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The keys of the kingdom



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I thank the Lord for His faithfulness and His constant company, supplying my body, my soul and my spirit in all needs. I thank Him for making me know and exercise faith, hope and love to achieve my dreams.

This book is dedicated to all those who often think about giving up their blessings for failing to keep within themselves the spiritual strength and the authority to drive out the “foxes” from the land that God has already given them.

*“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”
(Prov. 4: 23)*

Introduction

How are you, dear reader?

Nice to meet you.

May I come into your home and tell you some truths that I learned about keys and properties? But I don't come alone. I'm bringing three more friends who can testify what I want to pass on to you. I present to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Let's go in?

The idea of writing this book came to me as a response to a particular difficulty, when I thought that what I lacked was faith. However, I found out that what I needed was hope. This book came right after I have written 'Unbelief or daring?' where the character under discussion was the apostle Thomas. I ended up discovering the difference between faith and hope, and its meaning from the biblical point of view, namely, the spiritual focus that the bible gives to the subject, unlike what we consider in the emotional sense. Although I put here in the introduction the biblical meaning of hope with regard to our salvation be completed, that is, in the second coming of Christ, the book, basically, is going to talk about hope in the promise and in the dream of God for us, covering more the emotional level. We assume that we are certain of our salvation in Jesus and that we must wait patiently for the end time. It is no use to worry about His coming if, as a bride, we do not prepare ourselves, taking care of our sanctification.

Today we'll talk about the 'Keys of the Kingdom.'

Key is a symbol of power and authority, usually exercised through the Word of God (Matthew 16: 19: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven"). Thus, prophesying the Word and making good use of it we will open the way in the spiritual world for our blessings and deliverances. However, in the mind, in the emotional area (i.e., the soul) and in the material, we need to do something more than just speak; we need to put into practice what we say and what we learned from the Lord so that our blessings are not stolen. Here come into play other three important keys to our inner growth and the achievement of our blessings, which are: faith, hope and love, as spoken in 1 Corinthians 13: 13 by Paul.

Since we will be dealing more specifically with hope, we will begin by describing its concept from a biblical point of view, while we'll give a short explanation about the other two keys: faith and love. Then, we'll enter the goal of the book, which is to awaken again the flame of hope in the hearts where it was quenched, so that people come back to pursue their dream and believe in the promises of God.

Hope means the act of waiting for what one wants; expectation. This is what we'll find in the dictionary. In Greek, the word is *elpis* (ἐλπίς – Strong #g1680, which means: hope, expectation, trust, confidence), as it is written in Rom. 8: 24: "For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen?" The bible considers some characteristics such as:

1) To wait for the promise (eternal life) because we have a faithful God; in other words, to wait till our salvation is complete. The bible also says that hope is the anchor of the soul, which means that hope keeps us in the ways of the Lord, making us endure till our home in heaven. The biblical texts are:

a) Rom. 12: 12: "Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer."

b) Rom. 15: 4: "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope."

c) *1 Cor. 15: 19*: “If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”

d) *2 Cor. 1: 9-10*: “Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again...”

e) *Eph. 2: 12 cf. 1 The. 4: 13*: “remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel [*he spoke about the Gentiles*], and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world”... “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope [*Those who still don't know what eternal life is*].”

f) *Col. 1: 5*: “... because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel...”

g) *1 The. 5: 8*: “But since we belong to the day [*children of light, in contrast to the children of darkness*], let us be sober [*moderate, frugal, simple*], and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation [*the mind is sure that the soul attained salvation in Jesus and waits for it, not allowing that any doubt comes to steal it*].”

h) *1 Tim. 1: 1*: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope...” Here Paul says that Jesus is our hope, that is, He assures our eternal life and helps us to wait for the end times.

i) *Heb. 6: 13-20*: “When God made a promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, ‘I will surely bless you and multiply you.’ And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Human beings, of course, swear by someone greater than themselves, and an oath given as confirmation puts an end to all dispute. In the same way, when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (*Gen. 14: 18-20*). The curtain separated the ‘Holy of Holies’, where was the ark of the Covenant, symbol of God’s presence with men, from the ‘Holy Place’ of the Tabernacle where the priests came to officiate every day to the Lord – *Lev. 16: 2*. In the ‘Holy of Holies’, only the high priest entered once a year. For us Christians, the curtain symbolizes the separation between God and men, as well as the flesh of Jesus that was torn on the cross to break this separation (*Hb 10: 19-20; Hb 9: 11-12*); the ‘Holy Place’ corresponds to the soul, and the ‘Holy of Holies’, to our spirit in direct contact with God.

j) *Heb. 13: 14*: “For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for [*we wait for; we have hope that it exists*] the city that is to come [*The New Jerusalem*].”

k) *1 Pet. 1: 13*: “Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed.”

2) *The hope is inseparable from faith in God and is associated with patience and perseverance:*

a) *Rom. 4: 16-22*: “For this reason it [*the promise, he meant*] depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he

is the father of all of us, as it is written, ‘I have made you the father of many nations’)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become ‘the father of many nations’, according to what was said, ‘So numerous shall your descendants be.’ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith was reckoned to him as righteousness.”

b) *Rom. 10: 13-15*: “For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”

c) *Rom. 10: 17*: “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.”

d) *1 Cor. 9: 10*: “Or does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was indeed written for our sake, for whoever plows should plow in hope and whoever threshes should thresh in hope of a share in the crop.”

e) *1 Cor. 13: 13*: “And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

f) *Gal. 5: 5*: “For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.”

g) *1 The. 1: 3*: “... remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

h) *1 The. 5: 8*: “But since we belong to the day [*children of light, in contrast with the children of darkness*], let us be sober [*moderate, frugal, simple*], and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.”

i) *Heb. 6: 10-12*: “For God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do. And we want each one of you to show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope to the very end, so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

j) *Heb. 11: 1*: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

k) *1 Pet. 1: 21*: “Through him [*Christ*] you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.”

3) *It is also associated with love, besides faith (already mentioned):*

a) *Rom. 5: 5*: “and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

b) *1 Cor. 13: 1-13*: “If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude [NIV: it does not envy, it does not boast, it does not proud. It is not rude]. It does not insist on its own way [NIV: it is not self-seeking]; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all

things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

By paying attention to the word written in *Heb. 11: 1*, we conclude that faith is a spiritual thing, not something created, moved, or developed through rationality, however, a driving force that comes from the spirit, apparently without explanation, so that we can act in accordance with it and obtain the goals we set for ourselves. In other words, it is the fuel so that the word of God in our mouth can reach the target desired for us and bring into existence the things that do not exist. Another important observation about faith: it is developed through the practical experiences of our lives, which cause us to climb increasingly levels of spiritual growth and intimacy with God. Therefore, based on past experiences and victories, by putting into practice our faith we can overcome greater challenges and thus increase our measure of it. The bible also says that faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ (*Rom. 10: 17*). This means that by His word, the Lord sends His prophets so that the people hear and may believe in Him (*Rom. 10: 13-15*), as we read above.

Hope, as we have seen, means the act of ‘waiting for what one wants’, ‘expectation’, even for the simplest things as the fruit of the crop or the salary for work (*1 Cor. 9: 10*). Going one step further in our reasoning, we can say that hope means: to wait with confidence. This makes us think that, while faith seems to be related more to the spirit, hope is related more directly to the soul, for waiting with confidence would be the result of believing in God’s love for us, to exercise this love with our neighbors, and to wait for what we are sure, but still can not see, which is the faith of our spirit in the Word and in the divine promise (“For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” – *Rom. 8: 24-25*). The factor that comes into play here is time, both human and divine, so when our promise takes too long to arrive, the soul, which sees the chronological time, becomes impatient and often fights against the Holy Spirit, who sees God’s time. Therefore, 1) our faith in the Word and in the promise, 2) the certainty of God’s love for us and 3) His fidelity to His promises, 4) as well as our unconditional trust in Him, all these factors are the pillars that will keep us standing up until what we expect comes true. By its connection with love, hope is free from all selfishness. He who has it is not waiting for a blessing for himself only, but for something that can be shared with others. He who loves expects that his fellow men are the receivers of the good things from God, as well as they were given to him, even more when it comes to salvation of the soul (*Rom. 8: 18-23*: “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies”).

To complete our reasoning, it is interesting to comment on the meaning of *hope, wait and expectation* in the Old Testament. The word most often translated as ‘wait’ in the sense of *waiting on the Lord* is the Hebrew word ‘*qavah*’ or ‘*kavah*’, which has the following meanings: (1) ‘to bind together’ (perhaps by twisting yarns as in making a rope), ‘to cling, to hang’; (2) ‘look for patiently’, (3) ‘tarry or wait’. The second word is *tiqwah* or *tikvah* – ‘hope, to wait for, to await, to look for eagerly, to wait expectantly, expectation’. The third word is *miqweh*. The nouns *miqweh* and *tiqwah* come from the root *qwh*, ‘to wait for, to look for eagerly’. Another word frequently used is *yachal*. *Yachal* means ‘to wait’, or ‘wait in hope, wait expectantly’, sometimes translated as ‘trust’, ‘confidence’. The last word for ‘wait’ is *chakah*, ‘to delay, to tarry’, or ‘to yearn’. Let’s see some biblical examples:

- 1) *Qavah*: Ps. 25: 3; Ps. 27: 14; Ps. 37: 9; Ps. 69: 6; Isa. 40: 31
- 2) *Tiqwah or tikvah*: Ps. 9: 18; Ps. 62: 5; Ps. 71: 5; Isa. 49: 23; Jer. 31: 17
- 3) *Miqweh*: Jer. 14: 8; Jer. 17: 13; Jer. 50: 7
- 4) *Yachal*: Ps. 33: 18
- 5) *Chakah*: Ps. 33: 20; Ps. 37: 7; Ps. 106: 13; Isa. 30: 18

Thus, we can see that, besides the meaning of ‘a time to wait with patience’, hope has also the meaning of ‘to bind together’, ‘to cling’, ‘to hang’. According to this thinking, hope is something that makes us ‘to cling to the Lord’ or ‘to hang’ in the Lord and His promise so that He lifts us up to the places of honor and victory.

Now that we know what hope is, let’s address another subject, which is ‘the spiritual theft’ of these three ‘keys’ by demons that use people to undermine the project of the Lord for us, taking advantage of the moments of weakness of our soul or our spirit or availing themselves of our lack of vigilance.

So, let’s review some information about certain words used in the bible, as well as the names of some animals and that have an interesting symbolism to our story:

1) *Fox*: is a symbol of experience, cunning, sagacity, subtlety of spirit and malice. Jesus called Herod a *fox* (Lk. 13: 31-32), for He knew his intentions toward Him. *Foxes* also symbolize demons that dig the emotional wounds. The fox is from the same family of the dog and jackal (this one goes in packs; probably, it was in them that Samson set fire to the tail in *Judg. 15: 4*). The terms used in Hebrew, *shu’al*, and in Greek, *alōpex*, include both the fox and jackal. They eat fruit and vegetables, including grapes. Foxes and the little foxes tend to dig around the vines in flower (*Songs 2: 15*); in this text of *Songs* it means the small and insignificant things that can infiltrate a beautiful marital relationship, corroding it until the vine of love is destroyed. The bride wanted these little things were caught before causing serious damage. In the relationship between God and His bride the same thing occurs, when the works of the flesh, seemly insignificant, suddenly become a sad routine, undermining love and destroying everything that took so long to be built. That’s why we must be alert to remain with the fire of the Spirit lit, encouraging us to seek the Lord’s presence every day and to take care of this loving relationship as it is done with the spouse. In this book, the *fox* will be used as a symbol of cunning, sagacity, subtlety of spirit and malice, which instigated by demons, use the closest people to destroy the love, faith and the hope in the promise and in God’s dream.

2) *Lion* symbolizes royalty, power, authority, strength, action of spiritual powers over us. Here, the lion will be the figure of Jesus, the Lion of Judah, the King of kings and Lord of lords, He who is above all Ruler and Authority of the darkness [“See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered...” (Rev. 5: 5 b)] and who will destroy the foxes that stole the gifts and the promises of our heroine.

3) *Horse* (*Deut. 17: 14-28 – the choice of a king*) symbolizes human force ('the strength of the arm'), as well as war, rush and attitudes toward our neighbor. The Word also says, "His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the speed of a runner; but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love" – *Ps. 147: 10-11* ... "Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the Lord our God" – *Ps. 20: 7*.

4) *Clock* is a symbol of time, both of our human time and God's, and that, logically, works in us the hope, perseverance, faith, trust and inner peace.

5) *Doors* often are a symbol of authority that we have to exercise against the enemy's advance over our soul; they are also a symbol of divine protection ("For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you. He grants peace within your borders; he fills you with the finest of wheat" – *Ps. 147: 13-14*), as well as new opportunities given by God to know more what's in store for us, for example, His kingdom ("Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" – *Matt. 25: 34* ... "Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in" – *Ps. 24: 9*).

6) '*Keys*', as mentioned earlier, are a symbol of power, authority and government, "These are the words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens" – *Rev. 3: 7 b...* "I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open" [*promise about the Messiah*] – *Isa. 22: 22*.

This book is an allegory about the three keys mentioned (faith, hope and love) that were granted by God as a gift to our heroine, but by the bad and constant experiences of the past, allied to the carelessness on her part and by the bad intentions of others, were stolen by the foxes. Then, to regain her blessing that will make her open the door to the divine promise, she will have to pass a test in order to learn how to watch over, to know how to deal with time, to take care for the treasures received, to use the power and authority given by Lord, and thus, to take possession of her 'promised land'.

The name of the heroine is *Elizabeth* (in Hebrew, *ʿelisheba*, *Elisheva*, which means *God is my oath, the God who makes covenant, God's promise or I am God's daughter*). At his side will be a lion, here the figure of Jesus, the '*Lion of the tribe of Judah*', which will make her win and defeat the foxes. Its name will be *Judah* (in Hebrew, *Yehüdāh*, which means '*praised, celebrated, acclaimed in praise (ydh) to the Lord*').

When I asked the Holy Spirit the name for our heroine, He spoke 'Elizabeth' and then I started to think on the example of Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife and mother of John the Baptist, who was old and barren, however, was blessed with the blessing of seeing her dream (to have a child) fulfilled. Probably, she had no more *hope* in her soul, for the time to generate was over for her, nor faith, for in truth, she had asked the Lord for a child, but only at the time of the visitation of the angel Gabriel to Zechariah is that she received the promise (*Lk. 1: 13*). Then her faith was exercised and her hope, revived. Her sterility became fertility, not only generating physically a child, but also making her a person spiritually and emotionally productive, being a living testimony of the power of God among His people.

I hope the Holy Spirit can be your companion on this trip and reveal His secrets, so that the dreams and promises of God for you become real and no longer be stolen. May the bad experiences of the past which undermined your faith, love and hope be removed from your soul and let there be a "*New Time*" for you.

I love you in Jesus.

A gift of love



Elizabeth was thoughtful that morning. She woke up early to sweep the house before going to the field, where its owner employed her temporarily during the wheat harvest. She was a young woman without family, so she had to earn a living for herself. She had nothing to complain about; after all, God had defended her all those years and, though she was not rich, never lacked food in her house. However, she felt different that day. She had been thinking about her future for some time and something more important than just material support. It was missing ‘flavor’ to her existence. From an early age she had a hard life, of hard work and responsibility because of some family problems that she faced; she did not want to remember them now, but of anything that might give an incentive to continue her journey.

Elizabeth said to herself, “Oh life! What tiredness! I do not know where the dust comes from. There is sand to sweep every day; if I don’t sweep, my house will look like the desert out there: a few palm trees in the distance, the well of water about ten minutes walk ... Yeah, Betsy! Hurry up or you’ll be late for the harvest and lose your pay day. When you come back, you dream again.”

“Elizabeth!” the old woman shouted.

“What is it, Mrs. Naomi?”

“Come on, girl! You are late for work. This way you will lose your wage. Give glory to God for having a neighbor like me, who cares for you as your mother. Have you already locked the house?”

“Yes, ma’am, you don’t need to worry. I’m coming. Bye.”

Elizabeth ran. Really, the old lady was right; her reveries made her arrive late, but in time to not be seen or reprimanded by the boss. The sun was hot and she bent over to put the twigs in sheaves, thinking,

“How nice the odor of the wheat! I love it. The only thing I don’t love is to stay bent to gather it. Oh! What a scorching sun!”

The day passed quickly and it was almost dark when she got home. Naomi was on the front porch waiting for her with a package in her hands.

“Honey! Someone left this for you.”

“Who?”

“I do not know well. I couldn’t see his face behind the turban, but he seemed a messenger. He was riding a camel and told me that his master was sending you this package. Take it, enjoy it. It’s late, I’ll prepare dinner and go to sleep. My family is hungry. Good evening, Elizabeth.”

“Good evening, Mrs. Naomi. Thank you for having saved the package for me.”

Elizabeth ran up the stone steps and opened the door. She closed it behind her and ran to the bed, placing the package on the mattress to see what it was about. She opened it and was surprised. There was a parchment rolled up and a wooden box like a safe. Which one would she open first? He thought well and unrolled the parchment. She yelled in fright. What was she reading? Was it real? Yes, it was a property deed transferred to her and which gave the right to a large portion of land...



... But there was no signature of who wrote it, only a seal. She had never seen it. Who would it be? Why did her benefactor not sign, after all? How could she thank him? ...



... She read all the lines carefully and got to know the correct location of the place. It looked like a dream. The property was not located in a dry and barren land, but in a fertile plain with many springs of water and an abundant vegetation. She had already passed by there, however, she had never thought that one day that 'Eden' could be hers. Furthermore, the soil was propitious to various crops, not only wheat but grapes, fig trees, date palms, barley, corn and others.

Elizabeth thought, *"Betsy! You are now an owner, a farmer, no longer a temporary employee. Hey! There's more! Open the box immediately. See! There are three golden keys. What do they mean?"*



There was a note inside it and a figure where she saw the ramparts of her property and a gate. It was written, *“At the end of this path there is a gate and I will make you know what there is on the other side when you have the boldness to use the key I gave you to open it. Even if the enemy has pruned your chances of advancing or growing, your roots were not plucked out and your determination was not touched. Lift up your head, then, and take the key of victory in your hands. What seemed to be threatening or a deceit no longer exists and your eyes will see the truth of what I have in store for you. Do not be afraid to risk or burst forth to the new. You will know the meaning of accomplishment.”* She calmed down and tried to meditate on what she was reading. It was like a story that she read many years ago...

... an enslaved people... a cry to heaven... The Lord sending a deliverer to free them from captivity... the promise of a land flowing with milk and honey... the release ... the test of faith in the promise... then the conquest of it... Hundreds of years later, a young foreigner marries a wealthy lord, owner of a great field... and becomes the ‘owner of the field’... Betsy! You, a ‘princess’... honored!



She went on thinking, *“Betsy! I know! It was in the Holy Scriptures you read this, do you remember? It is clear now... The Lord is giving us this present and revealing us the way to conquer our property... Look! It is the coat of arms of one of the twelve tribes that are sealing the deed we received, the emblem of the tribe of Judah... Oh! Lord, thank you. Tomorrow I am going there. Good night.”*



Poor Elizabeth! She did not understand very well what she was receiving. Had she not thought about the emptiness of her life? Had she not asked for encouragement for her to live a fruitful life? She received three keys, but her soul did not reach the deep meaning of this. Everyone there in the village knew her for a long time. What would they think about this situation? She put the three keys in the box and lay down. Soon she fell asleep.

She did not realize she had left the box opened, without a padlock. So, at night, while she slept deeply, the little foxes came and stole the keys. Without them, the deed was worthless because Elizabeth could not enter by the gates of her property. This is

what the foxes did with those who did not watch over their belongings correctly or did not give the value owed to them. They came and took what was precious to them, beyond what they dug around what was planted, destroying the possibility of the plantation being born again. The long-awaited fruit did not thrive, hope died, faith in God faded, the love with which the work was made disappeared and nothing else made sense. So the destruction was installed. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after years of attempts and failures made those lives marked and they could no longer expect anything good. The flame of the Spirit was extinguished in their hearts. The foxes knew the strategies; they were cunning, clever and sly, they had great experience in the subject; so, most of the time they fared victorious of a situation. But this time they had touched the wrong person and the wrong deed. They would have a surprise they would never forget, and ‘would taste their own poison.’



They ran and hid the keys. They did not realize they were being watched.



Elizabeth woke up and took a while to remember what had happened the previous day. She looked at the deed and the box, but soon she got scared and did not cost much for sadness and tears to come to her soul. The keys had disappeared. How? She had fallen asleep and left the safe open; that's what happened. Her unawareness had cost her

dearly this time. Now, she had the notion of what she was looking for all those years: the understanding necessary so that her life passed to have meaning. She complained so much of scarcity and misery, but when the supply knocked at the door, she had no wisdom or prudence to save it. This was true. She had no maturity or wisdom to govern herself, not even to keep three simple keys. The feeling of emptiness grew bigger and she went out crying into the wilderness with her deed in hands. She needed to get away from acquaintances to be able to think better. Then she looked to the mountains and got scared. A lion was watching her and then he started moving toward her. What would she do? There was nowhere to run or hide. It was strange! He did not run in a hungry way as if seeking to devour the prey, but walked slowly, step by step, as if afraid to traumatize her. He came very close and looked at her. Elizabeth saw something in his eyes that calmed her down, at the same time that awoke her curiosity. Then he spoke,

“Elizabeth! Do you want to recover what has been stolen?”

“Do you speak?”

“Yes, but few are able to understand me. I came to testify to the truth, only those who are of the truth hear my voice.”

“Can you understand what I’m feeling?”

“Of course! I have observed you all these years and I waited for the right moment to tell you some secrets. Come, let us walk.”

“Where?”

“To your promised land.”

“And the foxes?”

“I destroyed them. I know where they hid the keys and I’ll take you to conquer each of them. So when you have all the three in your hands, then I’ll take you to your property.”

“It looks like training...”

“Exactly! But don’t be afraid, I will accompany you.”

“By the way, what’s your name?”

“Judah,” he answered.

Love

They began to walk and suddenly the landscape changed. They were walking down a path that Elizabeth had never seen before. They reached a point where the road was divided into three. Which way to go?

“Your training starts now, Elizabeth.”

“What does this mean?”

“You will conquer the first key. They have a name, you know? Only the three together will open the gate of your property. The first is called *love*.”

“And how do we do?”

“First see through the eyes of the spirit what every road proposes to you. Then I’ll say a few words. In possession of them and of the vision you have, you can choose the path. Exercise your free will. From now on, you will begin to grow and understand many things,” Judah said to her.

“What if I make a wrong choice?”

“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed ... I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. Come on! Now, concentrate and tell me what you see.”

“The path on the left shows a thorn bush, the middle one, lots of candies, and the right one, a flowered garden. Is that a riddle?”

“Calm down, do not despair. Hear my words with the heart, and then decide, and I’ll accompany you.”

“Speak, I’m listening.”

He said, “If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love does not envy, it does not boast, it does not proud. It is not rude. It is not self-seeking; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

“Hmm! It may seem strange to you, Judah, but the boost that I feel in my heart makes me choose the left path. It does not seem logical, but is through it that I’m going.”



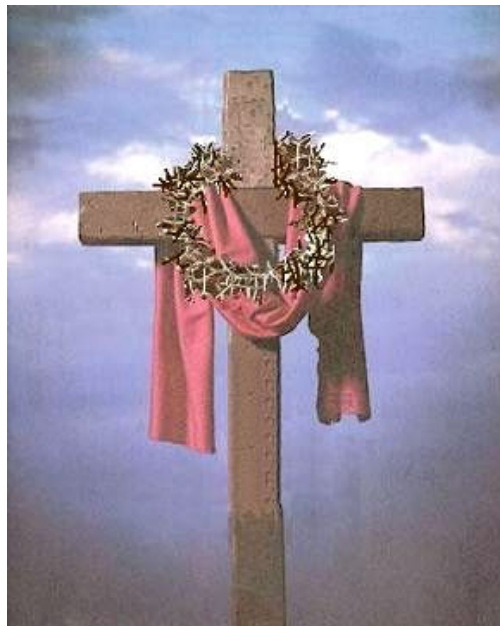
They started walking and Elizabeth saw the thorn bushes around her. She had to walk carefully to avoid injury from the thorns. How strange! As she walked along, she remembered many people whom she had loved, but unfortunately, had rejected and

despised her. They looked like the thorn bushes that were around her. She began to realize that it was useless to flee, because everywhere she turned, their presence would be there. She heard a bush say, 'Love is patient'. So, it was as if a person was charging patience of her, as an 'envoy of the devil' to 'suck her' of the love and patience that she had with others. That's when she said, 'The Lord loves you.' When she spoke this, the bush disappeared from her path. The next brought to her mind another acquaintance saying to her, 'Love is kind.' She did the same she had done with the previous, and this bush disappeared before her eyes. The next ones repeated the words that Judah had spoken to her, 'love does not envy, it does not boast, it does not proud. It is not rude. It is not self-seeking; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.' After the nine tests, she looked to Judah, and he smiled at her. There were no thorns in her path anymore. All around was clear, and in front of her she saw an empty cross, with only a red mantle and a crown of thorns on the top.

Judah completed the test, "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."

"Ah! Now I understand. Only *ONE* could take upon himself all our thorns and show what the true love is."

"Come on, come closer."



She came to the base of the cross and heard a voice saying, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I command you this: that you love one another."

"Elizabeth! Look down," Judah said.

She obeyed and was glad. The first key was there and was hers. She took it and put it in her clothes with care. Now she felt different, stronger, more experienced and more

loved. And the love she felt was coming from that cross. She had already witnessed it before... where? Then she remembered that was the love she saw in the eyes of Judah when they met in the desert.



“Congratulations, Elizabeth. You passed the first test.”
“What do we do now?” she asked.
“Just go ahead.”

Faith



The well-known road opened before them and, later, it showed a division again; it was a new choice to be made.

“What do you see now, Elizabeth?”

“To the left I see a desert, in the center the sea, and to the right, a fertile plain. Okay! I got it. Speak the word that will take me to the second key.”

“The second key is the *faith*, and the word that will make you choose the path is, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you... I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse... If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.’”

“Judah! What a strange thing! Why the impulse of my interior leads me again to choose, apparently, the hardest way?”

“What do you call hard?”

“Now! Do you not see? The deed that I received showed me a productive and abundant land in everything, but I see my own footprints in the sand of the desert.”

“Then, it’s where you should head for”, Judah encouraged her.



They walked and a hot wind began to blow until it became a true sandstorm. This seemed to blind our heroine to the point of bringing doubts about what she was seeking. She was no longer sure that could survive there, let alone if the scroll she carried in her hands was true. Could she believe what was written there? It looked more like a fantasy. Should she believe so blindly in the word spoken by Judah? She lost the sense of direction and no longer knew which way she was going, if to the north, the south, the east or west; there was no possibility of returning to the main road. At the apex of her despair the sandstorm stopped and Elizabeth could see an oasis ahead. Was it real or a mirage?

“Be calm, Elizabeth, just move on.”

She walked slowly as if dazed. Moreover, she felt hot and thirsty. Yes, there was a small wellspring and she refreshed herself. By sitting, she felt something touching her hand and realized it was a scorpion. While she decided what to do with it, she noticed another unpleasant presence on the other side of her body: a small serpent of the desert, of the kind that moves laterally with speed and accuracy, and when it decides to bite the prey, it lunges swiftly introducing its poison. Her only security was the presence of Judah with her. Then the two intruders retreated, but began to speak. The words were disjointed and disheartening, putting her faith at stake. She also remembered the old

customs of her family, which now had to be left, in order to make her win the second key. It was impossible to be a winner after a so great struggle! They spoke and she retorted the way she could, trying to keep intact her conviction in the promise. It seemed a sword duel, where what was at stake was her very life. She had given up everything she knew before in order to conquer her dream; now it was to kill or die. Then she remembered the cross she had seen and put her hand in the pocket, feeling the first key. It was then that she 'brandished her sword',

"For nothing will be impossible with God in all His promises. The impossible with men are possible with God."

The snake and the scorpion died and she leaned back in the palm tree to recover her breath. He looked to Judah, who was smiling happily for her victory. They stood up and went ahead until Elizabeth saw a bush in the distance. The small bush was dry and with insignificant appearance, like everything in that desert. As she headed for the bush she saw little foxes killed along the way. Arriving near the bush, the same voice that had spoken to her on the cross sounded in her ears,

"Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. Be strong and courageous. Do not I command you? Be strong and courageous, for I will be with you wherever you go. No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life... The just shall live by faith."



She felt the loving and powerful presence that she had felt on the cross, and looked at the trunk of the bush. The second key was there. Elizabeth had conquered it, as well as the holiness and the divine revelation that she needed to be able to walk.



“Are you ready to go?” Judah asked.

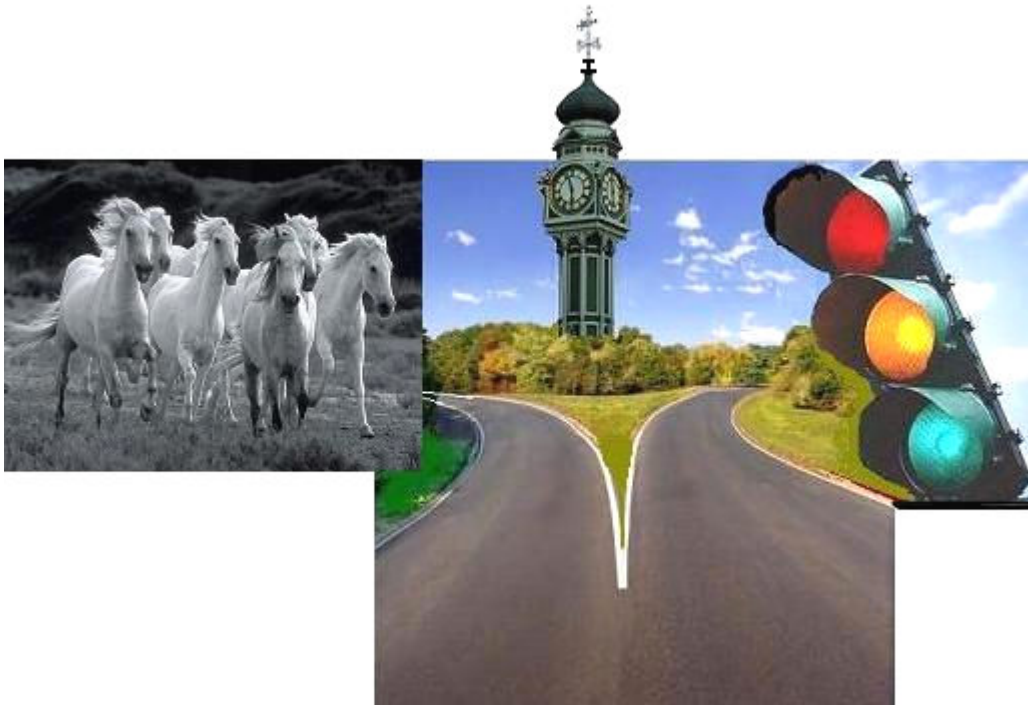
“Sure! But I’m a little tired with all that I went through until now. My whole body hurts, as if I have fought against many giants.”

“Do not worry; I am the Lord who heals you.”

It was the voice that emanated from the bush and touched her as a balm.

“Thank you. See you soon.”

Hope



They returned to the road they were accustomed to and, shortly ahead, there was another division on it. On the left, many horses ran fast in the direction of Elizabeth and Judah. In the center a large clock stood magnificent as a tower, and on the right, a traffic light with three lights shining. The voice of Judah came to the ears of Elizabeth,

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end... for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work. Whoever obeys a command will meet no harm, and the wise mind will know the time and way... His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the speed of a runner; but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love... hope does not disappoint us.”

He spoke again, “Elizabeth, this is the third key, *hope*. Choose the path.”

“This time I choose the middle path.”

“Okay, let’s go!”

What an interesting thing was happening! Elizabeth was not sure, but it seemed like time had stopped. She had lost the track of time. She could not tell if the deed which she had in hands was given to her long ago or if she had just received it. She looked to Judah without knowing what to do; the only thing she could see were the feelings of her heart. She was tired with everything that she had lived until that moment. Was because of this that the discouragement began to reach her soul? It seemed that the experiences of life began to come to light as a way to tell her that hope had died, and despite the love and faith in her heart time would still be a great enemy to her.



When her time to be happy and achieve her dreams would come? The faith which had been implanted in her spirit gave her the assurance that nothing would be impossible; the promise was still standing. However, her soul could not remember the last time she rejoiced with true joy. The feelings of defeat in her mind tried to convince her that any attempt at this moment would be frustrated. There was no hope for her. Everyone had forgotten her; God too? This thought tormented her, so Judah came to rescue, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me... those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.”

They walked, she saw the big clock in front of her, but had the feeling that she never left the place; it always seemed to be far away. Could it be that the right time would never come for Elizabeth? She could hear the ringing of the bell announcing the hour. She began to remember all the times she tried a change in her life; however, it only brought weakness and frustration, because could not get what she aspired. Her life had become a sad routine, without the fire of hope to keep her firm in her purpose. The weeks and months passed, turning into years. She knew nothing of these things. What the Lord was trying to say to her? She had within her the faith, love, patience, perseverance, determination... So what was missing? What she desired depended only on her or on other people?



While she meditated on these things, the same voice that had spoken on the cross and in the bush encouraged her, “There is a time to every purpose under the heaven; and the heart of the wise man knows the time and the way. You have known my time in your life. Remain under the guidance of my Spirit and all things will fit perfectly bringing you fulfillment, liberation and victory. When I act, who can prevent it? My word has already been released. But whoever shall turn it back? Arise and shine, for the Lord’s light can be seen upon you. Darkness covers the earth and thick darkness covers

the people, but the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. It is time of new heavens and new earth.”

“When, Lord, since you have eternity before you and for you a thousand years is as one day and one day as a thousand years?”

Silence... Neither Judah pronounced a word.

The powerful voice spoke again, “Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts... I will remove the guilt of this land in a single day.”

A wind began to blow around and took her to the base of the big clock. It was very high and there seemed to have no doors or stairs by where one could reach its apex. She saw the third key hanging on one of the hands of the clock, but how going up there to get it?

“Judah! And now, what do I do?”

“This battle is not for you to fight; take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the Lord on your behalf, for the Lord is with you.”

Suddenly the bells began to ring, once, twice, three times... In the seventh time, the key fell into the hands of Elizabeth and she felt that her time had come. Her trust in the Lord had not been frustrated. Now, the third key belonged to her. The property that was rightfully hers was definitely in her power and nothing else could steal it.



“Judah! The three keys are here!”

“Yes, you got it,” he said.

“Now let me know my land, please.”

Restitution



They arrived and saw the walls around the large property of Elizabeth. Judah showed her the door and said, “Take a turn with each key and the door will open.”

She obeyed and what she saw was amazing. By opening the door, a kingdom was unfolded before her eyes, not just a simple piece of land. The place was so wide that many homes could be built there, countless lives could be blessed. She heard the noise of the waterfall that went down by the rock turning into a river of very clear waters. She would never feel thirsty or suffer the shortage of the desert. The trees were fruitful, the fields of wheat exuded the smell of prosperity and the blessing of the Lord, and His presence in that place gave it the appearance of a sanctuary.



Judah said something; so she made a great discovery: it was his voice which spoke to her on the cross, in the bush and in the clock, when she conquered each of the keys. He was the *Lion of the Tribe of Judah*, the Son, who was giving her His kingdom; hence the seal on the deed. What He gave her would never be taken away from her, for she managed to overcome all the tests. Now she had the maturity to understand the deep things of heaven and the wisdom to deal with its treasures.

He said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him... Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it... Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom...”



*“To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as
I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.”
(Rev. 3: 21)*

*Faith and hope
And the key of love,
Which open the doors
For the Lord's blessing
Faith and hope
And the key of love,
Which open the doors
For the Lord's blessing*

*They are in our power
They are in our being
To perform only
Your will
They are in our power
They are in our being
To obey You
And win*

*We surrender, we dedicate
Our hearts to You
We promise, we submit
Our whole soul to You*

(This is the literal translation of the song – its meaning in English)