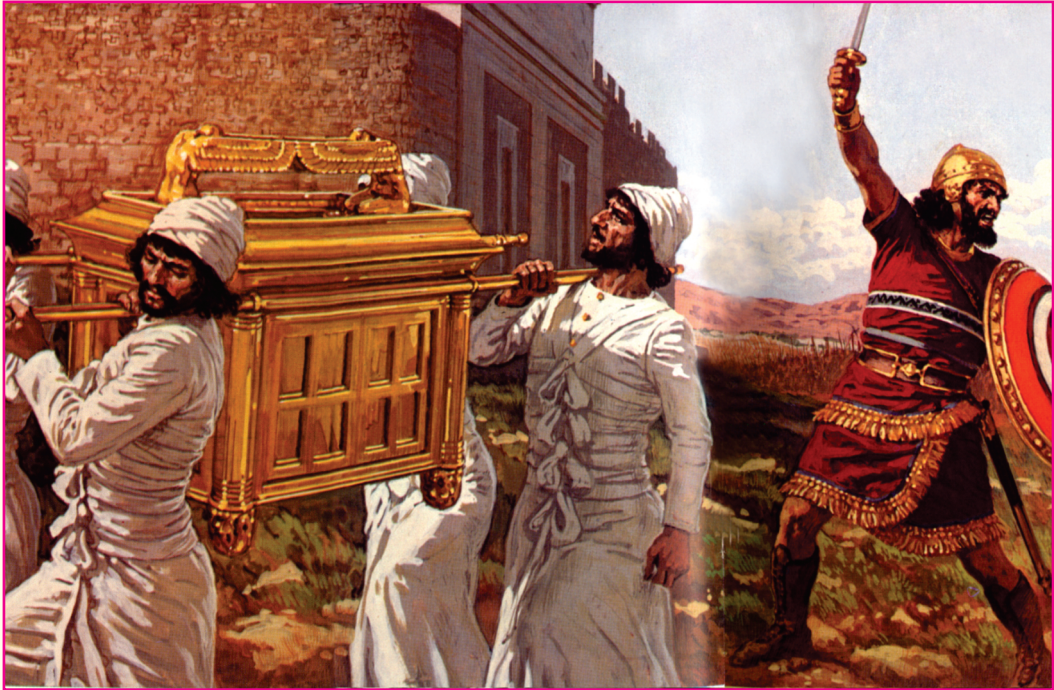


Lesson 10

IN THE PROMISED LAND



Israel, the chosen people defied God on several occasions. Each time God punished them, but later forgave them mercifully and showered them with blessings. In spite of all this they even doubted God's promise of the promised land of Canaan, the land of milk and honey. God gave them suitable punishment. He said: **As punishment for your faithlessness, your children shall wander in the desert as nomads for forty years... You must do penance for forty years in atonement for your misdeeds** (Num. 14:33-34).

Forty years of life in the wilderness was really hard and tedious for the Israelites. Whenever they faced problems, they murmured against Moses and against God. And Moses always begged God for forgiveness on behalf of the people. Thus Moses was leading a people whose prominent traits were disobedience and defiance.

Death of Moses

Moses was the leader of Israel since the days when they were liberated from slavery in Egypt. He was the prophet of God. Though Moses had many drawbacks, God engaged him for this mission giving him courage and strength. He suffered many hardships for the people under his leadership. On several occasions they turned against him. They were prone to accuse him and murmur against him. Once they even tried to stone him to death. Still he always interceded before God on their behalf. He performed penance for the sins of the people. Once he fasted and prayed for forty days as penance for the idolatry of the Israelites (Deut.9: 18). Moses however could not enter the Promise Land.

Once the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain opposite Jericho. Pointing to the Promised Land He said: "This is the land, of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants', I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there" (Deut. 34:4).

Moses died while they were still in the wilderness. He was buried in the valley of Moab. The people of Israel observed thirty days of mourning for their dear departed leader under whom they spent forty years since the exodus from Egypt. There was never a prophet like Moses who spoke face to face with the Lord.

Leadership of Joshua

Aaron whom God had given as assistant to Moses died earlier. God assigned Joshua as the successor to Moses to lead Israelites. Before his death, Moses had blessed Joshua.

Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all the Israelites: "Be strong and bold, for you are the one who will go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their ancestors to give them, and you will put them in possession of it. It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed" (Deut. 31:7-8).

Joshua was the son of Nun and the spirit of wisdom was upon him. The Lord guided Joshua and the people listened to him. Following the directions of Moses, Joshua endeavored to lead the people, trusting solely in God's providence. It was with this total obedience to God that Joshua could bring the people of Israel to the land of Canaan.

Entering the Promised Land

At the end of their forty years of wandering they reached a place called Moab, on the bank of river Jordan. They had to cross the river to enter the land of Canaan. Joshua then said to the Israelites, “draw near and hear the words of the LORD your God... When the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan flowing from above shall be cut off; they shall stand in a single heap” (Josh 3:9-13).

The priests started ahead of the people, carrying the Ark of the Covenant containing the stone tablets that the Lord had given them. The Ark of the Covenant was a symbol of the presence of God. **The people followed the Ark. The moment the priests touched water, the flow stopped. Dry land appeared in the river Jordan.**

Then the people crossed over opposite Jericho. “While all Israel were crossing over on dry ground, the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood on dry ground in the middle of Jordan, until the entire nation finished crossing over the Jordan” (Josh. 3: 16-17). The Israelites, who started on their long journey to Canaan after miraculously crossing the sea, now entered Canaan, after miraculously crossing the river Jordan.

Erecting a Monument

Once they had crossed the Jordan, the people erected a monument to God using twelve stones they collected from the riverbed, as God directed Joshua to do. Joshua asked the people to tell the following generations that this monument was in grateful memory of the miraculous crossing of the river Jordan. The place where they erected the monument was called **Gilgal** (Josh. 4:1-3).

Conquering of Canaan

Camping in Gilgal, the people of Israel conquered the land of Canaan. They achieved this by strictly following the directions that God gave to Joshua. **The first city they conquered was Jericho. God helped the Israelites in a special way to occupy this city strongly fortified and surrounded by high walls** (Josh. 6:1-21).

After this they occupied all the cities and towns of Canaan one by one. Joshua distributed among the twelve tribes of Israel all the land that they occupied. Thus was fulfilled God's promise that He would give Canaan, the land of milk and honey, to the descendants of Abraham. This was the last of the Promises of God to Abraham.

The phrase, 'the land where milk and honey flows' should be understood to mean a land where God's blessing was available in abundance. The slavery of Egypt and the hardships of the wilderness were now over. Now the people of Israel could live in their own land in abundance. God, who is faithful in His promises, had provided for all the needs of the people of Israel.

Heavenly Jerusalem

The people of the New Testament also are on a long pilgrimage like the Israelites of those days. Our pilgrimage is to a new land of Canaan that God, our loving Father, has promised us through Jesus. **At the end of this journey we will reach the goal, the heavenly Jerusalem.** Heaven is the goal of life for all the people of the world. How much more beautiful is heaven compared to the land of Canaan flowing with milk and honey! Heaven is the abode of God's presence. The final goal of each individual is union with God.

Even though the people of Israel committed many offences they did not forget their goal, the land of Canaan. At the end of their hardships they could achieve the goal. This is the message that we get from the life of the people of the Old Testament. We should lead our lives, keeping heavenly Jerusalem as our goal, receiving from God the strength to overcome obstacles that we may face on the way. Thus we will be able to share the bliss of heaven at the end of our earthly lives.

Let us Pray

O God who helped Israelites to reach the promised land, help us to reach heaven.

Read the word of God and narrate

Narrate the event of the Israelites miraculously crossing the river Jordan and reaching the land of Canaan (Joshua 3:1-17).



Word of God for our Guidance

It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.

Do not fear or be dismayed

(Deuteronomy 31:8).

My decision

Like the Israelites who travelled with Zeal to reach the land of Canaan, I will lead a life with zeal to reach heaven.

Let us do

Mark the following places in the map
River Jordan, land of Canaan.



Let us find out the answer

1. What kind of a prophet was Moses?
2. Whom did God appoint as the successor of Moses?
3. Why did Joshua establish a monument at Gilgal?
4. What is the final goal of every human being?