Solomon) → Amariah → Ahitub → Zadok → Shallum → Hilkiyah → Azariah (2 Chr. 31: 10 – in the time of Hezekiah) → Seraiah (taken captive to Babylon along with Zephaniah the second priest – Jer. 52: 24) → Jehozadak (taken captive to Babylon) → **Post-exile:** Jeshua or Joshua (520 BC, during the period of the prophets Zechariah (520-480 BC) and Haggai (520 BC): Ezra 2: 2; Ezra 3: 2; Ezra 10: 18; Neh. 12: 1; 10-11; Hag. 1: 12; Hag. 2: 2; Zech. 3: 1) → Joiakim (Neh. 12: 10 – 480 BC) → Eliashib (Neh. 3: 1; Neh. 12: 10; 22; Neh. 13: 4; 7; Neh. 13: 28 – 458-443 BC) → Joiada (Neh. 12: 10; 22; Neh. 13: 28 – 420 or 415 BC). Probably Eliashib and Joiada were contemporaries of the prophet Malachi (450-400 BC), the period some scholars say that coincide with the return of Nehemiah to Persia, after twelve years as governor in Jerusalem (Neh. 5: 14; Neh. 13: 6), coming back again to the Holy City (Neh. 13: 6). That's why Malachi reproached the priests, for they were neglecting their priestly duties → Jonathan (or Johanan, Neh. 12: 10; 22 – 408-336 BC) → Jaddua (Neh. 12: 10; 22 – 340 or 336 BC, shortly before Alexander the Great (333-323 BC) rise to power and defeat the Persian Empire, whose last ruler was Darius III; Jaddua met Alexander in 332 BC) → **Intertestamental period** → (Beginning in 397 BC, in the spiritual standpoint, i.e., prophetic, after the period of Malachi) → **Historical listing, not biblical** (source:

Wikipedia.org) → **Dominion of the Ptolemies on Palestine** (323-198 BC): Onias I → Simon I → Simeon the Just → Eleazar → Manasseh → Onias II (Around 234 BC) → **Dominion of the Seleucids on Palestine** (198-167 BC; priest chosen by the Seleucids): Simon II → Onias III (185-175 BC) → Jason (175-172 BC) → Menelaus (172-162 BC) → Alcimus (162-153 BC) → **Revolt of the Maccabees**, under the command of Mattathias Hasmon in the village called Modiín. Mattathias was a priest but there's no proof about having his lineage linked to Aaron's. He was father of five children: Simon, Judas (Maccabee), Eleazar, John and Jonathan. Mattathias died in the riot, and his son Judas Maccabee (160-153 BC) was appointed general. Finally, the Maccabees drove out the troops of Antiochus IV (Seleucid King) of Jerusalem. The revolt lasted from 167 to 160 BC. Judas Maccabee died and was succeeded by his brother Jonathan, who became high priest of Jerusalem by the choice of the Seleucid King Antiochus VI Dionysus (144-142 BC) → **Hasmonean Dynasty on Palestine** (167-63 AC): Jonathan Maccabee (153-143 BC) → Simon Maccabee (143-135 BC) → John Hyrcanus I (the youngest son of Simon Maccabee – 135-104 BC) → Aristobulus I (His birth name was Judas, the eldest son of John Hyrcanus I – 104-103 BC) → Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BC. Alexander, son of John Hyrcanus I inherited the throne of his brother Aristobulus I because he married his widow, Salome Alexandra, according to the levirate law) → Queen Salome Alexandra and John Hyrcanus II (76-67 BC), her eldest son by Alexander Jannaeus → Aristobulus II (67-63 BC – another son of Salome and Alexander Jannaeus) → John Hyrcanus II (restored – 63-40 BC. The grand daughter of John Hyrcanus II, Mariamne I, was the second wife of Herod the Great) → Antigonus (40-37 BC), the son of Aristobulus II. Antigonus was the last king of the Hasmonean Dynasty → about 65–64 BC, the Seleucid Empire was annexed to the Roman Republic. The same way, the Hasmonean Period was ended, and the **Roman Period** began, when Pompey invaded Jerusalem (63 BC) and Herod the Great rose to power as king → **Herodian Dynasty**: Herod was son of Antipatrus, an Idumaean (or Edomite), placed by General Pompey as procurator of Palestine in 67 BC. Antipatrus, prospered in the court of the last Hasmonean kings and came to rule Judea after Roman occupation → Herod the Great appointed Ananelus as high priest (37-36 BC), succeeded by Aristobulus III of Judea (36 BC). Aristobulus III was Herod's brother-in-law and brother of Mariamne I; he was assassinated by Herod, who had already murdered John Hyrcanus II of Judea (36 BC) → Ananelus (restored – 36-30 BC), Joshua ben Fabus (30-23 BC) → Simon ben Boethus (Father of Mariamne II, who married Herod the Great) → Joazar ben Boethus (4 BC) → Eleazar ben Boethus (4-3 BC) → **Annas** (6-15 AD – Ananus ben Seth or Annas ben Seth, the father, who is mentioned in the Gospel) → **Caiphas** (18-36 AD, Annas' son-in-law: Lk 3: 2; Jn 18: 13. He was appointed high priest by the Romans). The five sons of Annas also served as high priests:

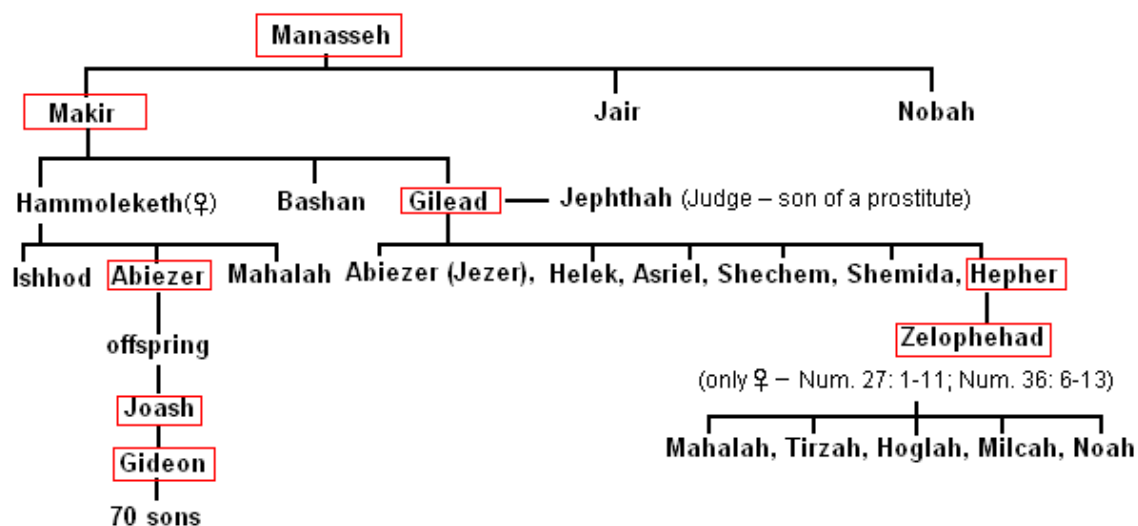
- Eleazar ben Ananus (16-17 AD)
- Jonathan ben Ananus 36-37 AD, after the death of Caiaphas)
- Theophilus ben Ananus (37-41 AD)
- Matthias ben Ananus (43 AD)
- Ananus ben Ananus (63 AD)

Descendants of Ephraim (1 Chr. 7: 20-29):

Note: Beriah was a son of Ephraim (1 Chr. 7: 20–23), born after the killing of his brothers Ezer and Elead, and so called by his father 'because disaster had befallen his house.'



- **Descendants of Manasseh** (1 Chr. 7: 14-18; Judg. 11: 2; Josh. 17: 1-3; Num. 26: 29; 33):



Jair [a descendant of Manasseh – 1 Chr. 2: 21-22; he also took the land of the Amorites (Gilead), as well as the children of Makir: Num. 32: 40-41; Deut. 3: 14].

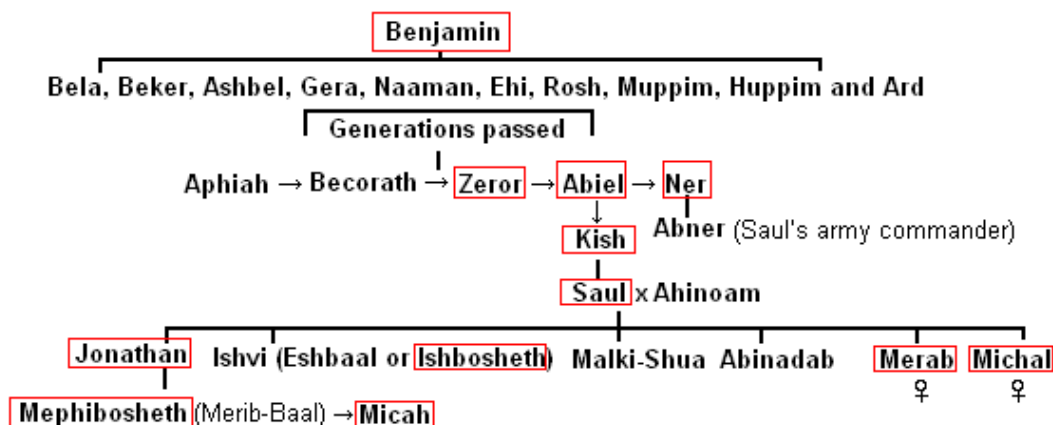
Nobah [a descendant of Manasseh; he also took the land of the Amorites, along with his brothers, namely, the land of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan: Num. 32: 33-42]

Descendants of Dan:

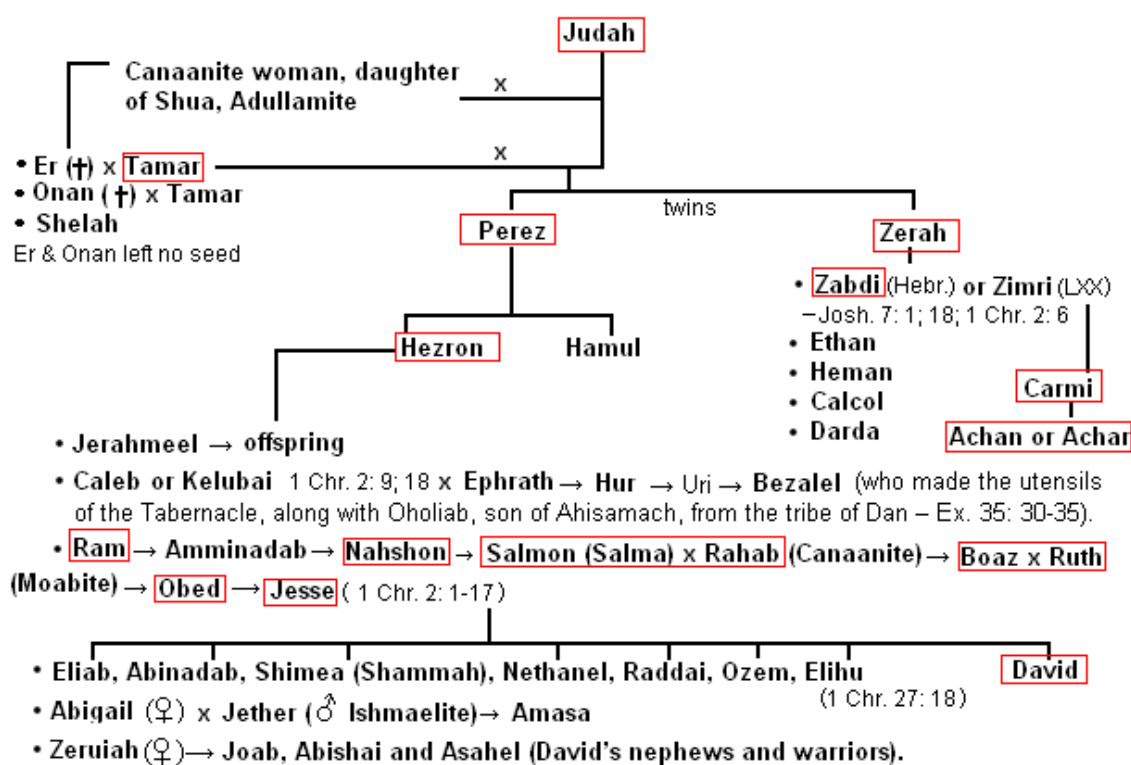
Hushim → generations → Ahisamach → **Oholiab** (Ex. 35: 34) → generations → **Manoah** (Judg. 13: 2) x ♀ (name unknown) → **Samson**

Descendants of Benjamin (1 Sam. 9: 1-2; 1 Sam. 14: 49-51; 1 Chr. 26: 28; 1 Chr. 8: 33; 1 Chr. 9: 39):

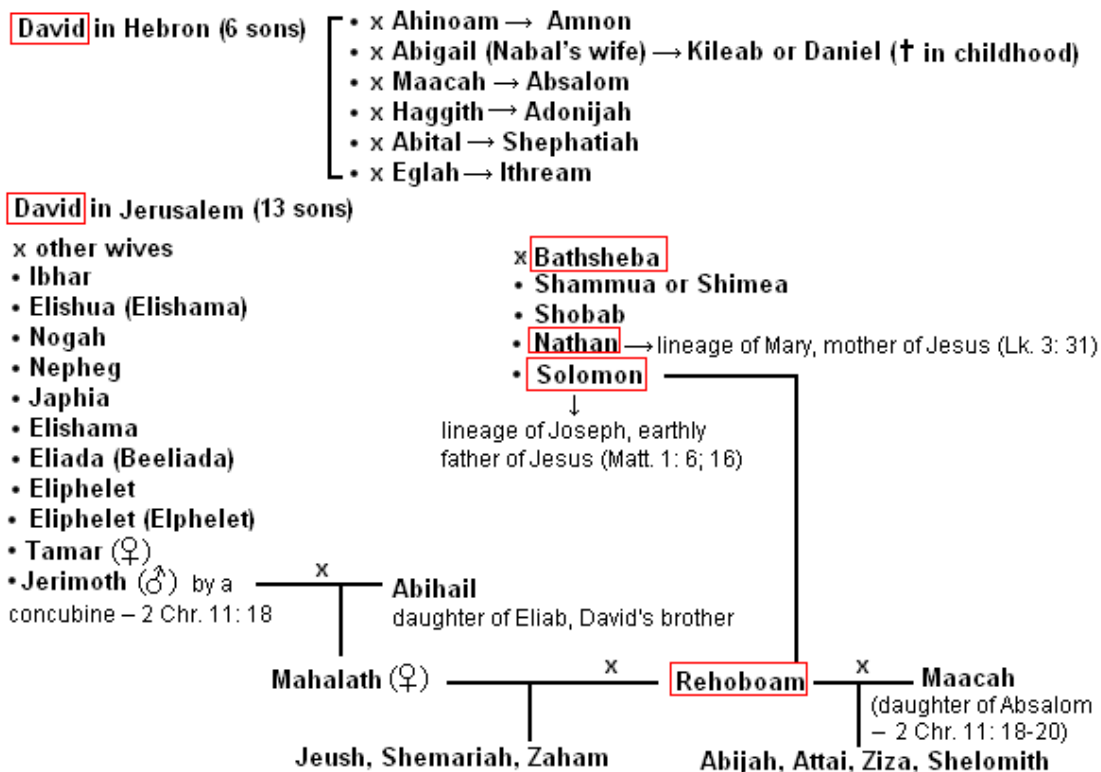
From **Benjamin** also came: **Mordecai** (Esther's cousin, Est. 2: 5; he was son of Jair, son of Shimei, a descendant of Kish; and **Paul** (Apostle, Phil. 3: 5).



Descendants of Judah (Gen. 38: 3-30; 1 Chr. 2: 3-55; 1 Chr. 5: 1-2; Josh. 7: 1; 18):



Descendants of David (1 Chr. 3: 1-9; 1 Chr. 3: 10-24; 1 Chr. 14: 3-7 – 6 born in Hebron and 13 in Jerusalem) and the **descendants of Solomon** (1 Chr. 3: 10-24):



Abijah → Asa → Jehoshaphat → Joram (Jehoram) → Ahaziah → Joash → Amaziah (these last three were not counted in Matt. 1: 1-17) → **Azariah (Uzziah) → Jotham → Ahaz → Hezekiah → Manasseh → Amon → Josiah → Johanan, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, Shallum** (1 Chr. 3: 10-16 or Jehoahaz: 2 Chr. 36: 1).

Jehoiakim → Jehoiachin (Jeconiah, 2 Chr. 36: 9; 2 Kin. 24: 8; Jer. 24: 1; Jer. 27: 20) and Zedekiah (2 Chr. 36: 11 or Mattaniah 2 Kin. 24: 17)

Jehoiachin (captive) → **Shealtiel** (captive – Matt. 1: 12), Malkiram, Pedaiiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama and Nedabiah (1 Chr. 3: 17-24). Isaiah said to Hezekiah that some of his sons would be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon (Isa. 39: 6-7). Probably, Jeconias got rid of that.

Shealtiel → Zerubbabel (Ezr. 3: 2; 8; Ezr. 5: 2; Neh. 12: 1; Hag. 1: 1) and Shimei (1 Chr. 3: 19, says that **Zerubbabel** and Shimei are sons of Pedaiiah, Shealtiel's brother). Some scholars say that perhaps Shealtiel died while Zerubbabel was young and he was raised by his uncle Pedaiiah. Therefore, he would be considered his son, or else, Shealtiel died without descendants and Pedaiiah married his sister-in-law (law of the levirate), wife of Shealtiel, and from that marriage Zerubbabel was born.

Zerubbabel → Abiud (Matt. 1: 13) → **Eliakim → Azor → Zadok → Akim → Eliud → Eleazar → Matthan → Jacob → Joseph** (husband of Mary) from whom **Jesus** was born.

Persian kings after the fall of Babylon:

- Cyrus the Persian emperor (Cyrus II or Cyrus the great) who ordered the return of the Jews in 538 BC (1st return of the exiles), by invading Babylon. He reigned as king of the Persians, Medes, Lydians and Babylonians (559–530 BC)

- Cambyses II (son of Cyrus): 530–522 BC.
- Darius I (brother-in-law of Cambyses II): 522–486 BC. In his reign the temple began to be rebuilt (520–516 BC). It had begun in 536 BC (2nd year of the reign of Cyrus in Babylon and stopped until 520 BC – 2nd year of Darius I).
- Xerxes I (Ahasuerus – אחשורוש): 465–486 BC (son of Darius I). Xerxes is a Greek transliteration of his Persian name after his ascension, Jshāyār Shah, meaning ‘ruler of heroes’. In the bible his name is mentioned as Ahasuerus (in Hebrew – אחשורוש), being written as Ahashuerus, in Chaldean; or Axashverosh, in Greek.
- Artaxerxes I: 465–424 BC (son of Xerxes I, but not the firstborn). There was a 2nd return of the exiles to Jerusalem with Ezra in 458 BC to minister in the rebuilt temple. Rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, 445 BC (3rd return with Nehemiah).
- Xerxes II (son of Artaxerxes I) and reigned one month and a half. He was murdered by his brother Secydianus or Sogdianus (the form of the name is uncertain). In his turn, he was killed by Ochus, satrap of Hyrcania (region southeast of Caspian Sea, modern Iran), who rose to power and adopted the name of Darius II.
- Darius II (Neh. 12: 22) ruled Babylon and Persia (424–404 BC). He is called Darius the Persian. His birth name was Ochus; then he adopted the name of Darius II (Persian: Dārayavahuš; that’s why the Greek sources call him Darius Nothos, ‘Bastard’).
- Artaxerxes II Mnemon, meaning: ‘whose reign is through truth’ (404–358 BC). He was son of Darius II.
- Artaxerxes III or Ochus (3rd son of Artaxerxes II): 358–338 BC.
- Artaxerxes IV or Arses (youngest son of Artaxerxes III): 338–336 BC
- Darius III (great-grandson of Darius II and cousin of Arses): 336–330 BC when Alexander the Great defeated him in Macedonia. Originally called Artashata; in Latin: Codomannus, and in ancient Greek: Kodomanos (Κοδομανός) was the last king of the Achaemenid Dynasty of Persia. Darius (Dārayavahuš, in Persian) was the name he adopted after ascending the throne.