

A Patristic Commentary



THE BOOK OF Joshua

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BY

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FORWARD

Standing with awe and admiration before the great among the prophets, Moses, the receiver of the Law, and the first leader of the people of God, who brought them out of the land of bondage and the bitter servitude of Pharaoh, by the mighty arm of the Lord; Yet, as a representative of the Law, he could not bring them into the land of promise, to enjoy Jerusalem, the city of the great King, and to establish there the temple of the Lord. He had to get them across the wilderness, but to stop at the rim of the River Jordan, on the mountain of Moab; there, to look from afar toward the Promised Land, yet not to enter it; leaving that to 'Joshua', the new leader, as a representative of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is alone capable of realizing what the Law could not do, to bring us up to the inheritance; and by whom the promises, long awaited by humanity, are realized.

Through this evangelical view, we see in the book of Joshua, an open Bible, that draws its strength from the salvation work of our Lord Jesus Christ; and, at the same time, reveals the secrets of the New Testament, and presents them in exalted abundance.

I pray to our gracious Lord Jesus, to use this work, to motivate us through it, to yearn to the enjoyment of our eternal inheritance in Him, through the work of His fiery Holy Spirit.

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(Monastery of St. Mena; Mariut
September 1982)

INTRODUCTION

(1) THE PERSON OF JOSHUA

To understand the Book of Joshua, we should study 'Joshua' as a person, especially during the time he was attached to the prophet Moses, before being given the leadership of the people, to bring them to the Promised Land... We have dealt with that in our interpretation of the Books of Exodus and Numbers.

The name 'Joshua':

'Joshua', is a Hebrew word meaning, (Jehovah is salvation), or (God is the Savior). His name was originally 'Hoshea' (Numbers 13: 8).

As the name "Joshua" is the same as 'Jesus' in Hebrew; that is why this name gave this Book a special attraction, in representing symbolically the person of 'Jesus', as the Savior of humanity, as well as His works with us; something that led the fathers of the Church, to contemplate on every word and every action of Joshua, as symbols of those of the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation.

The name 'Jesus', according to the apostle Paul, is "*above every name*"; given to the incarnate Word of God, to whom, "*every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth*" (Philippians 2: 9, 10)... And as Joshua, son of Nun was the first to carry this name, that was not by chance or without a goal, but to proclaim the leadership work of the Lord Jesus Christ, bringing us into the higher Jerusalem, after crossing over the Jordan, to enjoy the new land, and to worship in the temple of the Lord, with an exalted liturgy.

The scholar Origen says that no one of the old generations carried the name “Jesus” except Joshua, the son of Nun. Indeed, from the day ‘Abel’ was born, “*Men began to call on the name of the Lord*” (Genesis 4: 26); yet he was not qualified to carry that name. Although ‘Noah’, in his generation, was the only one qualified to “*find grace in the eyes of the Lord*” (Genesis 6: 8, 9), yet he was not privileged by that name. Even ‘Abraham’, who was promised to get the covenant; ‘Isaac’, the son of the promise; Jacob, the blessing-snatcher (Genesis 27); and ‘Moses’, the “*faithful in all the Lord’s house*” (Numbers 12: 7; Hebrews: 3: 2); All these were not found worthy of enjoying this honor]¹.

Joshua and the battle of Rephidim:

Joshua, the son of Nun, from the tribe of Ephraim, was born in Egypt, and came out of it together with the prophet Moses, to the wilderness, where he became Moses’ disciple. Yet, the first time we hear of him, was in the battle of Rephidim, when Moses appointed him as a leader of the people in that first battle after the exodus, that had been against Amalek (Exodus 17: 9); He was then 44 years old.

In our study of the book of Exodus, we dealt with that battle, and the symbols it carried²; But what I want to confirm here, is that mentioning Joshua, for the first time in that battle, and our first time to get acquainted with him, carries a special significance, that the divine inspiration intends to present. The Scripture says:

“Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose us some men and get out, fight with

¹ راجع أوريجانوس: عظات على يشوع عظة 1: 1 ترجمة أمال إبراهيم.
² لمؤلف: سفر الخروج 1980، اصحاح 17.

Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand'. So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek" (Exodus 17: 8 - 10)

The divine inspiration probably intended to confirm that our first encounter with 'Jesus', the Lord of glory, is to be through the battle of the cross; in which He came to choose His believers, as strong men, to fight against the devil and his hosts; to enjoy, with His support the spiritual victory over the hosts of darkness. In our acquaintance with the living Jesus, either in the angelic proclamation of His incarnation, His birth, circumcision, fasting, temptation, Baptism, or His ministry, etc ... we see Him through the cross.

We encounter Joshua, the son of Nun, for the first time, as a leader of a victorious army; the secret of his victory being his carrying of the name 'Joshua', conqueror of the devil. Father Lactantius says: [He was chosen a leader of the army against Amalek, the one who attacked the Israelites, to conquer the enemy through his symbolic name; and to lead the people to the Promised Land]¹.

Why did Moses order Joshua to choose men and to fight Amalek? We said that Moses represents the Law; and that Joshua represents the Lord Christ, the Grantor of grace. And as the evangelist says: "*For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*" (John 1: 17). It is as though, the law, represented by Moses, revealing Amalek, the fierce enemy, and making clear the seriousness of the situation; cried out to Jesus Christ, who alone could choose spiritual men, and grant them the possibility of conquest. The law revealed the true Amalek; according to the words of the apostle: "*I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have*

¹ Lactantius: *Divine Inst.* 4: 17.

known covetousness unless the law has said, 'You shall not covet' " (Romans 7: 7); yet being unable to uproot it, he introduced me to Jesus, the conqueror of sin; according to the words of the same apostle: "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes*" (Romans 10: 4). It is as though the law has a double role: To reveal the seriousness of the battle against Amalek (the sin); and to proclaim the need for Jesus, as the leader of the spiritual battle, and the Grantor of conquest.

The scholar Origen comments on this Scripture text (Exodus 17: 8 - 10), saying: [Moses admitted his inability to mobilize the army; and to lead it; although he was the one who made possible, the exodus of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt (Exodus 32: 11). Hence he called Joshua, and said to him: "*Choose us some men, and get out.*" On whom, then, did the responsibility to fight Amalek, fell?!]¹.

What a magnificent symbolic portrait! Moses, saying to Joshua: "*Choose us some men, and get out*". As though, it is the voice of the Mosaic law, that prepared the way for the Savior; crying out, and asking him to choose his believers as mature men (1 Corinthians 16: 3); with no weakness of children, nor softness of women ²; to go out to the spiritual battle, with and by Him; by whose incarnation and making Himself of no reputation, He came out to us, to conquer on our behalf; in our name, and on our account. St. John the beloved saw Him: "*(going) out conquering and to conquer*" (Revelation 6: 2)... He went out, obedient (to the Father) to the point of death (Philippians 2: 8), for the sake of His love for me (Galatians 2: 20); to bear death on behalf of everyone of us; fighting the real Amalek!

¹ In Jos. Hom 1: 1.

² للمؤلف: سفر العدد 1981.

Joshua as a spy:

In our study of the book of Numbers, we talked about Joshua, as a spy, chosen from his tribe; who, together with 'Caleb' the son of Jephunneh, came back with a true report about the Promised Land, springing from their faith in God's true promises. We saw how Joshua should unite with Caleb (heart), as a sign of the union of our faith in Jesus Christ, as a Savior, with the loyalty of the heart and its sanctification, in order to gain the divine promises¹.

Joshua, servant of Moses:

The Book says:

"So Moses arose with his assistant (servant), and Moses went up to the mountain of God" (Exodus 24: 13)

So if Moses refers to the law, unable to provide salvation; how could it be said that Joshua -- as a symbol of Jesus Christ -- is a servant of Moses?!

The scholar Origen interprets the concept of the word (servant) here, saying: [How was he serving him? It was not as someone subordinate to him, but as a helper and guard]². How could our Lord Jesus Christ be counted as a servant to the law, or as its helper? Despite all what the law has realized, it could not realize the salvation of humanity! It only revealed the malady, but could not provide the cure; except it deliver us to the Lord Christ, as the true Physician for the soul. In other words, what the law did, was to utter the verdict of death upon us, confirming the inevitability of our execution; like the leader who places the cover on the head of the condemned, for everyone to

¹ المرجع السابق، ص 77 - 84.

² In Jos. Hom 1: 2.

anticipate the moment of execution. The law condemned the sin in us; thus all of us came under the curse of the law. Instead of enjoying salvation, the curse was confirmed, and we came under the verdict of death. That is why, the Lord Jesus Christ came to remove the ‘head cover of execution’, and to abolish the authority of death, not by words or commands, but through practical love; He carried our body, to receive death in it; and to bear our judgment in His body; He, on whom death is unable to shut in, nor judgment be proven; rose, in order to raise us, righteous, in His body; so that the curse can not, any more, reign on us. That is why the apostle says: “*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law*” (Galatians 3: 13); and, “*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh*” (Romans 8:3).

It is as though the Lord Christ has realized the ultimate aim of the law, namely our salvation, by carrying the judgment in His body, setting us free from judgment; He came under the law, to liberate us from its killing literality. **The scholar Origen** says: [You may probably ask: How could Jesus, the Son of God, be a servant to Moses?! Because, “*When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law*” (Galatians 4: 4)]¹.

Pope Cyril, the Great, speaks about how the Lord Christ would submit to the law, in order to redeem us from its curse, saying: [Now, we see him abiding to the law of Moses; In other words, we see God, the law-giver, keeping the law which He gave!]; Or as the apostle Paul says: “*Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God*

¹ Ibid 2-2.

sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Galatians 4: 3 - 5). And how did He redeem us?...

By keeping the commandments of the law. In other words, on our behalf, Christ, the Redeemer, completely obeyed the Father. As is written: *“For as by one man’s disobedience, many were made sinners; so also by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous”* (Romans 5: 19). Christ, like us, delivered Himself to the law; as it is fitting for Him to consummate all righteousness; He took on Himself the likeness of man, and became as one of us -- we, who are, by our nature, under the yoke of the law; He paid the half shekel, the tax put by the Roman empire on His people ... Therefore, if you see Christ obeying the law, do not get frustrated; and do not put the free Christ among the slaves. You should rather contemplate on the depth of that secret; the secret of salvation and redemption] ¹.

Joshua, the successor of Moses:

Moses proclaimed that Joshua the son of Nun would be his successor, in the presence of Eleazar the High Priest and before the congregation (Numbers 27: 18 - 23). It is as though the law proclaims to the people of God, through the priestly work, the need for Jesus as a new leader, to bring them into the eternal inheritance.

Moses had to die (Joshua 1: 2), for Joshua to receive the leadership. If the soul had been united to the Mosaic Law as her spouse, she could not unite to Jesus except after the death of that first man. The apostle Paul says: *“Do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he*

¹ الحب الإلهي، ص 269، 270ز

lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God” (Romans 7: 1 - 4). And **the scholar Origen** says: [The law had to die, in order that believers would not be accused of adultery]¹. He also says: [If we cannot comprehend how Moses would die, we cannot comprehend how Jesus would reign. When you behold Jerusalem devastated and the temple abolished; If you see no more offers or sacrifices, no priests nor Jewish religious rites; If you behold that all that have come to an end, then you should say: “*Moses, the servant of God is dead*” (Joshua 1: 2). When you see no one “*appears three times in the year before the Lord God*” (Exodus 23: 17; 22); nor anyone who sacrifice a Passover, eats unleavened bread, offers or sanctifies a firstborn (Exodus 22: 28); you should say: “Moses, the servant of God is dead”. But, when you behold the Gentiles entering into faith, the Churches established, and the altars set, not covered with the blood of animals, but sanctified “*with the precious blood of Christ*” (1 Peter 1: 19)... Then you should say that Joshua occupied the position of Moses and got the leadership; yet, it is not Joshua the son of Nun, but Jesus Son of God. When we behold “*Christ our Passover, sacrificed for us*” (1 Corinthians 5: 7); ourselves eating “*the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*” (1 Corinthians 5: 8); and the fruit of the good ground

¹ *In Jos. Hom 1: 3.*

yielding in the Church a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty (Matthew 13: 8 - 23) ... When you see “*the children of God who were scattered abroad, gathered together in one*” (John 11: 52); and the people of God sanctify the Sabbath, not by abstaining from daily life activities, but from evil doing; ... When you see all that, you should say that “*Moses, the servant of God is dead*” , and that Jesus the Son of God has got the leadership]¹. We can, in short say the words of **father Lectantious**: [Joshua succeeded Moses, to reveal that the new law that is given through Jesus Christ succeeds the old law that was given through Moses]².

We should not ignore the role played by the prophet Moses in educating his disciple Joshua; considered by **St. Ambrose** as the ideal discipleship, saying: [It is indeed great for man to attach himself to a good mentor. It is great for a young man to follow the example of wise men; as whoever walks in their company will be as wise; while he, who attaches himself to fools will be like them. Friendship with the wise is a great help that would support our education, and a sure proof of our straight path. Young people quickly become like those to whom they attach themselves].

That is how Joshua the son of Nun became great! He was in union with Moses, and this union not only was a way to educate him in the knowledge of the law, but also to get sanctified and to gain grace! When God’s glory shone in the tent through His presence, Joshua was there! When Moses spoke to God, the holy cloud also covered Joshua (Exodus 24: 12, etc.). The priests and the people used to stand at the foot of the mountain, while Moses and Joshua ascended to its top to receive

¹ *Ibid* 2-1.

² *Divine Inst.* 4: 17.

the law ... When the pillar of cloud descended, and God spoke with Moses, Joshua stood beside him as his servant; he stayed in the tent, while the elderly people stood trembling afar.

In every situation, Joshua kept his union with Moses, amid all those amazing works and awesome secrets. That is why he was in his company as God spoke to him, and succeeded him in authority (Deuteronomy 34: 9).

How beautiful was that union between the old man and his young disciple! One of them gave testimony, while the other provided rest! One of them gave guidance, while the other provided joy!]¹.

Joshua and the preparation for the crossover:

I do not want to go into details of Joshua's life and works; as all that will eventually come with our interpretation of the book itself; but I shall give here just broad lines, to facilitate connecting this Book together.

Joshua gave the people three days to prepare provisions for crossing over the Jordan, to get in to possess the Promised Land (Joshua 1: 10, 11). It is as though he is presenting to us Jesus Christ, who grants us the possibility of being risen with Him (on the third day), as a provision to enjoy Him in the life of the Jordan, to inherit the new life, and to enjoy the new spiritual food.

Joshua and the two spies:

Joshua sent two men to spy the land of Jericho; where they lodged in the house of Rahab, a Canaanite harlot, who hid them in between the stalks of flax on the roof. It is a magnificent portrait of how Christ sent His disciples to preach among the Gentiles, to receive the

¹ *Duties of Clergy* 2: 20.

gospel in their secret life; and how the word of preaching hides in between the stalks of flax, namely in the priestly work (the flax is a symbol of purity, and from it the priestly garments are made); that is spiritually lifted up on the roof.

The king of Jericho chased them; as though he was “*the flesh that lusts against the Spirit*” (Galatians 5: 17); seeking to bring the soul from the heights (the roof), down to the abyss; and not to let her hide in the righteousness of Christ and His priestly works (the stalks of flex).

Joshua and the crossover of the Jordan:

The crossover of the Jordan represents one of the main works of Joshua the son of Nun. It was presented in a special splendid way, if compared to the crossover of the Red Sea under the leadership of Moses; a subject we shall deal with in the interpretation of the third chapter.

Joshua and the secret of rest:

If some call the book of Joshua, “The book of wars and conquests;” we should also call it “The book of rest”; being said: “*Then the land rested from war*” (Joshua 11: 23). And when the apostle Paul intended, in his epistle to the Hebrews, to compare between Jesus and Joshua, he talked about the “rest”. Joshua brought the people into a temporary rest in the Promised Land; Yet the true rest is to be realized in the Person of Christ; in whom God the Father finds His rest, finding in us His children, an object of His pleasure; and in Him we likewise find our rest, seeing God the Father, our Father, opening His eternal bosom, for us to dwell in it, through entering into our Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, I leave the talk about that great leader -- Joshua the symbol of our living Jesus -- until we come to our interpretation of the book; especially the section of the division of the Promised Land, that

refers to our enjoyment of the eternal inheritance, by our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

The authorship of the book:

The Jewish ‘Talmud’, and the majority of scholars, had confirmed that Joshua the son of Nun is the author of this book; except for its five last phrases, that ‘Phinehas’, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron (Joshua 24: 33) most probably added, after the death of Joshua.

The authorship of Joshua, is clear from the fact that this book is written by an eye witness of most of its events; saying for example: *“So it was, when the kings of the Amorites who were on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel until we had crossed over, that their heart melted”* (Joshua 5: 1); and that ‘Rahab’ had been still living as this book was written, saying: *“She dwells in Israel to this day”* (Joshua 6: 25). This book was written before the days of King Solomon, as is obvious from (Joshua 16: 10), if compared to (1 Kings 9: 16): In the book of Joshua, it is mentioned that the children of Ephraim could not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; while the first book of the Kings, mentions that *“Pharaoh King of Egypt had gone up and taken Gezer and burnt it with fire, had killed the Canaanites who dwelt in the city, and had given it as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon’s wife”*. This book was also written before the days of prophet David; as in it is said, *“As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day”* (Joshua 15: 63); while, in (2 Samuel 5: 5 - 9), it is said that David defeated the Jebusites who dwelt in Jerusalem. The

book of Joshua was written before the twelfth century B.C; as in it the name “Sidonians” (Joshua 13: 4 - 6) was mentioned, who, in the twelfth century, were replaced by the Phoenicians, after Tyre swept Sidon before the year 1200 B.C; namely before the Philistines invaded the land; the Philistines were not mentioned among the inhabitants of that region in the days when Joshua invaded it (Chapter 12).

As to the events that occurred after Joshua, these are his death (Joshua 24: 29, 30); Caleb’s conquest of Hebron (Joshua 15: 13, 14); Judges 1: 20); Othniel’s of Debir (Joshua 15: 15 - 19; Judges 1: 11 - 15); and Dan’s of Leshem (Joshua 19: 47; Judges 18) ... These phrases might have been added by the High Priest after the death of Joshua the son of Nun.

Its topic:

At the foot of Mount Moab, the children of Israel, with the Tabernacle of Meeting, the Ark of Testimony, together with the Priests and the Levites, stood looking from afar, across the Jordan, at the Promised Land, that they waited for so long to gain; hoping that their new leader Joshua, will bring them over to it, in order that in them, God’s promises to their fathers would be realized. Indeed, Moses could in his time, enjoy the land of Gilead, west of the Jordan; a land suitable for raising sheep; that the two and a half tribes (Reuben. Gad, and Manasseh) requested to possess; But it was impossible for anyone to possess one single yard of the inheritance, either east or west of the Jordan in the days of Moses; Everyone had to wait for the new leader who, alone, has the right to present the inheritance. It is as though this book is that of the inheritance, that proclaims that by Jesus Christ alone, men of the Old and the New Testaments would gain the eternal inheritance.

This book covers about 31 years, between the death of Moses and the death of Eleazar the son of Aaron; namely 6 years after the death of Joshua. According to Church tradition, these events happened at about the year 1450 B.C.; Some scholars believe that they took place at about the year 1200 B. C.¹; on assumption that certain archeological documents reveal that that region was under the authority of Pharaoh at the year 1600 B.C., and at 1200 B.C. Yet other scholars believe that the Egyptian invasion happened during interrupted intervals over limited regions; so an invasion could have happened prior to their possessing the land at Joshua's time, to be followed by a new one that could have happened over certain regions after it.

The book of Joshua and the Pentateuch:

As far as scientific studies of the Old Testament are concerned, some scholars consider this book as complementary to the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch); calling the six books together, 'the Hexateuch'. The Hebrew classification, however, divides the Old Testament into: The Pentateuch; the early Prophets that begins with this book; and the late Prophets.

It is to be noticed that this book starts with the word "After ..."; as though to connect it to the book preceding it, namely 'Deuteronomy'. Anyway, this book is considered, together with the five books of Moses, an integral unit, especially the two books of Exodus and Numbers. If the book of Exodus represents the crossover from the land of bondage to the wilderness, on the way to Canaan; the book of Numbers, is the book of strife in the wilderness, for the sake of the enjoyment of the inheritance; Then comes the book of Joshua, to realize the goal of the books of

¹ Peak's *Comm. On the Bible*, 1920, p.

Exodus and Numbers, through entering into the Promised Land, and the division of the inheritance among the tribes. We can say that the book of Joshua is the book of 'Resurrection with Christ'; it is inseparable from the book of Exodus that represents 'the crucifixion of the Lord'; and from the book of Numbers, that represents 'the strife'.

The position of this book, in relation to the five books of Moses, is similar to that of the book of 'The Acts of the Apostles', in relation to the four gospels. If the Pentateuch, in essence, present God's promises to the Patriarchs, to possess the land of milk and honey; and the Mosaic law was presented to the believers to practice obedience to God, and to get to know the true worship and salvation, through the sacrifice; The book of Joshua is truly considered as the beginning of the history of the Church in the Promised Land; actually commencing by the possession of the inheritance, and the enjoyment of a certain degree of stability in the holy land, to meditate on God's law, and to worship Him in His holy temple, incessantly offering the sacrifice. It is the book of the Church of the Old Testament, at its beginning, having settled down in the land of Canaan, to live as a representative of the living worship, amid a Gentile world, defiled by pagan practices. It is similar to the book of the Acts of the Apostles, in being the book of the Church of the New Testament, at its beginning, having settled down through the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ, its true inheritance; to practice through Him, the abidance to the new law, that came in the four gospels; and the worship by Spirit and truth; and to offer the unique sacrifice of Christ! This Church is actually enjoying what the holy gospels have brought to us, of the new tidings of joy.

Features of the book:

1- This book included the history of the children of Israel in the beginning of their new life, after they crossed over the Jordan, and settled down in the Promised Land; until the time comes to establish the temple of the Lord, that carries a shadow of the heavenly places. Indeed, this book is telling about the numerous wars that the people of God have gone through since they entered into the land, and their conquests over the nations, to replace them; but it is truly the book of 'God's faithfulness' in realizing His promises to us, despite our unfaithfulness. In the books of Exodus and Numbers we saw the continuous rebellion of man, and his paying for God's gifts to him by denial and bitterness. God used every way possible to proclaim His wrath, yet not to avenge Himself, but to proclaim His rejection, being the Holy, of their rebellions and defilements. Eventually, He had to deprive the first generation as a whole, of enjoying the inheritance, except for Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14: 30). Nevertheless, with joy, God realized His promise to their children, granting them all what He promised their fathers. God remains faithful despite our unfaithfulness; hopes for our salvation, and yearns for our glory, despite our persistent denial.

2- This book revealed to us the 'concept of salvation'; If God lets the people crossover the Jordan; that was in order to possess, together with Joshua, in place of the defiled nations. It is really a living portrait of the concept of salvation; namely, that we, through the Lord, cast away from our heart all defilements, to set ourselves free of the authority of sin; like driving kings away from their cities, destroying their castles, scattering their armies, and taking over their lands. The ultimate goal of all that, is to set the true Joshua as the King of Kings; reigning in us, for us to become by Him kings, and of authority in God. St., John El-Dargy, says about the authority that would become ours in the Lord: [Have authority over your heart as a king; yet sit in the depth of humility! Joy

would go, when you command it to go; sweet weeping would come, when you command it to come; and the rebellious flesh would do, what you command it to do (Matthew 8:9)]¹.

God does not want to reign in us, by enslaving us; and does not seek our worship as slaves, or even as laborers; but, as He reigns, to make us kings.... He wants us to have inner authority within the soul; He is not, as portrayed by the Existentialists, wishing to destroy our freedom, or suppress our will.

3- This book demonstrated the 'Holiness of God'; He does not stand sin, and can not make peace with it. He used His people to chastise the heathen Egyptians for their bitter defilements; those about whom the apostle says: *"Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man -- and birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things; who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator"* (Romans 1: 21 - 25). Yet at the same time, He committed His people -- as tools of chastisement --to be, themselves holy; and in case they deviate from His holiness, to fall under chastisement; not for the sake of punishing them, but in order to get them back to the 'Secret of their holiness'.

4- This book refers to salvation by Jesus Christ, through the entrance of man into a new life, under the leadership of a new leader, in a new land, and to enjoy new food. It is the book of the inheritance, which we, are enjoying here its (advance payment), through the new life, that we got in Jesus Christ; who granted us the authority over the

¹ Ladder, step 7: 39.

hosts of evil, and the possibility of driving away all evil, to enjoy the heavenly rest in Him. It is as though we say, together with the apostle: *“He raise us up together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”* (Ephesians 2: 6,7).

5- If this book is ‘the book of free salvation’, in which God realizes His promises for the sake of His faithfulness, and of His name by which we are called; yet it is ‘the book of obedience to God’; as there is no victory without obedience, and no enjoyment of inheritance through rebellion! Our faith that God gives us the gift of grace, has to be welded with the obedience to God; to be proclaimed as a living faith, working by love.

6- The book of Joshua is also considered as ‘the book of acceptance of the Gentiles’; So, if the people were to inherit Canaan after expelling the heathens; yet God does not reject the later, but only rejects their idolatry and evil. When Rahab, the Canaanite harlot, proclaimed her faith, she, together with her household enjoyed salvation; got the honor to have the Savior Messiah come out of her descent; and her name included in the genealogy of the Lord (Matthew 1: 25); something that several of the heroes of faith and the prophets have been denied! God never rejects anyone, but *“desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Timothy 3: 4).

7- God’s dealings with man carried a new way: He used before, to speak to His children through dreams, visions, or angelic ministry; but now, after Moses, received the law; God speaks to His people through the delivered or written commandment. The main commandment to Joshua, the new leader was:

“Be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do

not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go; This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth.” (Joshua 1: 7, 8)

When Joshua entered into the Promised Land, he chose the Mount of Ebal as his headquarters, where he built an altar to the Lord, on which he wrote a copy of the law of Moses (Joshua 8: 32); and afterwards,

“He read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.” (Joshua 8: 34; 35)

8- The book of Joshua began with the death of Moses as a representative of the law, until Joshua received the leadership and brought the people to the Promised Land; Then the book ended with the death of Joshua, to proclaim that there is no enjoyment of the inheritance, nor of settling down and resting, without the death of our Lord Jesus Christ for us; to die together with Him, and to live with and in Him.

The book of Joshua and the wars:

The wars included in the book of Joshua brought about certain questions: Could not God grant His people the inheritance, without committing them to destroy the nations that inhabited the region?

1- New discoveries revealed the circumstances under which the society in Canaan used to live at that time; and portrayed the incredible extent of corruption reached by man, who worshipped the god Meloch, and the goddess Ashtarot; and where women were committed to practice

adultery as a sort of offering to the gods, and so welter¹. That corruption carried spiritual death and eternal perishing, that words could not describe. The divine verdict, to be realized by the people of God, was but a revelation of the horrible fruit of sin and its destruction of life; these nations have brought upon themselves that destiny. God in His holiness does not stand nor accept corruption; and when He commanded its abolishment, it was not to avenge Himself, but to realize what man had chosen for himself.

2- What did happen, was not to the benefit of Israel alone, but was actually to that of humanity as a whole. That region, having been an important center of commerce; the traders, in their trips, used to carry on, together with their commercial deals, corruption, as though 'black death', to infiltrate into every part of the then known world². God intended to teach humanity a lesson, and to protect the world from that epidemic. From another aspect, as God was preparing the Jewish people to become pioneers to testify to Him, He intended to abolish all corruption around them, to let them live in a pure atmosphere. The divine inspiration says: "*Lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the Lord your God*" (Deuteronomy 20: 18).

Jesus and Joshua:

The personality of Joshua has been connected to that of our Lord Jesus Christ, having been the symbol that precedes the symbolized. Of the numerous aspects of similarity are:

¹ J. M. Gray: *Comm on the Whole Bible*, 1971, p. 166.

² *Ibid.*

1- Joshua came after Moses, the receiver of the law, as a symbol of Jesus Christ, who came after the law, to realize what the later was not able to do. The apostle Paul says: *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses write about the righteousness which is of the law, ‘The man who does those things shall live by them’”* (Romans 10: 4, 5); and he also says: *“For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God”* (Hebrew 7: 18; 19).

2- Joshua, in the old days, led the people to triumph, as a symbol of Jesus Christ, the Grantor of triumph over sin and death, and all the hosts of darkness. The apostle says: *“Who delivers us from so great a death, and does deliver us”* (2 Corinthians 1: 10); and: *“Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place”* (2 Corinthians 2: 14).

3- When the people faced the wrath of God, *“Joshua tore his clothes, and fell on the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening,”* to intercede on their behalf (Joshua 7: 7 - 10). Likewise, when humanity fell under divine wrath, the Word of God incarnated and descended to earth, to intercede for us by His blood to His Father. And as the apostle John says: *“If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but also for the whole world”* (1 John 2: 1, 2).

4- Joshua divided the land of inheritance among the children of Israel; The apostle says about the work of Christ in us: *“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the*

purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1: 11).

Canaan and the Canaanites:

As the book of Joshua is the ‘book of inheritance’ that proclaimed the realization of God’s promises to His people, concerning their entrance into the land of inheritance; I find it necessary to talk about that land, and the peoples who used to inhabit it.

‘Canaan’ is the fourth son of ‘Ham’ (Genesis 10: 6; 1 Chronicles 1: 8); His descendants dwelt in the land, west of the Jordan, that was called by the name ‘Canaan’; also called ‘the land of Israel’ (1 Samuel 13: 19); ‘the holy land’ (Zechariah 2: 12); ‘the land of promise’ (Hebrews 11: 9); and ‘the land of the Hebrews’ (Genesis 40: 15), after ‘Aber’ the grandfather of Abraham. The Phoenicians and the Hebrews used to consider Phoenicia as a part of Canaan; Abraham dwelt in it, and he got the promise that it will be possessed by his descendants (Genesis 26: 45); but Jacob left it because of the famine (Genesis 46), and went to Egypt with his children.

In the days of Joshua, the Canaanites with all their different tribes or peoples, used to dwell in the valleys and coastal regions, where water was more abundant than on the mountains. They dwelt in fortified cities all over the plains; every city as an independent state, with its own king, rulers, elate, army, commercial projects, religious establishments, and slaves. There was no central government¹.

We can divide the Canaanites into three groups of peoples or tribes:

¹ C. M. Laumann: *Interpreter's one-volume Comm-on the Bible*, p. 123.

a- Well established and settled down tribes; that reached a degree of civilization, as the Phoenicians on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, who became of the most important sea merchants in the old world. There were as well, smaller tribes in the valleys and hills, between the sea and the Jordan, like the Amorites; or east of the Jordan, like the Moabites and the Ammonites.

b- Semi-Bedouins, like the Edomians, and smaller tribes.

c- All-Bedouin tribes, like the Midianites, the Ishmaelites, and Amalek, who were nomadic in the Arabian desert¹.

The following is a concise view of these tribes:

1- The Anakims:

Descendants of 'Anak'; The name 'Anak' refers to the enormity of their stature; portrayed by the Jewish tradition as (giants), and as mighty men of valor (Numbers 13: 28, 33; Deuteronomy 2: 10, 21; 6: 2). Three of Anak's sons dwelt in 'Hebron' (Numbers 13: 32); while the rest of them dwelt in the neighboring cities within the valleys. They were dreaded by the Hebrews even before they fought them, until Joshua defeated them and divided their possessions among the Jews; giving Hebron to 'Caleb the son of Jephunneh' (Joshua 11: 21, 22; 14: 12, 15). They are counted as 'Rephaim', reputed for their great numbers and huge body stature (Deuteronomy 2: 10); it is presumed that 'Goliath' was one of them².

2- The Rephaims:

The scholar Origen believes that the word 'Rephaim' means (loosely mothers); while others believe it to mean (spirits of the

¹ *Peak's Comm.*, p. 3.

² *New Westminster Dict. Of Bible*, p. 41.

deceased) or (shadows of death); this name was used in the Old Testament with more than one meaning:

a- Meant to be one of the tribes of the region of Canaan, before Israel, that was attacked by 'Chedorlaomer', king of Elam (Genesis 14: 5). In the book of Deuteronomy, the Rephaims were mentioned as a group of peoples preceding Israel, certain of which dwelt in the land of Moab, the Moabites called them 'Emim' (Deuteronomy 2: 11); while others dwelt in the land of the Ammonites, who called them 'Zamzummim' (Deuteronomy 2: 20), and some inhabited at Bashan where Og was their last king. That widely stretched distribution of the Rephaims, led some scholars to believe that the word 'Rephaims' means (the predecessors); yet this interpretation is doubtful; According to them, every people calls those who preceded them in a certain region by that name, meaning their predecessors¹.

b- The second meaning is (the deceased)² who went down to the abyss, and do not praise the Lord; translated in the book of Proverbs as (the dead) (Proverbs 2: 18; 21: 16), those with no work nor life³.

c- The word 'Rephaim' was used as a name of a valley close to Jerusalem and Bethlehem⁴, south-west of Jerusalem and the valley of Hinnom⁵, known for its fertility (Isaiah 17: 5). It was called after the people who used to dwell in it for some time; and called nowadays as 'Valley of Hinnom'.

3- The Amorites:

¹ John L. McKenzie: *Dict. Of Bible*, 1972, p. 730

² *Ibid.*

³ في اللغة الugaritic.

⁴ *New Westminster Dict. Of Bible*, p. 798, *Josuiq. Antiq.* 7: 4:1; 2 Sam. 23: 13-14.

⁵ *Jos. Antiq.* 15: 18; 18; 16.

Some believe that this word comes from the Acadian word 'Amr', meaning (command); or it may also mean (guard, supporter, or patron) ¹. The beginning of their history is obscure; but they played an important role in the region of 'the fertile crescent'; their domain of authority having extended from Palestine to Sisa. All along 3000 years, the Babelonians used to call Syria and Palestine as the land of the Amorites; the first Babylonian dynasty, founded by 'Samu-abu', in the year 1894 B. C., has been Amorite; its most important king was 'Hamorabi' (the 18 / 17 century B. C.); that came to an end when the Hivites devastated Babylon².

The Amorites are included among the Canaanite peoples or tribes; they are descendants of Ham. This classification seems to be geographic more than ethnologic³. In the days of Abraham, they appeared dwelling close to the Dead Sea in 'Hazezon Tamar' (Genesis 14: 7): "... dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were allies of Abram" (Genesis 14: 13). And in (Genesis 48: 22), Shechem was called an Amorite city. They had a kingdom east of Palestine, under the authority of 'Sihon', defeated by the Israelites (Numbers 21: 21). West of Palestine -- according to the Jewish tradition -- the Amorites dwelt on the mountains, while the Canaanites dwelt in the coastal regions and in the valley of the Jordan (Numbers 13: 9). In the book of Joshua (10: 5), the five kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Yermuth, Lachich, and Eglon, were mentioned as Amorite kings, defeated by Joshua at Gibeon. ... Some of the Amorites remained in the land of Canaan after the invasion, and were widely

¹ Strong Dict of the Hebrew Bible, p. 4.

² New Westminster Dict. Of Bible, word Amorites.

³ Mckenzie, p. 26.

dispersed in the whole region. In the days of the prophet Samuel, the Hebrews made peace between Israel and the Amorites (1 Samuel 7: 14); and were used by king Solomon for forced labor (1 Kings 9: 20, 21). It seems that because of their importance, the name 'Amorites' was given to the whole people of the region of Canaan (Joshua 7: 7; Judges 6: 10).

4- The Gibeonites:

The name 'Gibeon' is a Hebrew name meaning (hill); it was the main city of the Hivites, in Canaan, who are also related to the Amorites (2 Samuel 21: 2); and also possessed by Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim (Joshua 9: 17).

Nowadays, it is the village of Jib, lying on the top of a plateau, eight miles, north-west of Jerusalem, not far from the valley of Eglon¹. The older city has been much wider and more elevated than the hill on which the new one lies. J. B. Pritchard discovered it along four seasons, starting from the year 1956; and his discoveries confirmed what came in the Holy Book, that it was a great royal city (Joshua 10: 2); and that Gibeon, in the days of the Israeli reign, has been the greatest center of wine production; that it was called the Industrial Regions².

Gibeon became the portion of the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18: 25); and was given to the children of Aaron as one of the cities of the Levites (Joshua 21: 17).

5- The Hivites:

The word 'Hawwah' meaning in Hebrew (a village of tents), and in Arabic, (a group of tents; was referred to one of the races of Canaan prior to the Hebrew invasion (Genesis 10: 17; Exodus 3: 17; Joshua 9:

¹ *Ibid*, p. 307.

² *Ibid*.

10); who were dispersed in numerous societies; were uncircumcised; and some of them dwelt in Shechem in the days of Jacob (Genesis 33: 18; 34: 2; 14 - 24). The influence of their descendants remained in the city for several generations after the invasion (Judges 9: 28); some of them dwelt in Gibeon and its surroundings; and had a peace treaty with Joshua (Joshua 9). Up till the days of King David, they possessed villages in the northern mountainous regions (2Sam.24:7), extending from the Mount of Harmon to the entrance of Hama (Joshua 11: 3; Judges 3: 3). The Hivites who were inhabitants of Palestine, were used by King Solomon as forced labor (1 Kings 9: 20 - 22; 2 Chronicles 8: 7).

Some may probably ask whether the Hivites had a true independent existence! Actually, the 'Horites; Hurrians' have early dwelt in Palestine and Syria; and there was some confusion between the two words 'Hivites' and 'Horites' in the Hebrew texts. In the book of Genesis (36: 2), there was a mention of 'Zibeon' the Hivite; while, in the same chapter (36: 20, 39), he was mentioned as a Horite. The word 'Hovite' in Hebrew' (Genesis 34: 2), came in the Septuagint Version as 'Horite' ... There is a probability that a section of the Horites were known as Hivites; although the word 'Horite' is the original¹.

6- The Hittites²:

Since the year 1871 A. D., when certain inscriptions were discovered in Kerkamis, our knowledge of the Hittites began; they represented a great eastern empire beside those of the Nile valley, and the valley of Tigris and Euphrates. An empire of Hittites flourished in Asia Minor between the years 1900 and 1200 B. C.; although their real race was not known. Some of them are seen in the inscriptions of the old

¹ *New Westminster Dict.*, p. 400.

² *Ibid*, P. 398-400.

Egyptian civilization, with long noses; and it seems that the modern Armenians are their descendants.

The word 'Hittites' concerns three groups at least:

a- Those who dwelt in middle Anadolia, the 'Hattians'.

b- Those who dwelt around the capital of Hatoshash, the 'Nesians'.

c- Those who dwelt in the south of the empire, and spoke a variety of Heroglyphic.

Historically, we should differentiate between the Hittite empire, and the Hittite states in north Syria and southeast Asia Minor. According to Archeology, the word 'Hittite' concerns the remnants of a famous unique culture that existed in Asia Minor, north of Syria and north of Mesopotamia. And despite the resemblance between the Hittite findings in Asia Minor, and those in northern Mesopotamia and north Syria (including the region of Torus), yet other factors indicate a complete separation between the two groups. It seems that the Anadolian Hittite culture was centered in Cabadokia, whose potteries indicate a close relationship with Troy.

Anyway, the real clue to the issue of the Hittites, came with the discovery of 10,000 clay tablets in the Coy Turkish harbor (the location of old Hatoshash), inscribed with Assyrian or Mesmerian letters, representing a number of languages: Somerian, Acadian, and Hittitian; and the inscriptions on the Hittite remains were written in Hittian Heroglyphic letters, representing the second important tongue in the empire; that look like Arian (Euro- Indian), that was used in the Hittite empire between the years 1600 and 700 B. C.

The modern historians divide their history¹ into three stages: the old kingdom, the Hittite kingdom, and the modern Hittite kingdom; something that needs a longer talk.

In the Old Testament, it came that the Hittites were the descendants of Heth, the second son of Canaan. We read that Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite (Genesis 23: 10 - 18); that Essau took two Hittite wives (Genesis 26: 34); as well as many Hebrews later on (Judges 3: 5, 6); King David had Hittite allies (1 Samuel 26: 6); and got married to Bathsheba, wife of Uria the Hittite (2 Samuel 11: 2 - 27); King Solomon had Hittite women (1 Kings 11: 1); and used Hittite forced labor (1 Kings 9: 20 - 22). The Hebrews considered them a well- known strong people, and recognized their land (Joshua 1: 4), considered them with the Syrian kings of Aram (1 Kings 10: 29); and put them on the same level with the Egyptians, as a sign of their greatness (2 Kings 7: 6).

7- The Jebusites:

The scholar Origen believes that the word 'Jebus' means (to trample with feet); carrying a symbolic meaning of defiling something.

The word 'Jebus' appeared, as the name of Jerusalem in (Judges 19: 10; 1 Chronicles 11: 4); although, seen by some scholars as embracing also the surrounding mountains, and by others as confined to Zion, or the city of David, on the eastern mountain.

The Jebusites appeared as one of the tribes that dwelt in Canaan (Genesis 15: 20; Numbers 13: 29; Deuteronomy 7: 1; Joshua 3: 10; Judges 3: 5; 1 Kings 9: 1; Nehemia 9: 8); they were descendants of Canaan (Genesis 10: 16; 1 Chronicles 1: 14); submitted by Joshua, but

¹ Mckenzie, p.363 /4.

stayed in Jerusalem (Joshua 15: 63; Judges 1: 21) until the days of David; and were used by Solomon as forced labor (1 Kings 29: 21); and some of them remained in Judea, until after the return from captivity (Ezra 9: 1, 2).

8- The Perizzites:

Some scholars believe that the word means ‘the inhabitants of an open village’; but Origen believes that it means ‘abundant fruition’

Some noticed that the Perizzites were sometimes counted together with the Canaanites (Genesis 13: 7; 34: 30; Judges 1: 4); and seen them as the ‘Rephaims’, of the original inhabitants of that region; of a different race from the Canaanites, and older than them in the land. They were counted among the 7 peoples, that God commanded His people to avoid making any covenant with them or to marry among them (Deuteronomy 7: 2, 3); a command they disobeyed (Judges 3: 5). King Solomon used them as forced labor (1 Kings 9: 20).

9- The Gergashite:

These were counted with the Canaanite tribes (Genesis 15: 21; Deuteronomy 7: 1; Joshua 3: 10; 24: 11; Nehemiah 9: 8); we know nothing further about them.

We should not confuse them with the ‘Gergesenes’, mentioned in the New Testament (Matthew 8: 28 - 33; Mark 5: 1); there is no connection between the two of them.

The book of Joshua and Archeology:

The excavations by Professor Sellin, in the region of Jericho and its surroundings revealed conformity between what came in the book of

Joshua, and the archeological discoveries¹. It is easy to recognize the foundations of the walls that the Canaanites used to build around their cities; having used multi-sided and multi-angular stones; while the Israelites used cubical stones. The remains of the fallen walls of Jericho are still conserved, together with the remains of a 6-feet house that has been on that wall.

Dr. John Elder² says that the excavations revealed that Jericho has been one of the oldest cities in the world; probably dating back to 6700 B. C. The specifications of that city conforms with what came in the book of Joshua (2: 15), that it was surrounded by walls, bound together from above by transverse connections, on which houses were built; and that there was only one entrance to the city (Joshua 2: 5 - 7). It is obvious from the remains, that the whole city was burnt with fire (Joshua 6: 24); Yet it is evident that it was not looted before being burnt; as grains, lentils, onions, dates, and even dough, were found in clay containers; in obedience to Joshua's command, not to take anything from that city (6: 17 - 19). Finally, all evidences show that the burnt Jericho had been left as it was, and not rebuilt for several centuries; which conforms with the curse uttered by Joshua (Joshua 6: 26; 1 Kings 16: 34); and that the destruction of that city happened at about the year 1500 B. C.; which conforms with what came in the Holy Book.

Sections of the book:

(1) The spiritual wars and the conquest; Chapters 1 to 12 .

1- Preparation for the inheritance 1 to 5

2- Inheritance of the middle section 6 to 8

¹ J. M. Gray, P 180.

² الأحجار تتكلم للدكتور جون إلدر، تعريب د. عزت زكي، فصل 7.

- 3- Inheritance of the southern section 9 & 10
- 4- Inheritance of the northern section 11 & 12
- (2) Division of the land 13 to 19
- (3) Cities of the Levites, and cities of refuge 20 to 22
- (4) Farewell commandments 23 & 24

THE FIRST SECTION

**THE SPIRITUAL WARS AND
CONQUEST**

(Chapters 1 to 12)

1- Preparations for the inheritance	Ch 1 - 5
2- Inheritance of the middle section	Ch 6 - 8
3- Inheritance of the southern section	Ch 9 - 10
4- Inheritance of the northern section	Ch 11 - 12

PREPARATIONS FOR THE INHERITANCE

The book of Exodus presents us with a living portrait of the crossover from the land of bondage, and the setting forth from the captivity of Pharaoh. Yet that achievement would be incomplete and useless, unless those who crossed over enter the land of promise, and enjoy the promises of God. The crossover is, negatively, an exodus; while, positively, it is an entrance! It is liberation from the captivity of the devil, to enjoy entering into the divine bosoms in Jesus Christ, the true leader of the spiritual crossover.

And just as the exodus necessitated long preparations: the appearance of Moses as the first leader of the people; God's work with him, in his relation with Pharaoh and with the people; and God's works of salvation, through the plagues, especially that against the firstborns, that necessitated the slaying of the Passover lamb, and the division of the Red Sea ... ; Likewise the entrance to inheritance, needed several preparation, recorded in the first five chapters of the book of Joshua:

In the first chapter: God proclaimed that He is the true factor in that salvation; He chose Joshua; supported him and the people by His word, the Grantor of life; by His spiritual food presented to them; and by His faithfulness in realizing His promises.

In the second chapter: Here, the human factor is demonstrated, in the person of 'Rahab' the Gentile harlot; who, despite her unworthiness to enjoy salvation; yet through living faith, she entered as a member of the holy congregation; and the Savior Messiah came of her descent.

In the third chapter: The possibility of the Jordan was presented; where the Lord Christ Himself brings us up to its sweet waters; to turn our backs to the wilderness; looking forward to the eternal inheritance, not as something far from us! ... Through the holy Baptism, enlightenment is realized, to comprehend the incomprehensible!

In the fourth chapter: The Church, hidden in the waters of the Jordan is revealed; where the tribes carry 12 stones that represent the holy Church. There is no crossover to the eternal inheritance outside the hidden Church; namely the fellowship in the body of Christ.

In the fifth chapter: The second circumcision is realized, and the Passover feast is celebrated. There is no entrance by the old man; but there should be a circumcision of the heart, in order that the new man would come to replace the old one. All this is realized through Jesus Christ, our Passover.

In short, we can say that the possibilities that came to be ours to enjoy the eternal inheritance are:

- 1- Realizing that God is the One working in us, and our spiritual leader. (Chapter 1)
- 2- Enjoyment of the living and practical faith (Rahab the harlot, Chapter 2)
- 3- Enjoyment of sonship to God through Baptism (Crossing over the Jordan, Chapter 3)
- 4- Entrance into the fellowship of the Church (Chapter 4)
- 5- Casting off the old man, and putting on the new one, through the new Passover (Chapter 5)

CHAPTER 1

IT IS GOD WHO WORKS! CHOOSING JOSHUA

The book opened by the proclamation of Moses' death, and the delivery of leadership to Joshua. The divine inspiration has made it very clear in that proclamation, that God is the real leader, who chooses His ministers, grants them help and wisdom, supports them by His law (His divine Word), and accompanies them in every work.

1- Moses dies so that Joshua would reign	1 - 2
2- God's faithfulness in His promises	3 - 5
3- He would always be with His ministers	5 - 7
4- His law as a support to His minister	8 - 9
5- The divine provision	10 - 11
6- The human role	12 - 18

1-Moses dies so that Joshua would reign:

"After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: 'Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them -- the children of Israel.' " (Joshua 1: 1, 2)

God, who chose Moses to lead His people, and to bring them out of the land of bondage to Mount Sinai, to receive the divine law, as a guide and a support amid the wilderness of this world, confirming, *"I will certainly be with you"* (Exodus 3: 12), is, Himself, proclaiming the death of Moses, and the choice of Joshua to lead the crossover, and to realize the inheritance. Moses had to die, for Joshua to appear; the law had to come to an end, for us to enjoy grace. God is The One who works in the two stages, by His integrated divine plan ... The secret of strength in both the ministries of Moses and Joshua, is in God's call to them, to realize His divine will.

God, who chose Moses, a representative of His law, is Himself, the One who allowed his death, to set Joshua, a representative of Jesus,

His only-begotten Son. I have previously spoken, in the introduction to this book, about the connection between Moses' death and the setting of Joshua; namely, putting an end to the law, for the enjoyment of grace.

Father Caesarius, Bishop of Arles says: [Moses died, for Joshua to reign! The old law came to an end, in order that the true Joshua -- namely Jesus -- would reign. Indeed the evangelist testifies: "*The law and the prophets, up to John ...*" 'Moses' here means (the law); as it is said, "*They have Moses and the prophets*" (Luke 16: 29); namely, they have the law and the prophets; The apostle also says: "*But even to this day, when Moses is read ...*" (2 Corinthians 3: 15); namely, when the law is read. Therefore, by putting an end to the law, our Lord Jesus ascends to the throne]¹. With another expression, **St. Erinaus** says: [It was fitting for Moses to bring the people out of Egypt, for Jesus to bring them into inheritance. Moses, as a representative of the law, had to stop; so that Joshua (Jesus), being the incarnate Word, would give the people the good tidings]².

God, who called Moses to work, is now, calling Joshua; or according to the apostle Paul, "*God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son*" (Hebrews 1: 1).

Calling Joshua was not the end of the story; but God remained the real spiritual leader, working through Joshua; commanding him: "***Therefore rise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people to the land which I am giving to them***" (Joshua 1: 2). We dare to say, that this divine command, is a symbol revealing the relationship of the Father with Jesus, His beloved Son. If Jesus "*became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross*" (Philippians 2: 8), He was risen by the Father, not as an outer gift He granted Him, but as a proclamation of accepting the cross, through the will of the Father, that the Son would be raised; to go, together with his people, over the Jordan (the water of Baptism), for us to gain the fellowship of eternal inheritance. Jesus is the resurrection (John 11: 25); He has previously proclaimed that He has the authority to lay down His life, and has the power to take it again (John

¹ Sermon 116: 1.

² Fragm. 19.

10: 18). For our sake, He receives death; and for our sake He receives resurrection, which is not an outer nature granted to Him, as He, Himself, is the Grantor of life (John 11: 25). That is what God symbolically proclaimed to Joshua: *“Arise, go ...”* The Son rose in obedience to the Father, and for us, went over our tomb; granting us the power of resurrection, through His Baptism; so as to praise Him, saying: *“He raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places”* Ephesians 2: 6).

It was not possible for Moses to cross the Jordan, to enter the land of inheritance; as he does not carry the power of resurrection, nor the authority to *“slay the reptile that is in the sea”* (Isaiah 27: 1); while Joshua, on the other hand, carries the symbol of Jesus Christ, who crosses with power, to slay the reptile, and to break the sting of death by His resurrection (Revelation 20: 2; 1 Corinthians 15: 55).

2- God’s faithfulness in His promises:

“Every place that the soles of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.”(Joshua 1: 3)

He has previously confirmed to Moses, that He is giving them the land, that He promised the fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; God remains faithful in His promises, despite our unfaithfulness, according to the words of the apostle: *“For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed let God be true, but every man a liar”* (Romans 3: 3, 4). If the generation that came out of Egypt, and of Pharaoh’s servitude, disobeyed God; yet God remains faithful, and realizes His promises to their children.

He is faithful in His promises; and knows the “fullness of time,” to give His gifts according to His perfect divine plan, for our salvation and our good. Man, because of his human weakness, and his bond with the vain time, likes to see God, promptly giving him everything; but God, who cares for our salvation, does not only know what to give, and to what extent He would give, but He also chooses the right time, in order that His gift would realize His goal in us.... Abraham and Sarah requested a son, and for a long time, until they despaired, and grew so

old, that Sarah asked her man to get descendants through her maidservant. But God eventually granted her a blessed son, out of her own womb (that became as good as dead); who came at the right time to realize a portion of God's plan for the salvation of the whole mankind! He gave her what she could not expect or dream of; yet at the time He predestined.

God is Faithful in His promises, even if we assumed that He is late. That is as far as He is concerned; But from our side, it is not fitting for us to pay back the positively of God's love toward us, by our own negativity; namely, to pay back His faithfulness by our own unfaithfulness. That is why the Lord says to the Bishop of the Church of Smyrna: "*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life*" (Revelation 2: 10). But, how could we acquire that attribute of faithfulness, if not by union with the only faithful, who is able to grant us His attributes, working in us?! The apostle Paul says: "*He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it*" (1 Thessalonians 5: 24); He is alone faithful and capable of granting us His faithfulness to work in us, through our fellowship with Him!

That is concerning God's faithfulness, and our likewise commitment through our union with Him; But concerning the gift that He gave, He says: "***Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given you***".

It is as though God wishes to bring us up to a race that has no limit; He gives without limits, but it is we, who present the limits. Let us hasten, as long as we are still in this world; Let us tread upon all the love of the world with the soles of our feet; as every place that the soles of our feet tread upon, He will grant us as a gift from Him!

Our fathers lived through this race, yearning to enjoy the free inheritance, through their incessant strife by God; according to the words of the apostle: "*If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead., I press toward the goal for the*

prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3: 11 -- 14).

As to the inheritance, does God care that we inherit land, or does he mean the literal meaning of treading upon it with the soles of our feet?! I do not think so; If He has promised the people in the Old Testament, to give them the land they tread upon with their feet; that in essence, carries what is far greater: that is our inheritance of heavenly places in which we enter and dwell! Some fathers believe that these lands refer to the position that was the devil’s and his hosts’ before their fall; as he has been an angel of light close to God -- the Morning Star -- by whose fall, he also treaded upon our hearts with his feet. Therefore, under the leadership of the true Joshua, we have to get our land back, and to tread upon the devil and his hosts with our feet, according to the Lord’s promise to “*give us the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy*” (Luke 10: 19); so that, we would not only get our hearts back, but we would occupy the position that was the devil’s before.

Concerning this, **the scholar Origen** says: [Consider what Joshua promised his soldiers at that time: “*Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you*” (Joshua 1: 3). That promise represented the lands of the Canaanites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and all the nations, whose lands were confiscated, having been unworthy of them. But, for us, these words embrace other promises: There are capable satanic races, against which we should make war, and with which we should valiantly wrestle in this life. If we manage to tread upon those mighty hosts with our feet, and defeat them in battle, we shall occupy their lands, provinces, and kingdoms that the Lord Christ will give us. Those mighty hosts were angels before, who used to have fellowship in the splendor of God’s kingdom. Haven’t we read what the prophet Isaiah said about one of them: “*How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning !*” (Isaiah 14: 12). The dwelling place of Satan, the chief devil, was prominent in heaven; but once he turned into a fallen angel, I became worthy, by the Lord Jesus, of treading upon him under my feet (Romans 16: 20); and got the right to enjoy his former place in heaven. By this we can understand the promise

of the Lord Jesus, that every place we tread upon with our feet, he will give to us. Yet, we should not assume that we could enjoy this inheritance while we are still under the spell of negligence and listlessness] ¹. **The scholar Origen** presents to us the (devil of anger) as an example of what we should tread under our feet, to drive him out of the land of promise (our hearts), in order that Jesus would reign in his place, saying: [Anger had caused that angel to fall from his rank; So if you fail to overcome him in your heart; if you do not drive him out, you will not be able to gain, as inheritance, the position that that angel had once occupied; and you will never drive him out of your land of promise, as long as you are listless. The same applies to the devils of pride, envy, selfishness, and uncleanness; every one of them has its harmful angels that initiate and encourage evil. If you cannot overcome them in your heart, to purify it from them; that which was already purified by the grace of Baptism, you will never enjoy the promised inheritance².

The scholar Origen is credited with another allegoric interpretation, which is that, for the believer to enjoy the eternal spiritual inheritance, he has first to tread, with his feet, upon the 'low land'; namely to tread upon the killing letter of the law, to enjoy the spiritual interpretation, that lifts us up to the heavenly places. Whoever walks according to the spirit of the literal law, will live by an earthly mind; while whoever walks by the grace, will live spiritually in the heavenly places. He says: [What are these places upon which we tread with our feet?! They are the message of the law lying down on the low lands; never to be lifted up, as long as we walk in the literality of the law. Therefore, if you intend to be lifted up from the letter to the spirit, and rise from the historical significance to higher comprehension, you would be worthy of the exalted inheritance that God gives you. If you manage to comprehend the symbols in what is written, and understand its divine significance; If you seek by your spirit and mind, the things from above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God, you will inherit these things according to the words of our Savior and Redeemer: "*Where I am, there My servant will also be*" (John 12: 26); If you reach to where Christ sits

¹ In Jos. Hom 1: 6.

² Ibid.

at the right hand of God, through your faith, life, purity, virtue, and the soles of your feet, that were washed by Jesus (John 13: 5), you will inherit these places that God will give you, and will become a heir to God and a heir with Christ (Romans 8: 17)]¹. The scholar Origen believes that treading with the sole of feet means the setting forth of the soul through its spiritual comprehension of the spiritual thought and deep interpretation of the word of God, through a life of faith, pure and sanctified by God.

As to the extent of that land that they will inherit, God says:

“From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates.” (Joshua 1: 4)

In this verse we notice:

(1) Its boundary is the wilderness; as the land of promise is actually our hearts that became, through their opening to the devil, a desolate and lifeless wilderness; that will turn, by Joshua’s entrance, into a fruitful paradise that pleases the heart of the Lord. That is why the prophet says: *“The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad ...”* (Isaiah 35: 1); and also says: *“More are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman”* (Isaiah 54: 1). And in the Book of Songs, it is said to the bride: *“Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?”* (Songs 8: 5). **St. John Chrysostom** says: [We, who were not worthy of earthly glory, are lifted up to the kingdom of heaven; enter heavens, and take our place before the divine throne]². Thus we leave the wilderness, not to enter into an earthly or worldly paradise, but into heaven itself, to be before the divine throne.

(2) He says *“From the wilderness and this Lebanon”*; and according to the Septuagint version: to the location of ‘Antilibanon’, and not Lebanon itself ... The inheritance is not to be given to those who have been in the wilderness, but to those who were in Antilibanon. **The scholar Origen** believes that Lebanon refers to the Jews; while Antilibanon refers to the Gentiles who replaced the Jews through faith; saying: [If you see the first nation, which is according to the flesh --

¹ Ibid 2: 3.

² الحب الإلهي: ص 732.

Israel, that was before the good “*olive tree*” (Romans 11: 24); understand that it is the real Lebanon; But, because of its lack of faith, it was deprived of the kingdom of God, that was “*given to a nation bearing the fruits of it*” (Matthew 21: 43). When you see one nation expelled, and another occupying its place in the Kingdom, you should understand that the later nation is ‘Antilibanon’, which is ‘*The Church of the living God*’ (1 Timothy 3: 15); that was assembled “*also of the Gentiles*” (Romans 9: 24), by our Lord Jesus Christ] ¹.

(3) “As far as the great river, the River Euphrates ... and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.” (Joshua 1: 4)

The River Jordan entered into the territory of the Hebrews, being the ‘River of life’; namely, the holy Baptism, without which we would not enjoy inheritance, nor life. In the Book of Revelations, St. John saw, “*He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the lamb*” (Revelation 21: 1). The waters of this world that fills the soul with corruption, would not enter into the land of promise: neither the great river nor the great sea ... Also in Revelation, He says: “*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea*” (Revelation 21: 1). Let the waters of this world stay out of the territory of the land of promise; Let it not enter into our hearts, or disturb our souls, until our days pass away in peace!

“*Toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory*” (Joshua 1: 4); as though the Sun of righteousness would never set on our land; would always shine in us; granting us a spiritual enlightenment, that would never stop.

3- He would always be with His ministers:

“*No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you.*” (Joshua 1: 5, 6)

If God called on Joshua to work, yet it is God who would work by and in him ... “*As I was with Moses, so I will be with you.*” As though

¹ In Jos. Hom 2: 3..

He is saying to him: If Moses succeeded in his mission, I was the secret of his success; so I will also be the secret of your success!

Through this divine companionship, the minister would have no personal enemy; He would love all people, and desire their salvation. And if he encounters an opponent, it would be the evil one who agitates the people, and not the people themselves; That is why he says: *No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life*" (Joshua 1: 5). This does not mean that a minister will not encounter any opponent; but should understand that the real opponent is the ruler of the kingdom of darkness! Concerning this the apostle says: *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Ephesians 6: 12)

Also through God's company, man would realize that he is hidden in God, the true leader of the battle; so he should not fear the hosts of darkness; as they are not wrestling against him, but against the divine Leader himself. That is why God confirms to Joshua: *"I will not leave you or forsake you; Be strong and of good courage"*. God wishes His ministers to be filled with hope and trust in Him, as the soldiers trust in their leader. That is what we feel in the words of the apostle Paul, who realized that our Master is the real Victor, who conquered as the head, when He came to us in the body; and still is conquering the hosts of darkness through the body, namely through His ministers and His Church; saying: *"Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place"* (2 Corinthians 2: 14); and also saying: *"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us"* (Romans 8: 37).

4- His law as a support to the minister:

If it is God who chooses the minister, calls him, supports him, and be with him, as the secret of his triumph, so that no man shall be able to stand before him all the days of his life; hiding him in Him before any attack of the devil; He, as well, presents His minister with His law, to meditate in it day and night; to become the secret of his sanctification,

and of His divine wisdom that helps him in his ministry. That is why God confirms to Joshua:

“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to the law which Moses My servant commanded you; Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night ...” (Joshua 7, 8)

God, in this talk with Joshua, concentrates on two important things in the life of a minister; that are closely connected and complementary to each other:

(1) Being sure that God is with him, he would walk strongly, bravely; and confidently, trusting in God who works in and with him under all circumstances. The apostle says: *“For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance”* (1 Thessalonians 1: 5). That is why, more than once, God confirms to Joshua:

“Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord Your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1: 7; 9)

With the same Spirit, God says to the prophet Jeremiah: *“ ‘Do not say I am a child; ...Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you’, says the Lord; ‘They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you’, says the Lord, to deliver you”* (Jeremiah 1: 7, 8, 19). As much as the minister hides himself in God, he would feel safe in Him, and would not fear anyone. And as **St. John El-Dargy** says: [Who becomes a minister to God, would only fear his Master; as whoever does not fear his Master, would most probably fear even his own shadow] ¹.

(2) He should abide to God’s law. As he hides in God, Who sends him, he would fear Him alone; lest, by breaking His commandments, and not realizing His will, he would hurt His divine Fatherly feelings. That is why he would meditate in God’s law day and night, to occupy all his heart, thought, feelings, and behavior -- both

¹ Ladder, step.

apparent and hidden. By that, the word of God would become, for the minister, his food, drink, weapon, and the secret of his comfort; or, let us say, an integral part of his life. This is the secret of strength in the minister's inner life and in his preaching. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [Indeed, we should not only seek, the help of the written word, but should also have our life pure; so as to have, for our souls, the grace of the Spirit, instead of the books; As the word is written in the books by ink, so also it would be, by Spirit in our hearts] ¹. And he says: [Ignorance of the holy books, is the cause of all evil; If we enter into the battle with no weapon; how can we expect to conquer?!] ².

St. John Chrysostom believes that the word of God is the true weapon for the minister; who receives it, not only through mental knowledge, or knowing it by heart, but through his own life, that should testify to it. Indeed, the world today, is in need of such spiritual leaders who lead a holy life, and who practice the word of God, as the secret of life for them, before preaching it by their mouth].

5- The divine provision:

Then Joshua commanded the officers, to instruct the people not to make haste, but to prepare for themselves, three days provisions. Who were these officers? And what are these provisions?

These officers used to supervise the people under the Egyptian taskmasters, to make the bricks (Exodus 5: 6); but after the exodus, they became leaders of thousands, of hundreds and of tens, for the realization of justice (Deuteronomy 1: 15).

What are these provisions?

(1) **Father Caesarius** believes that the three-days provision, after which they are to crossover the Jordan, to enjoy their inheritance, is the faith in the Holy Trinity; saying: [The third day as we all know is the secret of the Trinity. What provision should we prepare in order to reach the third day? It seems to me, that we should comprehend provision as being faith in the Holy Trinity, through which Christians reach the secret

¹ *In Matt. Hom 1: 1.*

² *In Col. Hom. G.*

of Baptism (the River Jordan). ... Indeed, brethren, no man shall behold the true land of promise; namely the eternal blessing, unless he passes through the secret of Baptism] ¹.

(2) The same father sees in the three-days provision, in preparation to crossing over the Jordan, the enjoyment of the attributes of faith, hope, and love] ².

(3) **The scholar Origen** believes that the provision that we should carry inside us, to follow our true Joshua, to enter into the eternal land of promise, is the Holy Book, or the word of God, spiritually understood, and practically proclaimed in our life. He says: [After this, Joshua says: "*Prepare provisions for yourselves*". And today, if you listen, 'Jesus' says to you: 'If you are to follow Me, prepare for yourself provisions for the road'. These provisions are in fact the works that accompany us in our walk with the Savior to eternity. I wish, in our study of the Holy Book, to beware of the quick and superficial reading; Otherwise, how would we extract the provision?!] ³.

(4) We can say that the three-days provision is the possibility of the risen life in Jesus Christ. We know that the figure 3 refers to resurrection, without which we cannot crossover the Jordan, nor enter into the land of promise. The provision that we should prepare for ourselves, is not our own, but is the acquirement of the resurrected life of Christ, as our own; and without which we remain in the wilderness, until we turn into lifeless corpses. In our interpretation of the Book of Exodus, we talked about the secret of the three days; when Moses and Aaron said to Pharaoh: "*Let us go three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God*" (Exodus 5: 3); Pharaoh tried hard to deny them getting into the secret of the three days; as though he is the devil who wishes to deprive man of the power of being raised with Christ, so that his worship would not be received, and he would not enjoy the inheritance. Our father Abraham had experienced that secret, as he walked three days to offer his son as a sacrifice of love to God (Genesis 22: 4). Looking forward to the sign of resurrection from the dead, he

¹ *Sermon 115: 1.*

² *Ibid 115: 2.*

³ *In Jos. Hom 1: 4.*

offered his beloved son, with sure faith that God is capable of raising him from the dead¹.

6- The human role:

As a sign of love, God not only gives man, but lets him share in the work; in order that the exalted will of God would meld with that of man, which is sanctified through its union with God in His Son ... That is clearly demonstrated in the divine talk with Joshua the son of Nun: If it is God who works within, as the Grantor of the power of resurrection, Joshua, together with his people are committed to arise and crossover (Joshua 1: 2). God grants the inheritance free, as promised, yet not for the negligent and the reluctant; but He gives every place that the sole of their feet treads upon (Joshua 1: 3); encouraging them to walk for the sake of inheritance; Proclaiming His companionship with His servant (Joshua 1: 5); and His support against any attack of the enemy. Yet the servant is committed to be strong and of good courage, and not to be afraid or dismayed (Joshua 1: 7; 9). Granting him His law as a support, yet the servant is committed to meditate in it day and night, for then he would make his way prosperous, and would have good success (Joshua 1: 8). Commanding them to prepare provisions for themselves, yet He Himself gives them these provisions! It is amazing how the abundant love of God is given free, yet without despising the will of man, or disregarding his strife and his love!

That human role was clearly demonstrated in Joshua's action with the two and a half tribes (Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh), who requested to settle down west of the River Jordan (Numbers 32: 1 - 5), in the land of Gilead. Moses approved their request, on condition that they leave their women, children, and livestock back in the land; but the men would go before the rest of the tribes, and would not return to the land of Gilead until they consummate their strife together with their brothers, and everyone receives his inheritance in the land of Canaan. This bore a symbol of the Churches of the Old and New Testaments: two and a half tribes represent the first, and the second represented by the nine and a

¹ سفر الخروج 1981، ص 36-38.

half. We have previously dealt in more detail with this issue¹. God could have delivered the nine and a half tribes without the strife of the two and a half ... But as He sanctifies human work and unity; so He committed them to work together with their brothers, as long as they are able to work and to strive. God does not resort to miracles, except when there is no other way to get man out of trouble.

In a clearer way, I wish to confirm God's sanctification of His believers: spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically; a sign of which is letting man work and strive, and without resorting to exalted miraculous work, except in case circumstances require them, a man's inability to manage! God, Who, brought His people out of the land of bondage, by a strong and mighty arm, sustained them in the wilderness for forty years, and performed such numerous miracles, could have handed them the land of promise without the strife of those two and a half tribes, or even without that of the other nine and a half; Yet, in that case the unity of the people as a whole would not have been sanctified, and would not have got the blessing of God's work with them. I say, that in seeking that our life be filled with exalted miraculous works, we are depriving ourselves of God's acknowledgment; of His working in our hearts, minds, feelings, and hands; sanctifying all what He granted to work with His hidden way in us, until He brings us crowned, up to the land of inheritance.

¹ سفر العدد 1981، ص 210-216.

CHAPTER 2

THE WORKING FAITH

If the last chapter, in its essence, was a proclamation of the minister's secret of triumph, that God is the One working in him; In this chapter, we come to an important fact, that the Holy Book intended to clarify before the enjoyment of inheritance, that salvation is for all, to be enjoyed by every true believer. If the Jews have come out from under the yoke of servitude to enjoy inheritance, yet many of them did not, because of their lack of faith, while a Canaanite harlot could get a portion of that inheritance. God confirms that He does not reject the Gentiles, but rejects their defilement and lack of faith!

1- Sending out the two spies	1
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1- Sending out the two spies:

"Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men to spy secretly, saying, 'Go view the land, especially Jerich.' "(Joshua 2: 1)

If Joshua represents Jesus, the incarnate Word of God; Who then, would be the two spies whom he sent out to the land and Jericho, to gain Rahab the harlot as a believer, who opened her house for them and her heart for their God; and requested from them a token of truthfulness, for her safety and that of her household?

(1) If Joshua represents our Lord Jesus Christ, the two spies he sent out, most probably represent the two missions sent out by the Lord to the world; namely, the twelve apostles and the seventy disciples; Those who started by calling the Jews to faith, and consummated by the Gentiles. The Gentile nations received their message in their hearts, as a secret of their salvation.

St. Jerome believes that the two spies represent the two apostles Peter and Paul, having been the ministers to the circumcised and the Gentiles; saying: [Intending to lead His people to the gospel, He secretly sends out two men to Jericho; one of them to the circumcised and the other to the Gentiles -- Peter and Paul. While Jericho sought to kill them,

the harlot took them in; representing the collective Church from all nations, that believed in Jesus; Although a harlot, she took them in peace on her roof, hid them there, where her exalted faith is; among the stalks of flax] ¹.

(2) **Bishop Caesarius** believes that they refer to the two commandments of love: Love of God and love of fellow men; saying: [Joshua sent out two spies, because the true Joshua sends two commandments of love. What are the men, sent out by the true Joshua, proclaiming to us, but the love of God and that love of men?!] ². If the ultimate goal of preaching the gospel is to receive the Lord Jesus Christ; we receive Him to dwell in us, to grant us His attributes working in us: His love of the Father, and His love of mankind!

2- The two spies and Rahab the harlot:

Rahab became a living example of the faith working in us. When **St. Ambrose** intended to persuade the virgins not to despise the married women believers, and even the harlots, if they come back and live in purity, he said: [Rahab was a harlot, but believed in God, to find salvation] ³. **St. John Chrysostom** speaks of that active faith saying: [If she would have contemplated: How can those fugitives, who lead a nomadic life (without cities), overcome us, who live in fortified cities with walls and towers?! She would then, have perished!] ⁴.

Rahab the harlot, as all the inhabitants of Jericho, and those of the whole region, heard of what the Lord has done with His people 40 years before: how He dried up the water of the Red Sea for them when they came out of Egypt, and what He did to the two kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, whom He utterly destroyed (Joshua 2: 10); Yet she was the only one who believed in God, opened her house to the spies, and testified to the Lord, saying: *“I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you ... And as soon as we heard these things our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is the Lord in heaven above and on earth beneath.”* (Joshua 2: 9 - 11)

¹ On Ps. Hom 4.

² Sermon 115: 2.

³ Conc. Virgins 2: 4.

⁴ In Rom. Hom 2.

By practically proclaiming her faith, she risked her own life. She asked the two spies to swear to her to spare her life and that of her household! A Gentile harlot, dwelling in a condemned city, has been able to proclaim her faith through her work, to get a sure promise of salvation. The apostle Paul says: “*By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace*” (Hebrew 11: 31); And the apostle Jacob says: “*Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?*” (James 2: 25). The apostle Paul proclaimed her faith; while the apostle James proclaimed her works; this, actually, could not be separated from that.

By faith, Rahab also forsook her harlot ways to live sanctified in the Lord. **St. Jerome** believes that the word ‘Rahab’ means a (Broadway) or (pride); Through faith she accepted the narrow way of humility, in place of her old broad way; saying: [She was before, walking through the broad way that leads to death (Matthew 7: 13); was led by her pride to destruction; but she finally turned to humility]. He also says in the same homily: [She was once walking the broad way that leads to destruction, but she then ascended high to the memory of God]¹.

While the people of God died in the wilderness because of their lack of faith, that Gentile harlot snatched the divine promises through her living working faith, to gain for herself and her household a portion in the land of promise, and to have the Savior Messiah to incarnate from her descent (Matthew 1: 5).

Her actions came to be prophetic, leading **St. Clement the Roman** to say: [There you see, brethren, that that woman did not have just the faith, but had also the prophecy]².

By the Spirit of prophecy she talked to the messengers to proclaim what would happen to the people of God, saying: “*I know that the Lord has given you the land*” (Joshua 2: 9). But, what was more was that her actions and person became a prophecy about the Church of the Gentiles, to be established with the coming of the true Joshua. In this concern the **Bishop Caesarius** says: [That harlot, brethren, represents the Church, that used to commit adultery with numerous idols before Christ; But when Christ came, He set her free, not just from adultery, but turned her into a virgin through an exalted miraculous work. Of her, the apostle says: “*For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may*

¹ On Ps. Hom 18.

² Ep. Of Clem. Rom. 12.

present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11: 2). The soul of each one of us has been a harlot, living according to the lusts of the body; But, receiving the two messengers of Joshua, in her the words of the apostle were realized: *“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord”* (Ephesians 5: 8)] ¹.

So Rahab became a representative of the Church of the Gentiles that received the two missions of Christ (the apostles and the disciples); and hid in her His commandment “Love of God and of men”; thus became His holy Church. What I say of the Church as a whole, I do say of every soul, being a living member of the Church, who once was in the darkness of evil, then received in her the salvation of the Lord Jesus.

3- The king of Jericho and Rahab:

Rahab receiving the two messengers through living faith working with love, made the king of Jericho mad. This is not a strange or a new thing; as with every divine mission or work, the evil one becomes mad enough, to send a counter mission to destroy it. When God created Eve as a helper, the evil one used the serpent to destroy both Adam and Eve; When God sent Moses and Aaron to deliver His people from the servitude of Pharaoh, he used the two magicians to oppose God’s work; And when God sent His prophets, like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah, the evil one sent false prophets and prophetesses; Finally, when the Lord Christ came, the anti-Christ will come to oppose the Church of Christ. In every era, and with every spiritual work, there is opposition; And even in every man’s life, whenever he gets ready to repent, war would flare up against him: from his own body, from his own household, and sometimes from his fellow members of his Church.

4- The two spies on the roof:

“She brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.” (Joshua 2: 6)

What a marvelous symbolic portrait, that reveals what takes place in the Gentile Church of the New Testament, who received the message of Jesus our Lord, as though receiving two spies; and hid the faith in the Savior in their hearts -- their secret places -- as Rahab did. As faith entered into the hearts, it brought them up to the roof; namely, raised them from the killing literality of the law, that brings them down; to set forth, through the freedom of the Spirit, upward as though to the roof; to have its insight opened to behold the heavenliness, and to comprehend

¹ On Ps. Hom 18.

the divine glories, through the union with the Father, in our Lord Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit.

We can say that the Jews, who abide to the letter, dwell in the lower level, deprived of spiritual enlightenment; as though they have put a veil on Moses' face, so as not to behold the glory. The Gentiles, on the other hand, once they were presented with the salvation message, had their hearts opened to and by the Holy Spirit; to set forth, as though with the wings of a dove, from a level to another, namely from a heavenly glory to another, to bring them ultimately to the roof, to enjoy being on the top, without a veil or obstacle! The apostle says: *"Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech -- unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were hardened. ... But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their hearts ... Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 3: 12 -- 18). And **Bishop Caesarius** says: {We have risen to the roof, through the Church that receives the teachings of the apostles, not by a lowly way but an exalted one; not following the killing letter as the Jews, but receiving the life-giving Spirit coming down from heaven} ¹.

Many people received faith in them, like Rahab did; Yet, in a spiritual draught, they rejected the work of the Spirit in them, to lift them up from glory to glory, to bring them up to the roof, to behold the divine glories. These people carry the name of Christ; Yet they, in their negligence, still dwell in the lower floors; as though they wish to go back to the dry life under the law, instead of rising up to the heavenly places, and having fellowship with the heavenly hosts, in their praises and joy, and in the rejoice of their inner heart.

Rahab hid them on the roof with the stalks of flax, whose (whiteness) is a symbol of the pure heavenly life; that no man could get while being negligent. **St. Jerome** says: [Flax is made to get its shining whiteness, after long work and much effort; It is planted in the soil -- black and ugly ... But rises up over it; then cut, washed, beaten, and combed. Here we see the meaning! The harlot took the two messengers,

¹ Ibid.

and covered them with her flax; in order that they transform her flax to shining whiteness! ¹

The flax also reminds us of the priestly garments in the two Testaments; The Church of the New Testament (Rahab); having received faith in the Lord Christ; and set forth with her heart up to the roof, to live in the heavenly places; It would realize that through the priestly work ... ; namely that of the Lord Christ, being “The Most High Priest”; who intercedes on our behalf with His blood. And as the apostle Paul says: *“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens”* (Hebrews 7: 25, 26). Through that new priesthood, on an exalted level, He presented us with the grace of priesthood, by working through His priests; And as said by the apostle Peter: *“ You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ ... But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood”* (1 Peter 2: 5, 9). Through priestly work in Jesus Christ -- the Most High Priest, Bishop and Shepherd of our souls -- the Church offers the sacrifice of love, acceptable to God the Father; and lifts its members up to partake of the heavenliness -- as though on the roof -- in their praises and liturgies. And as said by **St. John Chrysostom**: [It is as though man is taken up to heaven itself; stands beside the throne of glory; soars up with the Seraphim; and sings the holy praise] ².

5- A request for a token of faithfulness:

By the Spirit of prophecy, Rahab realized God’s promises to His people; so she received the two messengers, so as not to live anymore as a harlot, but to ascend by faith with them to the roof, to get covered by the pure flax, and to set herself free from bodily lusts and desires. She intended to enjoy, together with her family, a share in those divine promises. Her faith did not stop at her trust in God’s capabilities and faithfulness with His people, but believed that He would also grant her and all her household His divine promises. There are many who have faith in God’s work with humanity, yet they do not enter into personal

¹ On Ps. Hom 18.

² In Joan. Hom. 46.

relationship with God, on the level of their personal inner life, and their households.

In the trust of faith she said to the two messengers:

“Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father’s house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.” (Joshua 2: 12, 13)

Her faith was on a personal level that gives pleasure to God, yet not in selfishness or isolation. She also asked on behalf of her father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all what they have! This is our living Christian faith, in which the believer encounters his Creator and Savior, saying: *“My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies”* (Song of Songs 2: 16); yet through his Church fellowship; not isolating himself from the congregation, but realizing that he lives with its Christ, as a member in it; even if he is a hermit, who has no relationship with anyone. !

If we follow the allegoric interpretation, we can say that our Rahab, namely our faith, cries out for the salvation of the soul -- as being (the father), and the body -- as being (the mother); and for the sanctification of the feelings and emotions and every thought -- as being brothers and sisters; and for the sanctification of every faculty, on the account of the Lord-- as being *“All what they have”*!

Their response was: ***“Unless, when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household to your own home. So it shall be that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless.” (Joshua 2: 18, 19).*** The token that is given is the *“line of scarlet”*, a reference to the blood of Christ, without which, there is no salvation. The apostle Paul says: *“Without shedding of blood there is no remission”* (Hebrews 9: 22); The apostle Peter says: *“Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1 Peter 1: 18, 19); and St. Ambrose says: [The harlot lost every hope in human security amid the destruction of the city; Her faith prevailed, through binding a line of scarlet in the window ! She raised the sign of her faith, and the

sign of the Lord's Passion, so that the sign of the secret blood, which redeems the world, would be kept in mind] ¹.

Rahab or her household would not enjoy salvation, if they go outside the house, on the window of which a line of scarlet is tied; As there is no salvation outside the Church, redeemed by the blood of the Lord Christ. **St. Cyprian** says:

[Do you assume that you are able to hold on and live, if you withdraw from the Church, to set for yourselves different houses and places?! It was said to Rahab, "*Unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home; so it shall be that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we will be guiltless*"; By this, the secret was proclaimed: that whoever wishes to live and to be saved from the destruction of the world, are committed to gather together in one house; namely in the Church; and whoever goes outside it; namely if anyone, after gaining the grace of existing in the Church, leaves it and goes outside, his blood will be on his own head, he will be responsible for his destruction -- something that the apostle Paul clarified in his command to avoid the heretics] ².

[Whoever stays outside the Church will be outside the camp of Christ] ³. [As, he is not a Christian, he who is not inside the Church of Christ] ⁴. [How can anyone be with Christ, if he does not walk in the bride of Christ, and if he does not exist inside His Church] ⁵.

St. Cyprian has a famous expression: [Whoever does not have the Church as a mother, would not have God as a Father] ⁶.

6- The two spies on the mountain:

"Then she said to them, 'Get to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you, hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way. ... Then they departed and went to the mountain, and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought them all along the way but did not find them.'"
(Joshua 2: 16, 24)

¹ On Chridtian Faith 5: 10.

² Unity of Church 8; Ep. 75: 4.

³ Ep. 40 to Cornelius.

⁴ Ep. 43 to Antonius.

⁵ Ep. 42 to Cornelius.

⁶ Unity of Church 6.

Why did Rahab tell the two spies to go up to the mountain and to stay there three days, until the pursuers have returned?

As Rahab the harlot received faith in God, the king of Jericho got mad, and entered into animosity with her, not for her own sake, but for her faith; That is why it was fitting for her to ascend with her faith on the holy mountain of God, and to stay there three days, so that the devil (the king of Jericho) would not be able, with his evil pursuers, to reach her.

This mountain probably refers to the Lord Christ Himself, whom the prophet Daniel described as being the “*stone cut out without hands*” (Daniel 2: 34); “*The stone that struck the image (the statue), and became a great mountain and filled the whole earth*” (Daniel 2: 35). That is the holy stone who lifts us up to Him, and who strikes the devil and crushes it as a statue, to become Himself a mountain to which the nations ascend.

The holy mountain is also the word of God that lifts us up to the heavenly places, so as not to fall in the snares of the king of Jericho, and not to be caught by his pursuers, who refer to the lusts of the flesh. And as **the scholar Origen** says: [The harlot became an object of the hatred of the king of Jericho. Why? “*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh*” (Galatians 5: 17); and it is also written, “*If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you*” (John 15: 18). Therefore, there is a king who is an enemy to that harlot; namely, “*The ruler of this world*” (John 12: 31), who chases the messengers of Jesus, intending to get rid of them; yet he can not reach them, because they walk on the mountain (Joshua 2: 22), and seek the hill tops. The harlot soul in us cries out, saying: “*I will lift up my eyes to the hills -- from whence comes my help*” (Psalm 121: 1). Indeed the ruler of this world can not ascend to these places, to reach Jesus in these heights; although in the temptation, he took Him to a high place and said to Him, “... *Throw yourself down*” (Matthew 4: 6); he likes only the fallen to the lower depths, where he reigns and dwells; and from there he falls down to Hades]¹.

Caesarius, Bishop of Arles, was impressed by Origen’s interpretation, and even quoted some of its phrases; saying: [The king of Jericho; namely the devil, chased Joshua’s spies, yet could not catch them, as they climbed the mountain. They did not walk along the lowlands, namely the world pleasures, but walked on the mountain tops to say together with the Psalmist: “*I will lift up my eyes to the hills -- from where comes my help*”. The ruler of this world can not go after

¹ In Jos. Hom 1: 5.

them, because he loves everything low and easy to break, that is why he leads those who find pleasure in lusts; reigns over them, dwells among them, and go down by and with them to the abyss.

7- The two spies back with Joshua:

“So the two men returned, descended from the mountain, and crossed over; and they came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all that had befallen them. And they said to Joshua, ‘Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us.’”(Joshua 2: 23, 24)

If the two spies, refer to Christ’s messengers or ministers; the minister, who walks on the mountains, namely lives by the Holy Book -- the holy mountain from where he gets his help; and on which he rises over all things of worldly life, to encounter the Lord Christ, rising up to His heaven at the Mount of Olives, etc ... This minister will, eventually have to come down and return to Joshua (Joshua 2: 23). It is as though the minister, through the word of God, the high mountain, enters into its depths, to discover the Lord Christ Himself, waiting to receive from Him the report of his success. The disciples came to say joyfully to Jesus: *“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name”* (Luke 10: 17); *“And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven, Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you; Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven’”* Luke 10: 18 -- 20). They, like Joshua’s two spies, came to him proclaiming their conquest in the Lord; Joshua confirmed to them, *“The Lord has delivered all the land into our hands;”* as though he is saying, that He is consummating His promises to us to inherit the Kingdom.

If the Lord Christ, who is not separate from His Father, sometimes spends the whole night talking to Him, so how much it is fitting to us to return to our Jesus -- as the leader of the procession of conquest -- to present to Him a report of everything, big and small, in order that He realizes His work in us without obstacle, and to bring us to the land of His inheritance!

Finally, the two spies hid themselves three days before they returned to Joshua (Joshua 2: 16, 22). The minister himself would never encounter Jesus, risen from the dead, except by entering into the risen life (the figure 3) ... If the pursuers of the king are seeking to kill them; By entering into the secret of the three days, namely the secret of

resurrection with Jesus our Lord, they persist on their strife until they encounter Him!

In short, we can praise Rahab the harlot, on several aspects:

a- She secretly received the two spies; namely, received the two missions of Christ, concerning the belief in Him secretly in her heart.

b- She brought them up to the roof; namely, her faith turned into an exalted heavenly life.

c- She hid them among the stalks of flax, a reference to her acceptance of pure life instead of adultery.

d- She requested a token of faithfulness; and as she received the divine promises, and believed, not merely as a general gift, but also as a personal one to her and her household.

e- She asked them to go to the mountain; namely, not to walk any more in the lowly places.

f- By putting a line of scarlet on the window, her house became a symbol of the Church of the New Testament, sanctified by the blood.

g- She asked the two spies to remain three days, so that the King's pursuers would not catch and kill them, a proclamation of abiding in Christ, and to rise, together with Him, so that the devil would not catch us.

CHAPTER 3

THE POSSIBILITY OF BAPTISM

This book started by revealing the main fact in ministry, which is that God is the One who works in His ministers (Chapter 1), to bring them together with His people to His inheritance; Then came the episode of Rahab the harlot with the two spies, to confirm that faith in God the Savior, is practically the way to achieve that divine inheritance, and to enjoy God's promises -- Now, standing on the bank of the River Jordan, we discover the possibilities of Baptism in crossing over; namely, the possibility of God's salvation work by Baptism for the enjoyment of the inheritance. **The scholar Origen** says: [The events of the Jordan is a portrait of the secret that takes place in Baptism] ¹.

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3- Joshua exalted in the Jordan	7 -- 8
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1- Waiting for three days:

After the two spies presented their report about God's work with them, the whole procession set forth to the Jordan: *"Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia Grove (Shittim), and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they crossed over. So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp ... etc."* (Joshua 3: 1, 2)

If the two spies presented Joshua with an actual report, that all Jericho was fainthearted and terrified; and that Rahab has received them and brought them to the roof, from where they set forth to the mountains and then came to him; That was a reference to the word of preaching among the (Catechumens), to realize that, by Jesus Christ the Savior, all the fortresses of evil will be destroyed, the ruler of darkness will be terrified, and the salvation will be realized to him who embraces the mission and gospel of Jesus Christ. ... That would not be realized to them unless they set forth to the Jordan, under the leadership of the "true Joshua" Himself! Faith has to be sealed by Baptism, to be able to

¹ In Jos. Hom 5: 1.

crossover to the inheritance, and to enjoy God's promises and free gifts! The departure from Shittim to the Jordan, under the leadership of Joshua, is the commitment of the Catechumens to crossover to Baptism.

They departed from **Shittim** -- that means (Acacia trees), the location where Balaam tried to curse the people of Israel (Numbers 22 -- 24); and where the people committed harlotry with the girls of Moab, Midian, and Baal of Peor (Numbers 25) -- to set forth through the Jordan to the land of promise. They departed from the curse and harlotry (Baal Peor) to the new life, sanctified by Baptism. Yet that setting forth needed their waiting, together with Joshua, for three days, before crossing over the Jordan. Here we enter again into the secret of the three days, of which we have profusely spoken, and we shall go on speaking; being the secret of the resurrection with Christ on the third day. There would be no crossing over of the Jordan, and no enjoyment of the possibilities of Baptism, except through burial with the Lord for three days, and resurrection by and with Him! The apostle Paul says: *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through Baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"* (Romans 6: 3, 4). And he also says, that Baptism is the cross; what happened with Christ in crucifixion and burial, is done to us in Baptism, even if not by the same way. Christ died in flesh and was buried; but we die to sin and are buried ... If you partake of His death and burial, you will also partake of His resurrection and life¹.

The three days, as we saw in the first chapter², refer to the Holy Trinity; There is no crossing over in the waters of Baptism, except after proclaiming our faith in the Holy Trinity, when we receive sonhood to the Father, through our membership in the body of His only-begotten Son, and our abidance in the Son by the Holy Spirit. In other words, Baptism is the enjoyment of the work of the Holy Trinity in our life. Without faith in Him, Baptism would be of no avail!

After the three days; namely, after receiving the power of Christ's resurrection, and proclaiming the faith in the Holy Trinity, the officers of the thousands, hundreds, and tens, went through the camp, and they commanded the people saying:

¹ De Sacr. 51: 1.

² راجع تفسير يش 1: 11.

“When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before.” (Joshua 3: 3, 4)

St. Augustine says: [The Jordan implies (descent). Therefore, you should descend in order to ascend; and should not ascend so as not to fall] ¹. If Baptism is a descent for the sake of ascent; its way is strange for mankind who fell to pride, and do not wish to descend; and even if they do wish to descend, they are unable to. It is a new way that must be inaugurated by Him, who alone could get humble, though He is the great incarnate Word of God. The crossing over of the ark of the covenant of the Lord God, carried by the Priests and Levites before the people, implies that the Lord Christ Himself inaugurates the way of Baptism; approaching it through His humility, to lift us up to His sonhood to God. The Son became a slave, so that, in the waters of Baptism, He lifts the slaves up to sonhood to God!

If the Lord Christ did not sanctify the water of the Jordan, the water of Baptism would be without activity. That is why **St. Ambrose** says: [It carries the grace of Christ] ². According to the Coptic rite the water is signed by the cross and the cross is dipped into the water, as a proclamation that the crucified -- the true Ark of the Covenant -- has entered into and sanctified the Jordan.

The officers commanded the people to keep a distance between them and the ark, about two thousand cubits by measure; as the figure 2 refer to love, that makes the two -- the one who loves and the one beloved -- as one; Love came in the first and the second commandments of the law; the good Samaritan gave two denarii to the innkeeper, because of his love of God and of his wounded brother; and the widow offered two cents, as a token of her love of God and the people. As the figure 1000 refers to the heavenly life; so the figure 2000 refers to love on a spiritual heavenly level -- both love of God and of people. It is as though a Catechumen is committed, in order to gain the blessings of Baptism, to receive the new love in the water of Baptism. By that he enjoys the blessing of God who dwells in him, He who only dwells in hearts, wide with love. **St. Augustine** says: [Wherever love is, there is

¹ On Ps. 42.

² De Sacr. 51: 1.

the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13: 10), where God dwells in you, and where you are a throne to Him] ¹.

If we, in the water of Baptism, become holy members in the body of Christ, we would actually carry His attribute, expressed by St. John as: *“God is love”* (1 John 4: 8). And if Baptism is a new birth, the apostle confirms: *“Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love”* (1 John 4: 7, 8). It is as though, whoever closes his heart to God and to people, will benefit nothing from the water of Baptism, but it will be the secret of judging him... He gained the possibility of love through the new birth, yet he did not practice it. And if Baptism is the secret of enlightenment to the soul, without love, man lives in darkness, according to the words of the apostle: *“He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now”* (1 John 2; 9)... Thus, it is not possible to isolate the Jordan from the nature of heavenly love, granted to us by the Holy Spirit.

As to his saying: *“Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before”* (Joshua 3: 4), This refers to the fact that this way is new for us that we haven't experienced before; and it was not possible for us to approach nor enjoy it, before the Lord enters it first and inaugurate it!

If the crossing over of Joshua represents that of the Lord Christ as our Savior -- as the word 'Joshua' means (Jehovah salvation) -- the crossing over of the ark, refers to Him as the Word of God; carrying inside it the two tablets of law; And the crossing over of the priests, refers to Him as a supreme High Priest. It is as though, in the water of Baptism, we encounter our Jesus, the Savior, the Word of God, the Grantor of life; and the High Priest who intercedes for us before the Father, through His Holy blood. In it, we abide in His holy body, to gain our salvation, to enjoy His life in us, and to have audacity before the Father through Him.

2- Preparations for the crossing over:

“And Joshua said to the people, ‘Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.’” (Joshua 3: 5)

Joshua demanded their sanctification, to behold God's wonders among them. Indeed, those wonders are not a price of their sanctifying themselves; as they are free gifts, given to whoever proclaims his

¹ On Ps. 99.

longing and his belief in God's work, through seriousness, and readiness to receive God's gifts and graces. In our interpretation of the rite of Baptism, we dealt with the necessary preparations that Catechumens should take, in order to be worthy of gaining that secret¹. The Catechumens in the early Church were committed to certain studies, and to precise investigation of their faith and behavior; beside their commitment to fasting, praying, and watching before Baptism. **The scholar Tertullian** says: [Those seeking Baptism, should preoccupy themselves with fasting, praying, watching, and prostrating; together with confessing all their previous sins]². And **St. Cyril the Great**, has a marvelous talk to the Catechumens, saying: [If your wedding day is approaching, wouldn't you forsake everything and dedicate yourself to the task of preparing for the banquet?! The day of dedicating your soul to its heavenly Groom is approaching; would you not stop preoccupying yourself with the worldly affairs, for the sake of gaining the spiritual?! Let your mind be purified, as though with fire! Let your soul melt as though a mineral, to get rid of impurities' ... Pray more persistently, so that God would make you worthy of the eternal heavenly secrets...]³.

3- Joshua exalted in the Jordan:

“And the Lord said to Joshua, ‘This day, I will (exalt) you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, ‘When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan’. “ (Joshua 3: 7, 8)

It is fitting for man to exalt God through his worship, his inner behavior, and his dealing with others; but here, we find God Himself confirming to Joshua: *“This day, I will exalt you”* (Joshua 3: 7). How does God exalt Joshua? The greatness of Joshua in the eyes of God and of people has been connected to the crossing over of the Jordan (Joshua 4: 14); as though it is an allegoric portrait for the beginning of the proclamation of the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ through the Jordan. The following are the aspects of comparison in this concern:

(1) He says to him, *“that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you”* (Joshua 3: 7). That was what the crossing over of the Jordan revealed: God's companionship with Joshua. As to our Lord Jesus, His crossing over of the Jordan, namely His Baptism,

¹ راجع: الروح القدس بين الميلاد الجديد والتجديد المستمر 1981. ص 139-151.

² De Baptismo 20.

³ Protech. 6: 16.

has revealed His relationship with the Father, being His only-begotten Son, and the object of His pleasure, *“the heaven were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’* “ (Matthew 3: 16, 17). The feast of the Lord’s Baptism is called the Epiphany, through which not only have the Holy Trinity appeared by the Son being in the water, the Spirit coming down over Him and the Father speaking about Him from heaven; but also the work of the Holy Trinity appeared clearly in our life. Through Baptism, the Holy Spirit grants us the new life, that becomes ours in Jesus Christ; opens our inner insight to realize our new position as children to the Father, enjoying His sonhood and His pleasure; having become members of the body of His beloved Son.

(2) Joshua might have been exalted through the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant, and their going before the people, until all of them crossed over the Jordan. That was the first time for the Ark of the Covenant, to be carried by the priests, and to take the role of leading the people, who were committed to keep a space of 2000 cubits by measure between them and it (Joshua 3: 4) ... That situation demonstrated several aspects of the work of our true ‘Joshua’ in the water of Baptism, of which we mention the following:

a- Our true Joshua, was not exalted by our carrying the ark of the covenant, but by what He granted us in the new Jordan, having become carriers of the Holy Spirit Himself. We have become ourselves, the Holy temple of God; receiving His Holy Spirit in us through the Sacrament of the Anointment (Myron). The Kingdom of God became *“within us”* (Luke 17: 21), where God dwells and reigns.

b- The priests carrying the ark of the covenant refer to God’s gift to man; and the ark refers to His divine presence; and carrying it implies man’s approach to God after such a long time of animosity. Man used to look at God as though an unapproachable consuming fire; but once our Joshua entered the Jordan, He brought us up, not only to approach Him, but also to unite with the Father in Him. In the holy water, the fiery Spirit works in us, not to consume our souls, but to abolish our old man and to consume the animosity, granting us a spiritual enlightenment, through which we realize our sonhood to God the Father and our union with Him. That is why **the scholar Origen** says: [Blessed are those who became near and close to the fire that enlighten, yet does not consume

them] ¹. If in the divine incarnation, Godhead united with Humanity, and we saw the Son of God descends to us and dwells in our midst, close to us, and even became as though One of us; In the Jordan He granted us to rise up to Him, and to approach Him, to bear His divine life in us, and to lift us up to His heavens. That is what exalts our true Joshua, not by our approaching the Ark of the Covenant together with the priests of the Old Testament, but by our being lifted up to heavens, and our existence with God, united with Him in His Son, by His fiery Spirit.

St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa says about the work of the Jordan in our life: [The Jordan was exalted, as it renews men, and plants them in God's paradise] ².

And again, inviting us to enjoy Baptism, in which our Joshua is glorified, through His work in our life; he says: [You, who have been so long in mud, hasten to the Jordan, not in response to an invitation from John the Baptist, but through the voice of Christ. As a matter of fact, the river of grace runs everywhere; it does not originate in Palestine, then to disappear in the neighboring Sea, but it covers the whole world, enters into paradise, floods over the four rivers that descend from there, and restores to paradise the precious things, more than what the other rivers bring on; While those rivers offer nice fragrance, plants and fruits; this river brings on people that are born by the Holy Spirit! Follow the example of Joshua the Son of Nun, and carry the Bible, as he carried the Ark! Forsake the wilderness, namely, the sin, and crossover the Jordan. Hasten toward life according to Christ, and toward the land flooding with the fruits of joy, like rivers of milk and honey. Destroy Jericho, the old dwelling place, and do not leave it fertile] ³.

We have already dealt with the activity of Baptism in our life, in some detail; something that truly glorifies our Jesus, who crossed over that holy river] ⁴.

c- The people, committed to keep a space of 2000 cubits between them and the ark, refer to the believers of the Old Testament as a whole, who, even though enjoyed salvation, yet from afar, through symbols and prophecies, namely, through shadows and the likeness of heaven; While believers of the New Testament, are symbolized by the priests, bearers of the ark. In this and that, our Joshua is glorified and exalted.

¹ In Jos 4: 3.

² In Baptis. Christu PG 49: 293 D.

³ De Bap. PG 46: 420 D0 421 A.

⁴ راجع كتابنا عن الروح القدس.

(3) Joshua the son of Nun was also exalted; as by his crossing over the Jordan, the priests appeared as leaders of the people through their carrying the ark; being like the lamp stands that carry the divine light to give light to all. The ark, carrying the two tablets of the law, symbolizes the preaching of the divine word, without which nobody can crossover to the land of promise, and enjoy the eternal inheritance. **The scholar Origen** says: [Those were the hosts of priests and Levites who used to stand close to the Ark of the Covenant, that embraced the law; having been committed to enlighten the people with God's commandments; according to the words of the prophet: "*Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path*" (Psalm 119: 105). That light is emitted through the work of priests and Levites, some of whom had the task to "*put the lamp on a lampstand, to give light to all who are in the house*" (Matthew 5: 15) ¹. In our new Jordan, on the other hand, the priests do not carry an ark, that include the law, engraved on two stone tablets, but they carry the "word of God", written by the Spirit in their hearts (2 Corinthians 3: 3); and Christ is manifested with His attributes in their inner life and apparent behavior; that they present, not only by words of preaching, but by the Holy Spirit, that makes the word enter the hearts of hearers. The apostle Paul says: "*For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men, we were among you for your sake*" (1Thessalonians 1:5).

(4) Joshua was also exalted by the crossing over of the people, following the lead of the Ark of the Covenant; They could never crossover, unless preceded by Joshua and the priests, carrying the ark, and standing in the Jordan; as it was said to Joshua: "*When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan*" (Joshua 3: 8). It is an allegoric portrait of the truth of salvation; we would not enjoy the new life, nor strongly cross the Jordan, unless our life-giving Jesus Himself enters the Jordan, and stands in it, to carry us on His shoulders to bring us over to His Kingdom. Indeed the water of Baptism, without Christ, would be just ordinary water, capable of cleansing the body, yet without sanctifying it; unable to enter to the depths of the soul.

Joshua and the priests were commanded to stand in the Jordan; What a marvelous allegoric portrait of the greatness of our true Joshua, who brought us to the water of the Jordan, to behold Him standing, and

¹ In Jos Hom 4: 2.

to stand with and in Him. He was indeed buried in the water as if in the tomb; yet it was not possible for death to keep Him, nor for the tomb to lock Him up; But He stood risen from the dead, granting us the risen life. “*We (are) buried with Him through Baptism*” (Romans 6: 4), not to remain buried, but to rise with and in Him. This is the secret of the exaltation of the true Joshua; the secret of the cross, burial, and resurrection, having been proclaimed in the water of Baptism, as one melded secret.

(5) Joshua is exalted through receiving the leadership, as a symbol of the true Joshua receiving the leadership of our souls, as we crossover the new Jordan, and also after it. St. Ambrose says about how the Lord Himself works during Baptism: [Do not look at the worthiness of individuals ... Believe that the Lord Jesus Himself is present, when the priest prays for the invocation of the Holy Spirit; He who says: “*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the middle of them*” (Matthew 18: 21); How much more would He grant us, the proclamation of His presence when all the congregation are there in the Church, and the Sacraments are present?] ¹. In more than one occasion, **St. John Chrysostom** asks us not to look at the priest during the Sacrament service, but to the Lord Christ Himself working secretly in it. As to the leadership of the Lord Christ of our souls after Baptism, the scholar Origen says: [If you crossover the Jordan through the priests, you will enter into the land of promise, that land where Joshua, after Moses, will take care of you, and will be your guide in your new way] ².

4- The ark in the Jordan:

“And Joshua said, ‘By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan.’”(Joshua 3: 10, 11)

In this phrase, two main lines are clearly apparent and integrated together in the Liturgy of Baptism: The existence of the kingdom of the devil, symbolized by those pagan nations; and its destruction by God’s appearance and His dwelling among His children. We have already dealt with these two lines in our study of Baptism³.

¹ On Myst. S.

² In Jos 4: 1.

³ راجع كتابنا عن الروح القدس (جسد الشيطان).

It is to be noticed that the crossover of the Jordan, has demonstrated the dwelling of God among His people, granting them triumph over the kingdom of darkness; and from another aspect, it revealed how God submitted nature to them. As long as we bear the Creator in us, all creation will submit to us, and will obediently work for us. **The scholar Origen** compares between the submission of nature to the believers for their benefit, and its opposition to the wicked; saying: [The wicked harbors hatred toward all creation; as the animosity the Egyptians used to feel toward the land, the water, the air, and the heaven. The righteous, on the other hand, even what seems coarse, would be transformed for him to valleys and gentle slopes. The righteous would cross the Red Sea, as though walking on dry ground; while the Egyptian, who intends to crossover it, would be swallowed by it. For the righteous, water would be for him, *“a wall, on his right hand and on his left hand”* (Exodus 14: 22 -- 29); he would go into the fearsome wilderness, and there, finds for himself food from heaven (Psalm 78: 24). Such was the case in the Jordan, where the ark of the covenant was leading the people of God; The priests and Levites were standing, while the water was, as though taken by surprise, stood in awe before the sacraments of God, gathered in one heap, to present to the people a way without obstacles (Joshua 3: 15). Do not get amazed, O Christian, when you hear what had taken place to the old people; The Word of God promises to grant you, when you crossover the Jordan -- through Baptism -- much more exalted goods; He promises to grant you a way through the air. Hear what St. Paul says: *“We shall be caught up together with them (the righteous) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall always be with the Lord”* (1 Thessalonians 4: 17); the righteous should never fear anything, as all creation would be at his service. Listen also to God’s promises through His prophet: *“When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you; For I am the Lord your God”* (Isaiah 43: 2, 3). So, it would be with the righteous, as though lying in comfort in his bed; wherever he may be, all creation would submit to him (Genesis 1: 26; Psalm 8: 7) ... Therefore, recalling these incredible signs concerning the greatness of God: the sea, divided into two because of you, and the waters of the river that stopped as a heap; you would cry out: *“What ails you, O sea, that you fled? O Jordan, that you turned back? O mountains that you skipped like rams? O little hills like lambs?”* (Psalm 114: 5, 6); Then, the Word of God would answer you, saying: *“Tremble O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the*

presence of the God of Jacob, who turned the rock into a pool of water; the flint into a fountain of waters” (Psalm 114: 7, 8)]. Realizing that, **St. Augustine**, whispered to God saying: [You dedicated all your creation to my service, in order that I become wholly dedicated to Your service] ¹. And he also says: [You have put all things under man’s feet (Psalm 8: 6); in order that he may become wholly dedicated to You. That is why You did not let anyone but You have authority over him; but gave him the authority over Your creation] ².

5- The water standing as one heap:

Crossing over the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua totally differed than that of the Red Sea under the leadership of the prophet Moses. Then, the division of the Sea was realized to let the people pass; the salty water was like a wall on both sides. But here, “*The waters that come down from upstream shall be cut off, and shall stand as a heap*” (Joshua 3: 13); namely, that the waters coming down from high up, stopped on that side; while, on the other side, the waters flowed into the salty Dead Sea, leaving its place dry; On one side there would be sweet water in one heap, and not on the two sides as it was in the crossover of the Red Sea. That was not realized without significance, but carried a symbol of the New Testament, that we can comprehend, by comparing concisely between the two crossovers, with a clarification of the symbolism in the details of each of them:

(1) In our interpretation of the book of Exodus, we dealt with the crossover of the Red Sea under the leadership of the prophet Moses, as being a symbol of Baptism. So what are the differences between it and the crossover of the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua the Son of Nun?! I wish to confirm here, that the two crossovers represent actually two integrated aspects of Baptism: The first refers to taking off the old man, while the other refers to the enjoyment of the gift of the new man; the two of them are actually one integrated work; as there is no enjoyment of the new man, unless the old man is taken off; and the old man as well, could not be taken off unless we put on the new man. That is why, although we are comparing between the two crossovers, yet, the two are in fact one extending process, in which the Catechumen takes off the old man, proclaimed and exposed by the law (Moses), revealing its fruit, namely, the eternal death; and puts on the new man, presented,

¹ In Jos Hom 4: 1.

² مناجاة 19، 20.

through the divine grace, by our true Joshua; according to the words of the evangelist: “*For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*” (John 1: 17). The first represents the crucifixion with Christ, and the second represents the resurrection with Him. That is why; the first was realized by striking the sea with the rod (the cross), while the second, by the priests, carrying the ark (the resurrection), standing on the bed of the river.

(2) In the crossover of the Red Sea under the leadership of Moses, the water divided into two, and became a wall on both sides; while here, water stopped at the upper side, and flew down at the other side to the Dead Sea, leaving a dry pathway for the people. **The scholar Origen** looks at that as a living portrait of the work of Baptism, that [made the two as one, pulling down the middle wall, making the water accumulate on one side] ¹. Through Moses, namely the law, humanity got divided into Jews and Gentiles; but in Jesus Christ, we gained, through Baptism, one Spirit, not only between us and heaven, but also in between each others ... where the Church from all peoples, nations, and tongues gathered together, and all became members of one body.

The way of the law is a narrow one, wide enough for one people to pass, confining it between two walls on the right side and on the left. The way of the new Joshua, on the other hand, is spacious, through the accumulation of water on one side; wide enough for the entire world to pass; open before all with no discrimination.

From another aspect, it was not without reason that the water remained sweet on the right hand side; while it flowed on the other side down to the Dead Sea (Joshua 3: 16). **The scholar Origen** says: [If all those baptized keep the sweetness of the divine Spirit they gained, and do not turn back to the bitterness of sin, it, certainly, would not have been written, that a part of the river water flows down to the salty Dead Sea. There is a difference between the baptized: those who, after gaining the holy Baptism, would go back to deliver themselves to the worldly interests, and drink again from the salty cup of lust; who are symbolized by that part of the water, which flows down on the salty water of the Dead Sea. As to that part of the water, which stays steadfast and retains its sweetness, it refers to those who keep the gift they got from God. It is natural to refer to those saved by being (whole); “*For the bread of God*

¹ In Jos Hom 4: 1.

is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (John 6: 33); as there is one faith, one Baptism, and one Spirit (Ephesians 4: 4) ¹.

(3) The crossover under the leadership of Moses leads us to a way between two walls of salty water; while, under the leadership of Joshua, the water is sweet and the way is spacious. ... The first refers to the law that brings us to bitterness, and makes us as though confined and in danger; while the other refers to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the sweet and abundant, that gives the soul joy while we crossover this world.

(4) The first crossover has been chaotic: an enemy on the back, and salty water on both sides; while the second crossover was peaceful; no enemy chasing, nor salty water around. It is the way, that is (Our true Jesus), in which we find rest, would not be afraid of an enemy, nor of salty water, to approach us.

(5) In the first crossover, the people had to enter into a barren wilderness, that took them 40 years to cross; although God did not forsake them there, but personally took care of them, and provided them with all their spiritual and physical needs. In the second crossover, on the other hand, the believer sees the land of Canaan not far away, and Jerusalem so very close. In the Lord Christ, by faith, we clearly see the higher Jerusalem, and the heavenly promises, not far away; and enjoy its pledge. It is amazing that, in the second crossover, the water of the Jordan stopped on its higher side, as though referring to the believing soul, that exalts up to live in the heavenly places, and does not descend down to the Dead Sea.

(6) **The scholar Origen** says: [When Moses brought the people out of the land of Egypt, there was no organization of the multitude, nor rituals for the priests; and so they crossed the Red Sea ... While in the second crossover under the leadership of Joshua, the priests walked ahead of the people, carrying the ark of the covenant on their shoulders, that accommodated inside it the tablets of the law and the holy food (the manna) ²].

(7) During the first crossover, everyone was quiet; while in the second one, the priests were carrying the horns, a sign of conquest and triumph.

(8) In the first crossover, the people did not take something to remind them of that incident; while in the second crossover, they took

¹ *Ibid* 4: 1.

² *Ibid* 4: 1.

over twelve stones, as a reference to the holy Church, that was established in the depths of the Jordan; namely, that mystically set forth through Baptism.

(9) The crossover was realized when the soles of feet of the priests who carried the ark of the covenant rested in the waters of the Jordan; a reference to the Lord Christ, the Mighty High Priest, crushing the devil under His feet; Our crossover is a fruit of His crushing of the forces of darkness.

(10) The timing of the crossover of the Jordan had been precise; We know that the Jordan close to Jericho is 150 to 180 feet deep; and the crossover took place during the flood season, between the months of April and May, when the water is at its highest level, and the river at its maximum width and velocity; as a reference to the abundant and exalted work of God in Baptism.

CHAPTER 4

THE STONES OF THE JORDAN

As the River Jordan refers to the holy Baptism, from its positive aspect, Joshua chose twelve men of the people to carry twelve stones from the bottom of the Jordan, to set them in Gilgal, as a proclamation of the establishment of the holy church through Baptism.

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1- The memorial stones:

“And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the Lord spoke to Joshua, saying, ‘Take for yourselves twelve men, from the people, one man from every tribe; and command them saying, ‘Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests’ feet stood firm, you shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.’ ”(Joshua 4: 1 - 3)

God commanded Joshua to choose twelve men, to carry twelve stones from the bottom of the Jordan, from where the priests’ feet stood firm, as a proclamation of the establishment of the Church, being the living body of Christ; that we came to enjoy through the water of Baptism. And as **St. Augustine** says: [The figure 12 refers to the holy Church gathered from the four corners of the earth (Mark 13: 27), through Baptism, in the name of the Holy Trinity (3 X 4)] ¹. Or we can say that the Holy Trinity reigns on humanity in the east, west, north and south. The figure 12, thus refers to the Kingdom of God that reigns on all mankind; namely, to the Church that embraces members from all nations and peoples.

Through this figure, the church has been proclaimed in the Old Testament: in the 12 tribes that represented the people of God, or His Kingdom on earth at that time (Genesis 35: 12). In the New Testament, the Lord Christ chose 12 disciples to judge the 12 tribes (Matthew 19:

¹ On Ps. 87.

28). Even the heavenly Jerusalem, which, in essence, means the eternal Kingdom of God in us, or as called by St. John “*Where God dwells with His people*” (Revelation 21: 3), has 12 gates, 3 on each side (Revelation 21: 12). In ‘Elim’ the people found 12 wells of water (Exodus 15: 27), a reference to the Church, to which the Holy Spirit came to be (the well of water) the secret of its life and comfort amid the wilderness of this world. When Moses built an altar to the Lord, he set 12 pillars (Exodus 24: 4), to reveal that the Church comprises living pillars in the heavenly temple of the Lord, and a spiritual altar, on and in which the unique and eternal sacrifice of the cross is offered. In the same sense, the prophet Elijah built an altar of 12 stones, to offer his sacrifice (1 Kings 18: 31). According to the law, the High Priest puts 12 precious stones on his breastplate, that he wears in the presence of the Lord; as though he is the Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly High Priest, who bears His Church in His heart and on His shoulders, to offer it forever to the Father. **St. Erinaos** believes that the priest’s garment in the Old Testament, used to carry 12 bells (Exodus 28: 34) ¹, that had the following significance: As the garment refers to the body, it is as though our High Priest Jesus Christ, wears His Church a white undefiled garment, shining as white as light (Matthew 17: 2); its bells giving, wherever He goes, ringing of joy and rejoice to His saints, and warnings of woe to those who neglect their salvation.

2- The stones set up in the midst of the Jordan:

“Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood.” (Joshua 4: 9)

At the same time, men took 12 stones from the bottom of the Jordan, they carried to it 12 stones and set them there. **Bishop Caesarius** believes that [the 12 stones they brought to the bottom, refer to the fathers of the Old Testament; while the 12 stones that they carried from the bottom, refer to the disciples of the Lord Christ] ². The stones brought to the bottom refer to the Jews, who were buried and disappeared in the wilderness; while the stones carried away from the bottom refer to the Gentiles who set forth to the land of promise through Baptism.

¹ *Adv. Haer. 1: 18.*

² *Sermon 115: 3,4.*

Actually, we can not separate between the stones, that were carried on the shoulders to be set in the Gilgal, and those that were set on the bottom of the Jordan; as the first refer to the Church, being the body of Christ, that crossed over the Jordan, and suffered the cross, the death, and the burial, to rise together with His head, and experience with Him, every day, the new resurrected life. While the other stones, refer to the persistence of the cross with Christ; The true believer is committed to rise together with the Lord, and to experience sitting every day with Him in the heavenly places, to live with an angelic thought, an exalted holy life; and, at the same time, he should stand on the bank of the Jordan, to behold himself buried in its depth together with his Savior, to experience the resurrection with Him.

It is to be noticed that the Holy Book, tells us about the stones carried up to the Gilgal, to where the Kingdom (the land of promise) is, before talking about the stones brought to and set in the midst of the Jordan; although burial precedes resurrection, suffering precedes comfort, and humility precedes glory. But actually, spiritually speaking, there is no separation between the cross and the resurrection, between suffering with Christ and enjoying His comfort, and between humility for His sake to gain His glory. The Lord, being the resurrection, was raised on the cross, before His resurrection was realized; He was entering Passion, although His glories are eternal! The Christian, likewise, is not to receive burial, sufferings, and humility, unless he realizes, by the Spirit of God, the resurrection, comfort, and glory of Christ! That is why the apostle Paul says: “... *that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead*” (Philippians 3: 10, 11); He can not enter into the fellowship of His sufferings, unless he knows the power of His resurrection; then he can accept death with joy, with the hope of the great day of resurrection.

I wish our heart wander every day in the Gilgal -- the land of promise -- to find for itself a place among the living stones; realizing the power of the Lord working in him, to lift him up from glory to glory, and to bring him into the depths of the heavenliness; Then, he would set forth to the bank of the Jordan, to realize that he can not set forth to the true Gilgal, unless he is buried in the depths of the Jordan! He rejoices in the power of resurrection, yet not outside of the cross and burial together with Jesus, the Lord of glory.

Finally, the holy Book confirms to us, that there is no enjoyment of these divine gifts, except in the person of Jesus Christ, about whom is said: *“Now this, ‘He ascended’ -- What does it mean by that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things”* (Ephesians 4: 9, 10).

3- Hastening to crossover:

“The people hastened and crossed over. Then it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over, that the ark of the Lord and the priests crossed over.” (Joshua 4: 10, 11)

The scholar Origen presents us with a living portrait of the concept of the hasty crossover; saying: [It seems to me that the words *“The people hastened and crossed over,”* were not put by the Holy Spirit without significance; But, it is fitting for us, who are to approach the Baptism of salvation, and to receive the secrets of the Word of God, to avoid looseness and negligence, but to hasten to crossover completely. Complete crossover means observing all commandments; Let us then hasten to crossover, through consummating the Scripture: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit”* (Matthew 5: 3); if we forsake all pride, and embrace the humility of Jesus, we shall be worthy of that promised blessing. And having observed this commandment, we should not stop at that, but crossover to the rest of the commandments, like: *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness”* (Matthew 5: 6); *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”* (5: 4), *“Blessed are the meek”* (5: 5), and *“Blessed are the merciful”* (5: 7), ... Then we would be worthy to be called *“sons of God”* (5: 9). Let us hasten to crossover, through the virtue of patience, and bearing persecution. By such active pursuit of every perfection so that virtue conquers, we can hasten to crossover the Jordan ... But once we get to complete that crossover, it is fitting for us to be aware and alert, lest, with negligence in our behavior, we would stumble *“My feet had almost stumble”* (Psalm 73: 2); as though the prophet says, that we should not be less active in keeping the virtues, than when we were in pursuing them]¹.

Therefore, let us hasten to crossover through working faith, to live striving to consummate the divine commandments, and to keep the gifts and virtues that we gained from God. In the old, when Lot and his family lingered, the two angels took hold of their hands, brought them

¹ In Jos Hom 5: 1.

out, and set them outside the city, and said: “*Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain; escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed*” (Genesis 19: 16, 17); which they did, but Lot’s wife could not keep the gift of salvation; after hastening she turned back with her heart, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

St. John El-Dargi, warns us against lingering and not hastening in crossing over, especially at the beginning of our spiritual life; saying: [Lingering at the beginning of our spiritual battle, would surely lead to something dangerous and hateful. A firm beginning will surely be of great benefit, even if we happen to linger later on; as a strong soul, if it happens to linger, would remember its previous zeal, and that will motivate it to resume its progress; thus she would assume wings] ¹.

It is admirable, that the priests, bearers of the Ark of the Covenant, kept standing on the bottom until all the people completely crossed over (Joshua 4: 11). What a true fatherhood that was! A good shepherd does not seek what is his, but what is others’; although he is the one to open the way and to pave it for them, yet he persistently stays at the rear, to be sure that all are safe. The priests started the crossover and ended it; as though they follow the example of their Lord, who, although He is above all, kept Himself at the rear of the rows, to embrace all humanity, He who is “*The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last*” (Revelation 22: 13).

4- Crossover of the armed forces:

“And the men of Reuben, the men of God, and half the tribe of Manasseh, crossed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses has spoken to them. About forty thousands prepared for war crossed over before the Lord for battle, to the plains of Jericho.” (Joshua 4: 12, 13)

In our interpretation of the book of Numbers, we recall that these tribes requested from the prophet Moses to give them the land of Gilead, east of the Jordan, as their portion of inheritance, and not to have a portion of the lands west of the Jordan with the rest of the tribes; Moses consented to their appeal, on one condition, that they crossover together with their brothers (Numbers 32). Here, the divine inspiration confirms that 40, 000 of them, prepared for war, crossed over before the people and before the Lord for battle. In this text we notice the following:

¹ Ladder, step 1: 11.

(1) The number of those men, who crossed over for battle from the mentioned tribes, was 40,000. So if the figure 4 refers to the flesh, that is coming out of the earth (the 4 corners of the world); the figure 1000 refers to heavenly or spiritual life, as we previously said in that interpretation. It is as though, those men came to share with the congregation, physically as well as spiritually; in the worldly as well as in the heavenly things. It is comparatively easy to share with others, physically, by attending their joyful or sorrowful occasions; yet, together with that, we should share with them spiritually, by heart and thoughts. For example, in case we come to share with someone his celebration of success, I should not stop at just being there, or even at giving him a gift, but what is more valuable, is to share with him spiritually: wishing him a spiritual success, and an enjoyment of divine gifts. Let our fellowship with the other members be through the Head -- Jesus Christ -- who cares for us spiritually, physically, psychologically, socially, and culturally ... He wants us to succeed in all aspects of our life.

(2) The divine inspiration confirms that they crossed over *“before the children of Israel”*, as well as *“before the Lord”*. It is not enough to work on the account of the holy congregation, for the sake of its spiritual growth, and its conquest of the forces of darkness, but our work should be on the account of the Lord. There are many, who minister in the Church, and who do glorified things *“before the children of Israel”*, Yet they do not present the work on the account of God, and do not appear *“before the Lord”* ... They actually minister to the people, to their own dignity, and their self glory, and not to the Lord.

(3) The book describes them as being *“prepared for war”* and *“for battle”*. **The scholar Origen** says: [Who are these men, described by the book as ‘lightly girded’? I cannot suggest anything by myself, but can learn from the epistles of the apostle, saying: *“Having girded your waist with truth”* (Ephesians 6: 14). So, it is fitting for us to gird our waist with the “truth”, if we are to be honest toward this secret, represented by this military weapon (spiritual). If the truth is the girdle of Christ’s soldiers, every time we err in our talk, and utter lies, we are taking off the girdle of Christ. If we actually live in truth, we would be armed for strife; but if we walk with lies, we are unarmed! Oh! I wish we would conform with those 40, 000, girded for war, who crossed over before the Lord, girded with the truth. I also wish we do not forget the words of the book, *“girded before the Lord”*. It is not enough to make the truth apparent before the people; as we may manage to deceive the

people, while seeming truthful; but we can not be counted as girded with truth, unless we do that before the Lord; I do not mean by that, the truth that the people hear in our talk, but what the Lord sees in the depths of our hearts. We should have no deceit on our lips, nor in our hearts; not like those rebuked by the prophet; saying: *“Who speak to their neighbors, but evil is in their hearts”* (Psalm 28: 3) ¹.

5- Joshua exalted in the eyes of the people:

“They feared him as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life.” (Joshua 4: 14)

The scholar Origen says: [Every man under the law, feared Moses; Yet as he sets forth from the law, to crossover to the Bible, his worship and fear becomes different; according to the words of the apostle: *“For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me”* (Galatian 2: 19) ².

Those who live under the killing letter fear the law and get terrified before it; But who live in the freedom of the Spirit, will fear our living Jesus, as would do a son who fears to hurt his father’s feelings! We fear Him through love that lifts us from the fear of slaves, up to the holy fear of children. It was said about the Lord Christ Himself: *“His delight is in the fear of the Lord”* (Isaiah 11: 3).

6- Coming up to the Gilgal:

“Then the Lord spoke to Joshua, saying: ‘Command the priests who bear the ark of the testimony to come up from the Jordan’....And it came to pass, when the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, had come from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests’ feet touched the dry land, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and flowed over all its banks as before.” (Joshua 4: 15 -- 18)

The ascent of the people from the Jordan to settle in Gilgal, took place on the tenth day of the first month; and here we notice the following:

(1) The people came up from the Jordan to the land of promise, on the same date, that everyone of them took for himself a lamb, to offer it a Passover sacrifice (Exodus 12: 3). It is as though, on the same day, in which they celebrated the secret of Passover, their coming up from the

¹ Jos. Hom 5: 2.

² Ibid 5: 4.

Jordan to put their feet on the land of promise, was realized; And as though their coming up to inheritance, is to be realized through the Passover; namely, through the cross. There is no conquer nor an inheritance for us outside the circle of the cross.

This, and the day the exodus from servitude began, is the same day the movement to enter into freedom started; as though the exodus and the entry represent one integrated work, inseparable by time. In the cross, as well as in the baptism, I set forth from the servitude of the real Pharaoh, to enter into the freedom of glory of the children of God, in the true Joshua; In the Holy Spirit, I cast off the old man with all his evil works, that bound me all my life, to put on, by the Holy Spirit, the new man, with his holy nature in Christ Jesus, to consummate the days of my sojourn free in the Lord.

(2) The coming up to the land of promise was realized on the tenth day of the first month. And as the first month refers to the beginning of a new year, that coming up refers to entrance into the new life, through our enjoyment of the new inner man, to live by the thought of Christ (Philippians 2: 5), and to carry His features in us. The figure 10 refers to perfection, as well as to the ten commandments; as though we enter into inheritance in its perfection, when we consummate our strife on earth, and proclaim, by Christ Jesus, the consummator of the commandments, that we are not breakers of the law ... We have been, indeed breakers of the law, but, in Christ Jesus, who is "*born under the law*" (Galatians 4: 4), for our sake, we became non-breakers of it. By the new life (the first month), we come up from under the law, to above it, to live in the righteousness of God, by His Holy Spirit.

(3) The first camp for the people after their crossing over of the Jordan and their entry into Canaan was called 'Gilgal', meaning 'rolling' or 'circle'. This name came to proclaim the rolling away of the old reproach of servitude (Joshua 5: 9). Although they set forth from the servitude of Pharaoh forty years before that, yet, the reproach of servitude was not rolled away, until they stepped into the Gilgal, in the land of Canaan. It is as though the reproach of sin would not be rolled away from us, except by our entry into the 'circle of eternity', and our enjoyment of the pledge of the eternal inheritance inside us.

Talking about His work with His people, God talks of setting them free from the land of servitude, and bringing them over to Gilgal; as though it is the last place to settle in, although geographically it is the first location they reached in Canaan ... By enjoying Gilgal, God counted

them as though they have enjoyed all Canaan. Gilgal had numerous memorable events that reveal God's work with His people in that new land, of which are the following:

a- Gilgal was the headquarters of Joshua; In it he set the twelve memorial stones (Joshua 4: 19); and in it the people were re-circumcised (Joshua 5: 9) ... As we crossover to the heavenly life (the circle), our Jesus would receive our life, and control all our affairs, until our victory is consummated in Him.

b- Gilgal appears as a holy place even till the days of Samuel (1 Samuel 7: 6); In it Saul was anointed a king (1 Samuel 10: 8; 11: 14; etc.); and in it, there probably was a temple. Thus, our heart would become the true Gilgal, sanctified by the Spirit of God, who make it a temple for Himself; and set us kings united to the King of Kings, who have the spiritual authority over all hosts of darkness (the devils), and all their works.

c- Gilgal was the center of Saul's military activities against other nations, especially Amalek. When the heart is sanctified, it turns into a military spiritual center against evil and sin, on the account of God.

Moreover, many events happened in Gilgal; to it, men of Judah came to meet David, as he returned from Gilead (2 Samuel 19: 16). Unfortunately, that location, later on, was transformed into a center of pagan worship, in the days of the kings who reigned after Jeroboam; that earned them the curse of prophets (Hosea 4: 15; 9: 15; 12: 11; Amos 4: 4; 5: 5)¹.

Most probably it was 'House of Gilgal', referred to after the captivity (Nehemiah 12: 29). The exact location of Gilgal is not accurately known; believed by some to be 'Athla ruins' close to the swamp of 'Galgola', three miles south-east of 'Ein Sultan'; while others suggest that it is the 'Ruins of Maphgir', a mile and a quarter north-east of old Jericho 'Ein Sultan'².

¹ Mckenzie. P. 311.

² New Westminster Dict. Of Bible, p. 332.

CHAPTER 5

PREPARATION FOR THE SPIRITUAL WAR

All attention was concentrated on the inauguration of the new land, dividing it, and enjoying its goodness; But God kept them a little while in Gilgal, to reveal to them an important spiritual fact: That conquest is not based on the great number, nor on the mighty arm; but through the sanctified life in the Lord, the Grantor of inheritance. God presented them with the spiritual weapons, by which to work in them, in order to enjoy His free promises; despite the great opposition of the evil one.

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1- The animosity of the nations incited against them | 1 -- 2 |
| 2- The second circumcision | 3 -- 9 |
| 3- The new Passover | 10 |
| 4- Eating of the produce of the land | 11 -- 12 |
| 5- Appearance of the Commander of the army of the Lord | 13 -- 15 |

1- The animosity of the nations incited against them:

After the crossing over of the children of Israel, the kings of the Amorites, and the Canaanites got very agitated, and started to join their forces against them, and against their God! That was a war that carried the image of the original war between God and the devil. The later cannot stand the light, and would not bear to see the entry of anyone into the fellowship of God's Kingdom. With every spiritual success, the enemy gets agitated, and makes war, if not openly, he would do it secretly; and if not through strangers, he would do it through relatives, and even through the body itself, and sometimes through those who call themselves ministers in the Church ... That is why the Lord advises us that "*A man's foes will be those of his own household*" (Matthew 10: 36).

Their crossing over the Jordan, is not the end of strife, but rather its beginning; and our enjoyment of the holy Baptism, does not mean that we have reached the consummation of conquest, but it would mean our enjoyment of new divine blessings, that would agitate the devil much more. With every conquest, and with every triumph, the spiritual war

would get fiercer; thus the believer rises from glory to glory, through the successive triumphs, and through the attacks of sins against him.

The first thing that God clarified to His people after their crossover of the Jordan was to reveal the existence of opponents. It is as though, the first step in our spiritual life, is to realize the fact, that there is a dangerous enemy facing us; not of flesh and blood, but as expressed by the apostle: “*spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*” (Ephesians 6: 12). This enemy would never stop wrestling with us with every apparent and concealed way, day and night, in order to destroy our faith and hope in Jesus Christ. Realizing the seriousness of the bitter deceits of this enemy, we should also realize the capabilities of our true Joshua to destroy the devil, to scatter his plots, and to cancel his authority over us. That is why, **St. Augustine** cries out, saying: [The tempter is coming against me with a mighty army, but he can not overcome me, because You have broken his dignity, and given me the courage to face him] ¹.

As to the spiritual weapons, that became ours in Jesus Christ, it starts with the second circumcision; namely, the spiritual circumcision.

2- The second circumcision:

“At that time the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time.’” (Joshua 5: 2)

When God promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants after him, as an everlasting possession (Genesis 17: 8), circumcision was the seal of that covenant by which God’s promises are realized.

Why does God say to Joshua, “*Circumcise the sons of Israel again ... a second time*”? At that time, they were not circumcised, as all males who came out of Egypt died in the wilderness, and no one of them entered into Canaan except Joshua and Caleb. In order that the descendants of Abraham would enjoy that promise, all of them were committed to be circumcised in Gilgal, to enter into the holy fellowship of the people of God. God had warned Abraham, saying: “*The uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant*” (Genesis 17: 14). They had to get circumcised, having come out of the wilderness, and the circumstances in Gilgal were convenient

¹ مناجاة 16.

for circumcision ... But why does He say: “*Circumcise them again ... a second time*”? **The scholar Origen** answers this question, saying: [We say that whoever was educated under the law, and was taught the preaching of Moses, forsaking the mistakes and falseness of idolatry; that he has consummated the first circumcision according to the law. But, having transferred from the law and prophets to the Bible, we have to be circumcised again by means of the “Rock” – that was Christ (1 Corinthians 10: 4). Then, in us would be realized the word of God to Joshua: “*This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.*” (Joshua 5: 19)]¹

That was also clarified by **Father Lactanius**, saying: [This second circumcision is not to be in the flesh, as was the first one, which is still followed by the Jews; but it is the circumcision of the heart and the Spirit, granted by Christ², the true Joshua. **St. Cyprian** quoted this phrase from both the Old and New Testaments, to confirm to the Jews their need for the circumcision of the Spirit, and the vanity of that of the flesh³.

The second circumcision took place in the Gilgal, directly before taking over the cities of Canaan. That was to confirm to the congregation, that the burial in the Jordan and the resurrection concern the Lord Christ Himself, who was buried and rose; that, by our union with Him, we would be crucified, buried, and risen with Him; It is the realization of the Baptism on a personal level, for every member of the congregation. In the Gilgal, we see the twelve stones taken out of the Jordan, to represent the body of Christ in its wholeness, having experienced burial and resurrection. While in circumcision, we see every member of the congregation personally enjoying the burial and resurrection.

The Book emphasizes: “So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.” (Joshua 5: 3)

If the flint or rock refers to the Lord Christ (1 Corinthians 10: 4), these knives refer to the cross of the Lord, received by the believer, to be crucified with Him, and to get circumcised for all the works of the old man, to enjoy the new man, who is risen from the dead.

¹ In Jos. Hom 5: 5.

² Divine Inst. 4: 17.

³ Treat. 12 to Quirinius 1: 8.

Thus, the circumcision appears as the power of an inner life, where man enjoys the practical fellowship together with his true leader -- Jesus Christ -- accepts His crucifixion, to enjoy the power of His resurrection, that grants conquest and triumph over the devil, and even over death itself.

“So it was, when they have finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed. Then the Lord said to Joshua, ‘This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you’. Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day.”(Joshua 5: 9)

The word ‘Gilgal’ means (rolling away); God intended to roll away from them the reproach of servitude, connected in the minds of the old people, to Egypt. The scholar Origen says: [To approach the meaning of this phrase, all the people, even though having been under the law, and having received the teachings of Moses, yet they still had the reproach of Egypt in them; namely, the reproach of sin. Who could be compared to the apostle Paul in keeping the law? He who says: *“Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless”* (Philippians 3: 6); Yet, he proclaims, *“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another”* (Titus 3: 3). Does not he mean here the reproach of Egypt? But Jesus came, and gave us the second circumcision, *“through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”* (Titus 3: 5); purified our spirits, rolled away that reproach, and granted us in its place, the promise by the good conscious toward God. Thus the second circumcision has rolled away our reproach, and purified us from wickedness and sins. Therefore, if we, by faith, crossed over the Jordan, by virtue of the Bible, and purification by the second circumcision, we should not fear the reproach of the previous sins; hearing His words: *“I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt.”*¹ He also says: That is what the Lord intends to say in the gospels: *“Your sins are forgiven you”* (Mark 2: 5); yet He also says: *“Sin no more lest a worse thing come upon you”* (John 5: 14). If you would sin no more after being granted the forgiveness of sins; your reproach would be rolled away from you. But if you commit new sins, you are going back to the old reproach, and may be worse; as though you have *“trampled the Son of God under- foot, and counted the blood of the*

¹ In Jos. Hom 5: 5.

covenant by which you were sanctified a common thing” (Hebrew 10: 29). ... Yes, whoever delivers himself to adultery after receiving the Bible, would have his reproach worse than him who does that, while still under the law. For, it is said, *“Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot“?! (1 Corinthians 6: 15).* Do you see how, through negligence, the reproach would accumulate, to weigh upon you?! Oh! You would not be accused of uncleanness, but of defiling the sanctuaries; for about you is said: *“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you“?* (1 Corinthians 6: 9); and, *“If any one defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him”* (1 Corinthians 3: 17) ¹. He also said: [Add to this, that *“He who commits sexual immorality, sins against his own body”* (1 Corinthians 6: 18).; not only against his own body that became a temple of God, but against the body of the whole Church; for when defiling his own body, as a member, he would infect the whole body. ... Therefore to consummate in ourselves the second circumcision, and to have the old reproach rolled away from us, let us separate ourselves from these defilements, to be pure in body and in Spirit, to be able to *“lift up holy hands”* (1 Timothy 2: 8), pure mouth and lips, to glorify God with a true heart, by our prayers and deeds, in Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom is the glory and authority, to eternity] ².

Having known our spiritual enemy, and acquired the second circumcision, that purified us from every defilement, and set us free from every authority by that enemy, so as not to give him in our heart, an inheritance, we are committed to arm ourselves with the new Passover.

3-The new Passover:

“So the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho.”(Joshua 5: 10)

In our study of the Book of Exodus, we have talked in some detail about the Passover, and the connection between the old Passover and the new one. But here, having crossed over the Jordan, to the Promised Land, the people were committed, before starting the strife, to enjoy the second circumcision; and when their wounds are healed in Gilgal, they would keep the new Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight, on the plains of Jericho. Here we notice:

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

(1) The connection between circumcision and Passover is a connection between Baptism and the Eucharist -- the new Passover. The believer cannot enjoy and share in the sacrament of Passover, unless his heart is circumcised in the water of Baptism, in which he gains membership in the body of Christ. Then in the Eucharist, we would enjoy the holy body, to abide in Him and He in us. This connection reminds us of the old rite of Baptism, when most of the Catechumens used to gain the secret of Baptism on the eve of the glorified feast of the Passover -- the feast of the conquest over death, and the gaining of the power of resurrection in Christ, risen from the dead. The newly baptized believers come out clothed in the white garments of triumph, holding the lighted candles, to enter into the (chore) of believers, to enjoy communion in the holy Sacraments (the Eucharist), right after the Baptism. In Baptism, they crossed over from the old man to the new man; while in the Eucharist, they cross over from earth to heaven itself, through their union with God in Jesus Christ, our true Passover.

(2) It was not possible for the people to leave their places in the camp, to begin war, before they were healed (Joshua 5: 8). So, if we have gained crucifixion with our old man, in the water of Baptism, we shall have to be completely healed, through casting off our wicked habits altogether. And as said by **the scholar Origen**, [It is a sort of a painful strife, to forsake the old habits of sin, to enter into a totally new life ... In my opinion, this is the time spoken of by the Book, during which we have to stay in our places, as though in pain of circumcision, until we are healed. Healing is complete when we carry out our new duties with no murmur, and get used to what we used to consider before as a difficult task. We can say that we have truly healed, when our iniquities disappear, by the power of the new habit and virtue becomes in us, a second nature¹].

4- Eating of the produce of the land:

The children of Israel passed, as far as their feeding is concerned, through three stages: The first stage on their coming out of the land of Egypt: *"They took their dough before it was leavened ... in their clothes on their shoulders"* (Exodus 12: 34); and when this was exhausted, and they had nothing to eat, they entered into the second stage, as God poured on them the manna from heaven; that was mentioned by the Lord Christ, saying: *"Your fathers ate the manna in the*

¹ *Ibid 6 Cl.*

wilderness, and are dead” (John 6: 49). Then finally, when they entered into the land of promise:

“And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain on the very same day. Now the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land.”(Joshua 5: 11, 12)

In the first stage, the dough was connected to their clothes (Exodus 12: 34), namely, with their body; they ate for the sake of the needs of the body; having been still in the stage of spiritual childhood, connected to the body and the earthliness. But once they entered into the wilderness, God provided them with the manna from heaven, to confirm to them, that they should not worry for their bodies, as He is the One to sustain them and care for them both spiritually and physically. Now, in the new land, the Word of God, offers Himself as the heavenly Bread, saying: *“I am the living Bread which came down from heaven. If any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the Bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world”* (John 7: 51). The believer used to pass through these three stages: In the first stage he used to eat to live; in the second stage, he did not worry, as God provided him somehow, with his physical needs; But in the third stage, man finds in God Himself, his fulfilling eternal food.

5- The appearance of the commander of the army of the Lord:

As Joshua, with the people of God, crossed over the Jordan, set forth to the Gilgal, set the memorial stones; sanctified the people by the second circumcision; and enjoyed with them the Passover and the new produce of the land; ... everything became new for them; ... Joshua proceeded to Jericho. He probably realized that he is now alone without Moses; facing a new kind of war; against a city with high walls, and towers that could sustain for a long time under siege; Joshua could not disregard those cities, and proceed to other ones; as they would remain a real danger, and could strike them from the back! He probably was thinking of the animosity of the Canaanite nations around them (Joshua 5: 1, 2).... Anyway, Joshua, being the man of faith, the Word of God appeared to him, as the Commander of the army of the Lord, to support him.

If it is God Himself, who purifies their hearts by the new circumcision; abiding them in Him by the new Passover; and fulfills

them by the new land produce; He would not abstain from letting His living Word appear in a visible way, to confirm to Joshua:

“As Commander of the army of the Lord, I have now come.”
(Joshua 5: 14)

He is not just an angel or an archangel, but the Word of God Himself; saying to Joshua:

“ Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.” (Joshua 5: 15)

The same words were said to Moses, when the Lord appeared to him, through a burning bush (Exodus 3). We have previously known, in more detail, that taking the sandal off, is a confirmation of the necessity of taking off the earthly cares, and the vain glories; and a confirmation that the minister is not the Groom of the Church, but its servant; The true Groom being the Lord Jesus, working in him¹. **The scholar Origen** says: [Joshua realized by Spirit, that he was not facing someone sent by the Lord, but the Lord Himself; he would not worship the Lord, if he could not recognize Him]². As to calling Himself the Commander of the army of the Lord; that is not something strange for the Word of God; about Whom is said in the Book of Isaiah: *“I have made Him a Witness to the peoples, a Leader and Commander of the peoples”* (Isaiah 55: 4). And in the Book of Revelations, He appears sitting on a white horse; clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, followed Him on white horses; and out of His mouth goes a sharp sword (Revelations 19: 11 - 15).

How amazing is God’s love, and how great is His care! As He gets His believers into a war against the devil and his evil works, He goes before them as a victorious Commander, to conquer with them. And when our adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5: 8); there, we shall find, on our side, the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5: 5). When we get hungry, He offers Himself a living Bread; whoever eats of it, would never get hungry; When we feel lonely, He comes as a unique friend, to support us; and even as a true spiritual Groom, to fill up any void in us; If we feel lost, He offers Himself as the Way and Truth; And when death comes to us, He become to us the resurrection! In His love, He provides us with everything, to fulfill every need in us!

St. Cyprian: Treat 12: 2: 16.

¹ راجع تفسير الخروج، أصحاح 3.

² In Jos hom 111.

Finally, **St. Anthony the Great**, sees in the talk of Joshua, the son of Nun, to the Commander of the army of the Lord, a living example of how we can differentiate between heavenly visions and devilish ones; saying: [When you see a vision, do not fall down with fear; But ask bravely: Who are you? and from where have you come? If the vision is holy, you can be sure of that, when your fear is transformed into joy. But if it is from the devil, the vision would instantly weaken, before the steadfastness of your mind ... That is how Joshua, the son of Nun, did to make sure of the identity of who came to help him] ¹.

¹ *Vita Antonii* 43.

CHAPTER 6

THE FALL OF JERICHO

Having offered to His people, led by Joshua, all the possibilities to enjoy the inheritance; and having brought them across the Jordan; they stood before Jericho, that city of fame along the generations, fortified by mighty walls, that had to fall down before the people, to realize the promises of God. ... Here again, God offers new possibilities for conquest and triumph!

1- The city of Jericho	
2- Marching around the city	1
3- Blowing the trumpets	4
4- The shouting of the people	5 -- 16
5- The statute of the accursed	17 -- 21
6- Sparing Rahab	22 -- 25
7- Cursing Jericho	26 -- 27

1- THE CITY OF JERICHO:

‘Jericho’ meaning (the city of the moon), or (the place of good aroma), is located 5 miles west of the River Jordan; and 17 miles north-east of Jerusalem. But ‘Jericho’, that is mentioned in this Book, was located where ‘Tal-Alsultan’ is nowadays, one mile west of the modern Jericho; known now as ‘Al-Riha’ and the hills of ‘Abul-Olek’.

Since old times, Jericho was known for its palm trees (Deuteronomy 34: 1; 3; Judges 3: 13); bananas, oranges, and roses (Sirach 24: 14); Sycamore trees (Luke 19: 4); Balsam, and several other fruit trees.

Jericho was given to the tribe of Benjamin as their portion of inheritance; on the borderline between the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim (Joshua 16: 1; 7; 18: 12). There, ‘Eglon’, king of Moab dwelt, and stroke and humiliated Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of God (Judges 3: 12, 13). In it, the servants sent by King David to Hanun, king of Ammon, who shaved off half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, at their buttocks, stayed till their beards have grown, and then returned (2 Samuel 10: 1 - 5). In the days of Ahab, son of Omri, king of Israel, Hiel of Bethel, built Jericho, to lose his firstborn, as he laid its foundation, and his youngest son, as he set up its

gates, “according to the word of the Lord, which he had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun” (1 Kings 16: 34; Joshua 6: 26). In Jericho, Elijah and Elisha visited the group of prophets before Elijah was taken to heaven; then Elisha returned to those prophets (2 Kings 2: 4, 15). And it seems that the source of water that was healed by Elisha by casting salt in it (2 Kings 2: 21), is the spring known nowadays as ‘Ein of Sultan’. And when the captives of Judah, taken by Israel, under the leadership of Pekah the son of Remaliah (2 Chronicles 28: 15), were returned, they were brought on to Jericho. Close to it, the Babelonians took Zedekiah, king of Judah (Jeremiah 52: 5); and to it, together with Zerubbabel, 345 of its inhabitants and their descendants, returned (Ezra 2: 34; Nehemiah 7: 36); and some of them helped to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3: 2).

Herod the Great built a citadel near Jericho, and there he died. And in the days of the Lord Christ, a group of priests dwelt in Jericho, and used to move often between it and Jerusalem, as is clear from the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30, 31). And in Jericho, the Lord Christ opened the eyes of Bartimaeus and his companion (Matthew 20: 29; Mark 10: 46; Luke 18: 35); and in it, the Lord visited the house of Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1- 10).

2- Marching around the city:

Jericho, the first fortified city that confronted the people, who came to enjoy their inheritance; represents the love of the world,; as an obstacle that hinders the soul from setting forth to eternity, to enjoy the true inheritance; that loads it down, so as not to be lifted up by the wings of the Holy Spirit, from glory to glory. At the same time, it represents the ‘self’ -- the (ego), being the most serious obstacle that would face the spiritual beginners, to deprive them of the fellowship with God, the Grantor of conquest and of eternal inheritance. Two dangers that would face man in his spiritual strife are: love of the world, representing the left strike, and the ‘self’ or (ego), representing the right strike, when man counts himself as better than others, and more righteous.

The scholar Origen talks about Jericho, as representing evil itself, saying: [It came in the Bible: “*A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves ...*” (Luke 10: 30). Here we recognize a portrait of Adam, falling down from Jerusalem, to the exile of this world. And the two blind men from Jericho (Matthew 20: 30),

met by the Lord Christ who opened their eyes; did not they represent the men of this world, blinded by ignorance, for whose sake the Son of God came?! Therefore the city of Jericho is this world in which we live, that should be destroyed] ¹. And he talks of the battle of Jericho, as a battle against the evil of this world, fought in the heart, saying: [Let us go to war, and attack the most dangerous city in the world, namely evil; Let us devastate the walls of the arrogant sin! Are you looking around to know the way you have to take, and the battle location you have to choose?! Look inside yourself, as the battle you are to fight is in you, where there are the walls of wickedness that should be destroyed! Drive your enemy out of your heart! These are not my own interpretation; but let me quote the Lord Christ who says: “*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies*” (Matthew 15: 19). Do you appreciate the might of the army against you in the depths of your heart? These are our enemies whom we should slay in the first battle, and bury in the earth at the first line; if we are able to destroy their walls, and to strike every man with the edge of the sword, leaving none breathing (Joshua 11: 14); and no one to find a place in us, or to live anew in our thoughts. By that, Christ grants us the great comfort: “*Each one sits underneath his vine and his fig tree; with nobody to terrify Israel*” ².

The Holy Book describes Jericho as such:

“ Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in.” (Joshua 6: 1)

It represents one who is shut on himself; his heart not open to taking and giving, but he resembles a closed city where no one comes out or goes in; devoid of love! As for him, whose heart is wide open with Christ, the lover of mankind, he lives with an open mind, opens his depths for everyone by a divine wisdom; and emits from his heart every fulfilling love to others.

This is Jericho, representative of the world, or of evil itself, especially the ‘self’ or (ego). God used, in the conquest over Jericho, a unique way that was never, and will not ever be followed in wars. As the battle of Jericho, was to be the first battle in the land of promise, after crossing over the Jordan, God intended to proclaim in a distinct way, that

¹ In Jos. Hom 6: 4.

² Ibid 5: 2.

the war is His, and the victory is from Him, and their real and essential weapon is faith. The apostle Paul says: "*By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were encircled for seven days*" (Hebrew 11: 30).

In that battle, God did not use military tactics, men, human wisdom, or weapons; although He committed His people to use them in the battles to follow; in order to confirm to them from the beginning, that, although He appreciates human wisdom, and uses human work if sanctified, yet He remains alone the secret of our conquest over sin! He commanded them to march around the city once every day for six days, until they are exhausted. On the seventh day, He commanded them to march around the city seven times, until they are unable to march any more. Then, all the people are to shout a great shout, as a proclamation of their faith in God, the Grantor of triumph, who would then defend them and grant them what He promised.

Marching around probably refers to "entering into eternity", representing life with no end like a circle. By the eternal life that becomes ours in Jesus Christ our Lord, we can destroy the mighty walls and buildings of Jericho. The world, with all its seductions, will not be able to draw our hearts; the evil, with all its deceits, will not be able to draw our thoughts to it; and the 'self' or (ego), will not be able to captivate our soul and shut it in. "Eternity", or "life with the eternal Christ", is the way of conquest and inner triumph; through which the time, brought to death, is swallowed; and before it, all fantasies and vain glory of the wicked world, will escape ... Indeed, our entry into heaven, while we are still on earth, will lift us up over every weakness, and uproot from our inside, the deep roots of evil.

Marching around the city once a day through the first six days, refers to continuous work all our time (the week days); while marching seven times on the seventh day, means that, on the day of our rest -- the seventh day -- we should work double time for our Lord, and strive a perfect strife (the figure 7 refers to perfection). By that strife, keeping the Sabbath is spiritually realized; namely, the rest in the Lord. Actually, the day of the Lord, or the day of rest in Him, is not a day of laziness and relaxation, but it is a day of continuous strife, by the free grace working in us; until the devilish castles are totally destroyed; until the 'self' or (ego) in us is crucified; until our true Joshua reigns inside us, and finds rest in our hearts, as though on His throne; and until sin no longer have authority over us. **St. John Chrysostom** says that the Sabbath here, had

been literally broken, but spiritually kept, as the exceeding work gives more victory than every other day¹. And **St. Augustine** says: [Whoever does no sin, truly keeps the Sabbath]²; and **St. Clement of Alexandria** says: [Having taken rest from sin, we abide to the spiritual Sabbath, until the coming of the Savior]³. And **St. Jerome** says: [The Jews would never make a fire on the Sabbath; But we, on the contrary, are committed to keep the fire of the Holy Spirit burning, to consume every evil and sin]⁴. **The scholar Origen** has the following magnificent expression about the concept of the day of the Lord: [The perfect man is always preoccupied by God's words, His work, and His thoughts; By that he would be always living in the days of the Lord, and all his days would be days of the Lord]⁵. It was indeed a day of the Lord, as they marched seven times around Jericho, blew the trumpets, and shouted high for the Lord, who destroyed the forces and authority of evil, for Joshua to reign, together with his children with him.

3- Blowing the trumpets:

On the seventh day, marching seven times around the city, the priests blew the trumpets by the seventh time (Joshua 6: 4, 16). In our interpretation of the Book of Numbers (10: 1- 10), we talked about the language of trumpets, as being the word of God, incessantly uttered by the priests, capable of granting the believers the life of spiritual conquest, and of putting in them the inner joy and rejoice of the heart⁶. **St. Ambrose** says: [Not everyone has the right to blow the trumpet, nor to call others to a holy meeting; but that privilege was given only to priests]⁷.

The scholar Origen talks about the trumpets of the priests that were blown to destroy the walls of Jericho, saying: [Jericho represents the present world; the strength of whose walls would be destroyed when the priests blow their horns. The strong walls that serve this world are idolatry and relating divinity to things made by satanic deceit, and works of magicians and diviners, ... besides the different atheistic thoughts of

¹ *In Matt. Hom 39.*

² *Sermon 38 PI 270: 1242.*

³ *Lib. Of the Frs. Of the Church, vol 43.*

⁴ *pI. 39: 2058.*

⁵ *Adv. Celsus 8: 21.*

⁶ سفر العدد 1981: ص 54، 55.

⁷ *On Belief in Resur. 2: 111.*

philosophers, and teachings originated from disputes... All these are like high walls supporting the world. But once the Lord Christ came -- represented by Joshua the son of Nun -- He sent the priests and apostles to blow silver horns (Numbers 10: 2; Psalm 98: 6); namely to present exalted and heavenly preaching. The first priestly horns were blown in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; Peter, James, Judah, and John also blew horns in their epistles; and Luke in the Book of Acts; and finally Paul, who blew his horns through his fourteens epistles, to blast the walls of Jericho with lightening, to bring them down to the ground; destroying all its buildings, together with all its war instruments, of idolatry and philosophical thoughts] ¹.

Bishop Caesarius speaks of the trumpets of priests, saying: [The walls of Jericho, referring to this world, fell when the priests blew the horns; So also those of the 'pride', the (city) of this world, together with its towers: namely, greed, envy, looseness, etc.; That is to say, every evil lust will be destroyed and abolished, through the continuous preaching of the priests. That is why, priests should never keep silent in the Church, but rather comply with what the Lord says: "*Cry loud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression*" (Isaiah 58: 1). We are committed to persist on shouting loudly so as to keep our salvation, and to "*spare not*", so as not to perish by our silence, because of the wickedness of sinners. When you shyly care for his feelings, you fail to care for his (spiritual) health. Do not let his wounds get worst because of your silence, but let them heal by your shouts. We should shout, and shout loudly, that nobody should claim that he did not hear, or that he does not know the voice of the priest. ²] He also says: [The trumpet is important for the sinners, not only to pierce their ears, but also to shake their hearts; not only to rejoice them, but also to rebuke them. The sound of the trumpet should encourage the watchful to do well, and to terrify the negligent on their sins. And as, in battle, the trumpet terrifies the trembling soldier, and enflames the spirit of the brave; so also the trumpet of the priest does to the sinner and the righteous ... That is the work of the trumpet, to scatter the work of the sinners, and to steadfast that of the righteous] ³. He also talks about the

¹ *In Jos. Hom. 7: 1.*

² *Sermon 115: 5.*

³ *Ibid.*

trumpets of the priests, saying: [The blessed Paul says: “*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 10: 4, 5). Do not you see, that the tongues of the priests, according to the words of the apostle, are weapons of words that scatter the vain thoughts, and captivate the haughty pride] ¹.

4- The shouting of the people:

God commanded Joshua, that when they hear the sound of the trumpets, “ ***all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him.***”(Joshua 6: 5)

Some interpreted the word “shouts”, to mean (cries of joy); while, according to others, like **the scholar Origen**, they are (shouts of unity) by all the soldiers with one spirit, when they get carried away by the atmosphere of the battle. It is as though the falling down of the walls of Jericho, or the destruction of the kingdom of the devil, does not require the life of joy of an individual, isolated from the congregation, but the shouts of triumph by the entire congregation with one spirit. It is indeed the shout of spiritual strife against sin and the kingdom of Satan, full of hope and joy, through unity together. That is why the Psalmist says: “*Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands ! Serve the Lord with gladness*” (Psalm 100: 1); and: “*Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound*” (Psalm 89: 15).

Marching seven times around Jericho, caused them to get physically worn out, as though dead, incapable, not only to fight, but even to walk on their feet. And here, as marching around refers to eternal life, we say that their death was swallowed up in the victory and conquest of eternity; according to the saying of the apostle: “*Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’*” (1 Corinthians 15: 54). As though all, having enjoyed eternity in Jesus Christ, would give the shout of joy and rejoice, as a sign of victory over death, and the enjoyment of the victory of eternity; saying with the apostle: “*O Death, where is your sting ?; O Hades, where is*

¹ Ibid 115: 6.

your victory ...; But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15: 54, 57). As such, their exhausting strife mixes with the rejoicing of their hearts; and the spiritual war melds with the experience of the heavenly joy!

That is why the fathers of the Church -- even the Hermits among them -- talked about the life of inner joy in Jesus Christ, amid the tears of repentance, and the labors of spiritual strife; warning against falling before the spirit of sadness, that brings us into despair that could destroy our faith. They confirm our commitment to the great inner shouting, amid our bitter strife. **St. Agnatus Berianshaintof** says: [If you get a thought or a feeling of sadness, it is of benefit to remember the power of faith, and the words of the Lord, who warns us against fear and sadness; proclaiming and confirming to us God's promises, that even the hairs of our heads are counted; and that nothing could ever happen to us, without His knowledge and consent] ¹. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [Sin does not destroy as despair does; A sinner, if he is watchful, would quickly repent and correct his ways; while he who despairs and not repents, would fail to correct a thing, through his non-acceptance of the cures of repentance] ². He talks, as well, of our rising above the sadness and bitterness of afflictions, through presenting the joyful shouts of thanksgiving; saying: [I wish we do not drown in our afflictions, but offer thanksgiving for everything, to acquire great benefits; pleasing God who allows these afflictions. Affliction is a great goodness; we learn this from our kids, who learn nothing of benefit, without it. We actually are in more need of affliction than they are] ³.

The scholar Origen concentrates on the unity of spirit in the joyful shouting, commenting on the words of the Psalmist: "*Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound*" (Psalm 89: 15), saying, [He did not say: 'Blessed are the people who practice righteousness', nor 'who know the secrets, or who have the knowledge of the heaven, earth, and stars'; but 'Who know the joyful sound'. Sometimes, the fear of God, grants man joy; yet it grants it to one individual; That is why, for example, it is said: "*Blessed is the man who fears the Lord*" (psalm 112: 1); ... while here, the blessing is given in abundance ... Why? Because all

¹ *The Arena*, p. 208.

² *In Matt. Hom 86*.

³ *In Acts hom. 42*.

the people share in it; all of them know the fellowship of joy. That is why, it seems to me, that the shout of joy, means the unity of the heart, together with that of the spirit ... When the people raise their voice with one accord, in them would be realized what came in the Book of Acts about the occurrence of an earthquake, ... Then, everything would collapse, and the world would come to an end] ¹.

If the horns of the priests refer to the word of God, and the persistent work of preaching; the shouting of the people means the unity of heart that produces joy and rejoicing, through the victory over the kingdom of darkness. The priests preach repentance, and the people enjoy the gifts of God and His triumph over the world, through the unity of true love! That is why the Book says: "*All the people shall shout with a great shout*" (Joshua 6: 5). Thus, our Christianity is set upon a personal relationship between God and the human soul; yet not in isolation or individuality, but through its union with the other members, in one spirit, through the One Head.

The scholar Origen connects between the trumpets of the priests and the shouts of people, inside the soul; and beholds the true Joshua enter into the soul, to dedicate it a kingdom for Him, destroying the inner walls of Jericho. It is fitting for us, as priests, to carry inside us the trumpets, and blow them, to cast away the improper thoughts and words; blow the horns, namely, praise with psalms and spiritual songs (1 Corinthians 3: 16); or blow the trumpets of the secrets of the law, of the symbols of the prophets, and of the teachings of the apostles, that work together in harmony inside us ... All these would erupt inside us, a people that shouts with a great shout; Our thoughts, feelings, and everything inside us would shout with joy; with no defilement, deceits, or lies; Everything inside us would shout with one harmonious and integral spirit; Then, the walls of world love would be collapsed, and our Jesus would reign inside us; to say together with the apostle: "*But God forbids that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world*" (Galatians 6: 14).

Blowing the horns of the Old Testament (the law and the prophets), in harmony with the horns of the New Testament; namely, a study of the Holy Book, in one unity, and by one constructive spiritual

¹ In Jos. Hom 7: 2.

way, would also create a harmonious shout in man; The body would shout through the holiness of its members, with the soul through the holiness of its energies, feelings, emotions, and capacities ... All working with the spirit of unity, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, with a real joy, having our Lord Jesus reigning on it.

5- The statute of the accursed:

“Now the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction ...And you, by all means, keep yourselves from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord.”(Joshua 6: 17. 19)

At the start of their inheritance, God, intending for their heart, mind, and time, not to be directed toward profiting and material gaining, He forbade them to take anything from Jericho. In the following battles, He allowed them to take spoils, to confirm to them that, keeping themselves from the worldly things in Jericho, would grant them both the material as well as the spiritual things in the wars to come; as said by the Lord Himself: *“Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”* (Matthew 6: 33).

The scholar Origen comments on the statute of accursed, saying: [Joshua indeed said: *“And you, keep yourselves from the accursed things, lest you become accursed, when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.”* The meaning of these words is to beware of keeping things of the world inside us, lest wicked habits would get into the congregation of believers ... Do not mix things of this world with those of Christ; and keep the abominations of the world from entering into the sanctuaries of the Church. St. John, the Evangelist, blowing the horn in his epistle, warns us against that same thing, saying: *“Do not love the world or the things in the world”* (1 John 2: 15). And the apostle Paul also says: *“Do not be conformed to this world”* (Romans 12: 2). If we walk according to the ways of those of the world, we would be welcoming the accursed things. As examples, we may mention: Sharing the feasts of pagans, after we became Christians, together with practicing astrology, magic, etc. Would

mean giving the chance to accursed things to enter into the Church, the camp of the Lord; that would lead to the defeat of the people of God.

6- Sparing Rahab:

“Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the country, ‘Go into the harlot’s house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her.... And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father’s household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day.’ (Joshua 6: 22 , 25)

By faith, Rahab alone, together with her father’s entire household, were spared the doom; and that Gentile woman entered into the midst of Israel, to get attached to the true tree of Israel.

The scholar Origen says: [How can we understand that Rahab “dwelt in Israel to this day?”. Normally the Book uses this expression “, to imply that something remains till the end of time. For example when it says: “*And he is the father of the Moabites to this day*”

(Genesis 19: 37); this means (till the end of the world); the same may be said concerning: “*And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day*” (Matthew 28: 15).

But how can we say that Rahab “dwelt in Israel to this day “? We should understand from this that she joined the true Israel (the Church of the New Testament) to this day. ! If you want to be enlightened as to the way by which Rahab joined Israel; you will have to consider, how “*a wild tree were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree*” (Romans 11: 17)... We, who were branches of a wild olive tree, came from various nations, and were grafted in the original stem. We, who used to live in adultery and to worship stones and wood instead of the true God (Deuteronomy 4: 28), entered into faith in the Lord Christ, and became to this day, (the people from above), while the Jews, because of their lack of faith, became (the people from below). “*Many who were first will be last, and the last first*” (Matthew 19: 30)] ¹.

7- Cursing Jericho:

As Jericho became a representative of evil, that had to be completely destroyed and abolished, Joshua swore saying: “***Cursed be the man before the Lord who rise up and builds this city Jericho;he***

¹ In Jos. Hom 7:4.

shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates.” (Joshua 6: 26)

This was literally realized, when ‘Hiel of Bethel’ tried to rebuild it; the Book says: “*He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the Lord, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun*” (1 Kings 16: 34).

Jericho with its mighty walls has been destroyed forever, a sign of the destruction of evil and lack of faith. **St. Augustine** says: [Until when these walls will stay high / Not forever! The Ark of the Covenant is marching around Jericho; and in the seventh time, all the walls of the city, of contradictions and lack of faith would fall down; But, to have this realized, it is fitting for man to labor hard in his practices, bearing with the adversaries, in order to acquire wings to set forth with...] ¹.

Indeed, let Jericho be destroyed forever, and let Rahab the harlot be spared; namely, let the evil that prevailed on the world, be abolished, according to the words of the Book: “*The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one*” (1 John 5: 19).. Now, “*All that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*” (1 John 2: 16). Evil would be utterly destroyed, so that Rahab, who used to be a harlot, would become “*a holy and chaste virgin to Christ*” (2 Corinthians 11: 2). By that, the harlot would no more walk in her harlotry, but in the holiness of the Lord; according to the words of the apostle: “*And such were some of you; But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God*” (1 Corinthians 6: 11).

¹ On Ps. 55.

CHAPTER 7

DEFEAT AT AI

The people conquered Jericho, the huge and fortified city; but were defeated before 'Ai', the little village;

"There is an accursed thing in their midst." (Joshua 7: 13)

God would no more be in their midst, until they take away the corrupt yeast, and be sanctified to Him.

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1- The treason of Achan:

"But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel." (Joshua 7: 1)

It is not strange, that the great conquest over Jericho would end up by the treason and the accursed deed of Achan the son of Carmi, in the midst of the people of God; as that demonstrates the horrible human nature that pays back for God's exalted free gifts, by denial instead of thanksgiving. Before the mighty walls of Jericho, it stands in humility, waiting for God's amazing salvation; Yet, once the walls fall down, and the enemy submits, it commits a treason against the covenant of God !! Indeed, many mighty people, who could, by grace defeat Jericho, and destroy its greatness; in the corruption of their inner heart, were defeated before the tiny village of Ai, because of the accursed thing that infiltrated into their heart.

Anyway, God allowed, for the inheritance to start with such a great victory, then to be directly followed by bitter defeat, to make of that a lesson for all future generations: that the conquest is from God, and the defeat is because of our wickedness. Whenever we conquer through the divine grace, we are committed, while thanking God for His gifts, to beware, lest evil would infiltrate into us, through our negligence, to come to face defeat before sins that may seem to us small and of no

importance. Concerning this, the apostle Paul says: *“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified”* (1 Corinthians 9: 27). And for this reason the author of the songs warns us, saying: *“Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines; For our vines have tender grapes”* (Song 2: 15). It is as though, the more, a minister preaches and produces fruit in the life of others, the more he should discipline his body and bring it into submission, for fear of its fall; Whenever the grapes become tender, the vinedresser would fear more, lest the little foxes would come and spoil it ... Whenever we gain conquest inside ourselves, or in the life of others, and enjoy the divine free gifts; as we offer our thanks to God, and our trust in His divine work increases, we should beware, lest the evil one would infiltrate into us through the little foxes of transgressions. **St. Mark the Hermit** says: [The devil presents to us little sins, that may seem to be of no importance before our eyes; as he, otherwise, would not be able to lead us to the greater sins] ¹.

In the text before us (Joshua 7: 1), we notice that when Achan sinned, the anger of God befell over all the people. **The scholar Origen** says: [We should not ignore this phrase; for, as one person commits a sin, he would bring about God’s wrath over the whole people. How could such catastrophe happen?! When the priests, the overseers of the people, intend to look as forgiving toward the sinners, to spare themselves provoking their sharp tongues, forgetting the firmness fitting for their priesthood; by that they do not conform with what is written: *“Those who are sinning, rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear”* (1 Timothy 5: 20); and also, *“Put away from yourselves that wicked person”* (1 Corinthians 5: 13). They do not care for the commandments of the Bible concerning the sinners: *“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that ‘By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established’. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the Church But if he refuses even to hear the Church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector”* (Matthew 18: 15) ².

2- The defeat before Ai:

¹ الفيلوكاليا (ترجمة المؤلف): 1966، ص 126.

² In Jos. Hom. 7: 6.

It was not possible to start any action toward the strongly fortified Jericho, before God proclaimed to Joshua:

“I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor.”(Joshua 6: 2)

But here, as the accursed thing infiltrated into the midst of the people; and before such a little village like Ai, we do not hear God’s voice proclaiming anything to Joshua; nor Joshua consulting God before sending men to spy, or deciding the number of men to fight ... If it happened that Joshua did consult the Lord, the Lord would have forbidden him of doing anything before taking away the corruption that infiltrated unseen into his people; and that painful defeat before Ai, would not have taken place.

The spies despised the village of Ai, and said to Joshua:

“Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few.” (Joshua 7: 3)

Indeed the people of Ai were few; but the people of God, after He forsook them, became, not only few, but as though nothing at all. And as the wise Solomon says: *“The wicked flee when no one pursues; But the righteous are bold as a lion”* (Proverb 28: 1). That is what God warned His people through the prophet Moses, saying: *“But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God .., The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten them away”* (Deuteronomy 28: 15, 25, 26). So such was the error of the spies; having looked through a human eye, and disregarded the hidden secret of their conquest; that is the sanctified life in the Lord! They assumed that two or three thousand men are capable of striking Ai; although the situation first needed the striking of the inner corruption in the people. Actually, it ended up that all the people of war were needed to go up with Joshua, and to set two ambushes of thirty thousand mighty men of valor, and about five thousand men (Joshua 8: 5, 3, 12).

The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men of the Israelites (Joshua 7: 5); which is the same figure as the number of anointments of the Sacrament of ‘Myron’ (36), by which the priest anoints all the members of a newly baptized person thirty-six times, from the top of his

head, down to the toes of his feet. It is as though that weak 'Ai' has been capable of killing all members of the body, because of the accursed things inside the heart. A wicked thought, that we think as simple and of little importance; if we surrender to it, it would cause us to lose the purity of the whole body, and may cause us to lose all our life!

The fruit of all this was:

“The hearts of the people melted and became like water.”(Joshua 7: 5)

That was the work of sin, that destroyed the whole people, caused them to lose their courage and strength, and made their heart become like water; flowing with no one to help or support. So do not be astonished to hear the prophet Jeremiah, feeling the activity of sin, say: *“O my soul, my soul! I am pained in my very heart! My heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because you have heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war”* (Jeremiah 4: 19). And, having carried our sins, the Lord through the prophet says: *“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within me”* (Psalm 22: 14). How horrible sin is!

3- Joshua the intercessor:

“Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening, both he and the elders of Israel, and they put dust on their heads.” (Joshua 7: 6)

Joshua, who stood as an intercessor for the people before God; tore his clothes and fell on his face before the ark of God till the evening, carried a symbolic portrait of the atoning intercession of our Lord Jesus. He, before whom the heavenly hosts tremble, 'took off the clothes of His glory' for our sake; descended to earth; and proclaimed the perfection of His love, realizing the reconciliation on the cross, in the evening. Of Him Isaiah said: *“Because He poured out His soul unto death. And He was numbered with the transgressors”* (Isaiah 53: 12); and John, the beloved, says: *“And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world”* (1 John 2: 1, 2); and the apostle Paul says: *“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them”* (Hebrew 7: 25).

His intercession was not through tearing His clothes, or falling on His face to the earth, as Joshua did; but through the eternal living God,

He put on a human body, to pour out His soul to death; He carried on our transgressions and weaknesses, to have them condemned in His body. To be numbered with the transgressors, He who knows no sin offered His life for the sake of humanity that chose to harbor animosity toward Him. He, who is alone, capable of delivering Himself to death, and, at the same time, of rising again; became for us a living intercessor, to offer us to His Father, as members of His living body; to find for us a place of comfort in His divine bosom. His intercession is not just words or screams, but He brought us into Him, to be justified by His blood, and to be counted as an object of pleasure to the Father.

St. Augustine says: [There is only one Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, who prays for our sake, prays in us, and to whom we pray; As our Priest, He prays for us; Being our Head, He prays in us; And as our God, we pray to Him] ¹.

4- The secret of defeat:

God proclaimed to Joshua the secret of defeat, and offered him the cure:

“Get up ! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them, for they have taken some of the accursed things... They become doomed to destruction; Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. Get up, sanctify the people ...There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.” (Joshua 7: 10 - 13)

In these phrases, it is to be noticed:

(1) God says to Joshua twice, “Get up”: In the first time He says: “Get up; Why do you lie on your face?” and in the second, “Get up; Sanctify the people”. It is as though God the Father, seeing the Son, voluntarily bearing death, is asking Him to rise ... And through His resurrection to sanctify the people; The incarnate Son rises, to let us also rise with Him without a sin! ... The Book of Joshua is the Book of Resurrection; as without it, no inheritance will be realized for us, neither shall we have a portion in the divine promises.

(2) The secret of defeat, is that the believers will remain accursed; and forsaken by God, until they take away the accursed thing from their midst. One of them, by taking for himself what is accursed,

¹ On Ps. 86.

carried its nature, and became himself accursed, he and his people with him. Acquiring evil would give us its nature, and acquiring the sanctified, would make us saints. Whoever acquires the vain sin would become vain, and whoever acquires God would bear in him the divine life, and would have new attributes according to the image of his Creator.

(3) If the secret of our defeat is having the accursed in our midst, the cure will have to bear two integrated concepts: Taking away the accursed thing from our midst, and acquiring sanctification. The negative aspect, namely taking away evil, would not be enough, but there should be the positive aspects, namely acquiring the Holy Himself. That is why God commands Joshua to take away the accursed, and get up and sanctify the people.

5- Taking away the corrupt leaven:

It was impossible for the people to enjoy the sanctified risen life, unless they take away the old leaven that corrupts the whole dough (1 Corinthians 5: 6); They had to completely take away the accursed thing, to get back to enjoy the permanent company of God. Here we notice the following:

(1) Unfortunately, from the same tribe that provided the Holy Virgin St. Mary, who bows her head in obedience to God, to receive the dwelling of the Word in her womb, to deliver the Savior of the world, the Lion who comes from the tribe of Judah -- comes out Achan the son of Carmi, who brought the offense to the people and almost destroyed it! Probably God allowed this, to teach us to be aware of falling, and not to belittle the offense even what seems as simple and of little importance. The tribe, which is given the promises, produced him who deserved destruction. The divine honest and free gifts, offer us hope and certainty, yet we should be careful; lest we become like Achan who saw, coveted, took, and hid (Joshua 7: 21); saying:

“When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, wit the silver under it.” (Joshua 7: 21)

The offense usually begins with unsanctified seeing, then coveting, then taking, to be followed by hiding the evil in the earth, in the middle of the tent.

(2) God did not forgive Achan for several reasons: The first was that his behavior was the first of its kind after their entrance into Canaan; so God wanted from the beginning to give them a lesson, demonstrating the seriousness of sin, and confirming the necessity of cutting it off. That was what happened to the man who was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day -- the first one to break the Sabbath; God's verdict on him was: "*The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp*" (Numbers 15: 35). Also that was what happened with Ananias and his wife Sapphira, the first family to lie to the Holy Spirit, in the days of the apostles (Acts 5: 3). The second reason why God did not forgive Achan, was that he had enjoyed the divine blessings, and saw by his own eyes, how a way through the Jordan was opened for them to cross; and how the walls of Jericho fell down to let them inherit; That is why his wages were bitter and firm. If he chose to wait a little, he would have got his portion of the spoils from Ai and other battles to follow, as well as the inheritance in the land of promise; but he despised God's blessings, and cared for earthly things, to end up losing these and those. The third reason for not forgiving him, was that he did not repent, and did not confess from the beginning, but waited until God revealed the tribe, the clan, and the family that sinned (Joshua 7: 16, 17), and finally his very name; then he had to confess ... He hid his crime and did not repent, even after the people's defeat..

Anyway, Achan became a lesson to the whole Church along the generations, that the secret of defeat in the life of a believer or a congregation, is the accursed things in their midst. **St. Athanasius the apostolic** says: [When Achan was accused of theft, he could not claim that he was zealous in war; and when he was condemned, the whole congregation stoned him to death] ¹. Finally, he turned into an example to all generations concerning the commitment of the believer to abolish every bit of sin in his life without arguing. Joshua the son of Nun abolished every trace of Achan and his belongings; in order to demonstrate to us that we should deliver in the hands of God -- our living Jesus, our inner life and behavior, to Him; who, alone, can uproot the roots of our sins, to leave no trace of evil. Let us hold fast to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom every offense in us will be cut off that we do not perish; remembering the advice of the Lord to us, saying: "*If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; ... and if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it*

¹ To the Bishops of Egypt, 10.

from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell “ (Matthew 5: 29, 30).

(3) The body of the crime was:

a- A beautiful Babylonian garment (Joshua 7: 21); a garment imported from ‘Shinar’, the region where the tower of Babel was built (Genesis 11: 2); and where some of Jews were captivated (Isaiah 11: 11; Zechariah 5: 11).

If the garment refers to the body, coveting the Babylonian garment refers to body lust to enjoy the luxuries of nations. In the Book of Ezekiel, God rebukes Judah, because her sister Israel “*lusted for the Assyrians, captains and rulers, clothed most gorgeously*” (Ezekiel 23: 12). Achan bore the first seed of body lust with the Gentiles; so it was imperative to cut it off from its beginning ... He defiled the body, that God created sanctified!

b- Two hundred shekels of silver (Joshua 7: 16). If the garment refers to body lusts, the two hundred shekels of silver refer to love of wealth ... to acquire silver on the expense of deprived brothers. Silver also refers to the word of God; So, as the wicked man does wrong to his sanctified body, defiling it; he likewise misunderstands the word of God, and hides it underneath the ground of his tent; namely, he uses it according to an earthly concept, on the account of the tent of his body, instead of receiving it to lift him up to the heavenly places, on the account of his spirit, as well as for the salvation of his body.

c- A wedge of gold (Joshua 7: 16); which refers to the tongues of heathen philosophers, that look golden and glittery. **The scholar Origen** says: [I do not think that stealing a little gold was a sin big enough to defile his great Church ... The wedge of gold is the corrupt thoughts of philosophers that glitter like gold. Beware, lest you would be deceived by the splendor of their workmanship, and the sweetness of their golden tongue. Remember Joshua’s command that everything gold in Jericho is accursed. If you are reading the essays of poets, that tell about gods, do not be charmed by their eloquence; because if you take them to your tent, namely, let their teachings enter your heart, all the Church would be defiled. That was what the desperate Valentine and Basilides did; they stole the golden wedge of Jericho, and ventured to transfer the corrupt principles of philosophy to the Church, to defile the whole Church of God]¹.

¹ In Jos. Hom. 7: 7.

d- Fifty shekels: The figure 50 refers to the spirit of freedom and unity. In the tabernacle of the Meeting, the two curtains were coupled to one another by 50 loops on each side (Exodus 26: 4, 5); all the loops were coupled together by 50 clasps of gold, a reference to the secret of unity between the two peoples (the Jews and the Gentiles), through the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of the Pentecost; when they gained the Spirit of freedom in Jesus Christ, who also grants the unity. In the Jubilee -- the fiftieth year -- all slaves were liberated, the mortgaged land was redeemed and everyone enjoyed freedom ... Here, Achan received freedom to hide it underneath the ground of his tent; namely, used the sacred freedom on account of his body, and his worldly interests, to turn into looseness.

In short what Achan did was that he defiled the sanctities and possibilities given to him by God for his comfort and peace, and used them for his self-destruction and perishment.

He used the body (the garment) for lust, instead of making it a helper to the soul in the holy life; used the word of God, with a sinful mind, instead of getting lifted by it up to the heavenly places; used the mind in the glittering unconstructive philosophies, instead of using it for the glory of God; and used freedom, as a tool for the body, instead of using it, unhindered, as a secret of its setting forth to the bosom of God the Father.

CHAPTER 8

THE FALL OF AI

Because of sin, the people were defeated before that weak village of Ai; But now, as all were sanctified, after taking away the accursed things from their midst, they did not only get conquest and victory, but presented through that a symbolic prophecy, for the work of salvation of God.

1- Setting an ambush for Ai	1 - 17
2- Striking down Ai	18 - 28
3- Crucifying the king of Ai	29
4- Building an altar to the Lord	30- 31
5- Joshua writes the Law of Moses on the stones and reads it	32 - 35

1- Setting an ambush for Ai:

As evil was removed from the midst of the people, "*Then the Lord said to Joshua, 'Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land.'*"(Joshua 8: 1)

God commanded him to divide the people into two groups: The first group to lay an ambush against the city, behind Ai, between it and Bethel, on its west side. It seems that that group was in its turn divided into two groups: an ambush formed of 30, 000 men of valor (Joshua 8: 3), to be able to go against any movement of the people of Bethel to come to the aid of Ai; and another group of 5, 000 men (Joshua 8: 12), to be set in ambush close to Ai, to attack it when Joshua gives them the sign to attack. The second group, the obvious one under the leadership of Joshua, was to advance toward the front entrance of Ai. The plan was that, when the enemy comes out at them, that they would flee before them; the whole city of Ai will follow, leaving the city empty of its inhabitants; then, the other group would rise from the ambush and seize the city from behind.

That plan carried a living portrait of the work of salvation of God, on the level of the Church of the New Testament as a whole, and on the level of each of its members; It represents the conquest of the

(catholic) Church over the devil (king of Ai), depriving him of all his authority and capabilities; as well as the conquest of every soul over him.

Concerning the Church as a whole, the two groups represent two divisions in the Church of the New Testament: one of Jewish origin, and another of Gentile origin. The division, that was under the leadership of Joshua, that approached the entrance of Ai from the front, and pretended to escape, to draw the king of Ai, his army, and all his people, out of the city, represents the group of Jewish origin, that having received faith in Christ; approached the city in full sight; having come through the law and the prophets, to attack by its Jesus the kingdom of darkness, and to destroy the devil, its ruler. That is the group about which the Lord said: *"I have only been sent to the lost sheep of Israel"* (Matthew 25: 24); and the apostle said: *"Glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek"* (Romans 2: 10). As to their pretending to flee before the city of Ai, according to **the scholar Origen**: [All who followed Joshua pretended to flee; having fled from the burden of the law, from keeping the Sabbath according to the statutes, from the circumcision of the body, and from offering the bloody sacrifices. But beholding their following movement, we find that those who followed Joshua, the perfect and the fulfiller of the law, did not flee but got back to enter the city] ¹.

They pretended to flee, to draw the king of Ai and his people out of his city, then got back and conquered them. So did the Jews who received faith in the Lord Christ; they appeared to retreat before the law and its statutes, but came back to comprehend the two of them by the Spirit and not by the letter. They were freed from under the law, to live, not as breakers of the law, or despisers of its statutes, but to enter into its spiritual secrets, to appreciate its depths, and to realize its goal, under the leadership of "the true Joshua", the bearer of the curse of the law, for our sake.

As to the second group, it represents two divisions: one of 30, 000 men of valor, to approach from Bethel behind Ai; and the other, of 5000 men directly behind Ai. These two ambushes represent the congregation of believers of Gentile origin, whom Joshua had chosen and directed, yet was not physically present in their midst; the same way like the Gentiles, among whom the Lord Christ was not present in body, as He was with the Jews, but they heard of Him, and came to know Him

¹ In Jos. Hom 8: 2.

through the preaching of the disciples and the apostles. Those also did not approach the city from the front, but were hiding behind it ... ; as they did not have the law nor the prophets, and were not given the covenants nor the promises; and as the apostle says: "*The Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith:*" (Romans 9: 30). They came from behind, with no prior knowledge of the law, the statutes, and the prophets, yet, by the faith in their hearts, they attacked the city, destroyed the forces of darkness, and robbed the devil of his authority and might.... Their work melded with that of the first group, under the leadership of Joshua himself.

The two figures: 30, 000 and 5,000, concerning the two ambushes against the devil and his hosts, bear two spiritual concepts. The figure 30, 000 is the product of multiplying 3 X 10 X 1000. So if the figure 3 refers to faith in the Holy Trinity, or to the secret of resurrection with Christ, as we know from the previous chapters; the figure 10 refers to the law including the 10 commandments; and the figure 1000 refers to heavenly life; so this figure in its wholeness would mean that that group of nations, which did not receive or know the Mosaic law, by their faith in the Holy Trinity, as well as their enjoyment of life risen in Jesus Christ, became consummators of the law (10), yet in a spiritual or heavenly way (1000). The Gentiles (believers) did not break the law, nor despised it, but by faith they became justified in Jesus Christ, risen from the dead; as though they have consummated the commandments and realized them in a spiritual heavenly thought, and not in a killing literality. As to the figure 5000, it refers to the sanctification of the senses of those believers, who were before living in darkness and sinking in defilement; then by the living faith, had their five senses sanctified, and acquired the spiritual heavenly feature (1000).

As the plan was integral, and no one group could have won alone; both groups should be working together; so the Church appears integral, through acceptance of members of Jewish origin, and others of Gentile origin; despite the difference in culture, thoughts, and circumstances.

If we consider that plan presented by God to Joshua to overcome and to seize Ai, as representing the spiritual war in the life of each one of us, we would likewise, need a similar plan; to fight spiritually through the apparent strife, under the leadership of the true Joshua, as in the liturgical worship, fasting, private and family prayers, partaking of

giving, prostrating, etc. To meld all that with the hidden secret life, that acts as an ambush by the soul against sin and its kingdom, under the guidance of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; as for example the moaning of heart, (arrow) prayers -- the permanent prayer of Jesus --, the sanctification of the will and feelings, etc. Things unseen by anyone, and not recognized except by the Lord Himself. In other words we say, that our spiritual strife against the kingdom of darkness, would be by the sanctification of the body and its apparent works, together with the sanctification of the soul with its hidden works; no separation of the body in its sanctity, from the Spirit; and no contradiction between the two, as long as they both walk by Spirit, under the leadership of Our One Lord Jesus. Thus, our apparent life would meld with our hidden life, as one integrated life, harmonizing all our behavior, both in the Church, at home, at work, with friends, as well as with oppressors; to work in one harmonious spirit, worthy of our spiritual Leader, the Lover of mankind; to turn our life in its wholeness, and from all its sides, into one harmonious life, like a guitar on which the Lord Jesus Christ plays, by His Holy Spirit; each of its strings produces a special tune, but in harmony and integration with those produced by the rest of strings, all composing an unutterable symphony of love, to be presented by the Leader to His heavenly Father, by His Holy Spirit.

2- Striking down Ai:

Striking Ai was not through human tactics, but by a divine plan, in which God used His ministers and people; although He was the One who ordained and who granted the conquest. At the beginning, He commanded His servant Joshua to “*arise, go up to Ai*” (Joshua 8: 1), proclaiming that He is going to give him victory, and even providing him with the fighting plan (Joshua 8: 2). The Lord Himself followed up all his steps, saying:

“Stretch out the spear that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand ... So those in ambush arose quickly out of their place; they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand, and they entered the city and took it, and hastened to set the city on fire.” (Joshua 8: 18; 20)

God was the One working in the midst of His people, yet not without them! He rejoices and has pleasure to work on their account and with them! He acknowledges man and raises his value; granting him

salvation as a free divine gift, yet does not disregard the human factor, the human will, and the human work!

The divine command was for Joshua to stretch his hand with the spear toward Ai, in order to give it into his hand ... That command symbolizes the work of divine incarnation, in which the “hand” refers to the Person of the Son; while stretching it means its proclamation ... It is as though the Son proclaimed Himself through incarnation, and crucifixion; His cross acting as a spear, by which to destroy the forts of the devil, and to burn down his kingdom, by the fire of His Holy Spirit!

“They struck them down, so that they let none of them remain or escape.” (Joshua 8: 22)

The scholar Origen comments on this phrase, saying: [This expression embraces certain secrets; The meaning we extract here, is that we should let no single devil remain alive; we should kill them all till the end ... The saints are those who kill and destroy the inhabitants of Ai, and let none of them remain or escape. Yes, that would make their heart precise; *“for from within, out of (their) heart proceed evil thoughts”* (Mark 7: 21); and would watch out that *“no corrupt communication proceed out of their mouth”* (Ephesians 4: 29). So, let us fight in this way, and strike Ai with the sword, to drive out the adversary forces. I could also shake the heart of the sinner, by the sword of my mouth; strike adultery and fornication, by the words of my mouth, to let none of them remain or escape. Oh! The day all enemies (sins) are destroyed, God would be glorified as though in a feast; and before the failure of our enemies, we would greatly rejoice. That, in my opinion was what the prophet meant by saying: *“Early I will destroy all of the wicked of the land. That I may cut off all the evildoers from the city of the Lord”* (Psalm 101: 8); namely, to cut off the devil who pushes men toward wickedness. When you hear the expression *“the city of the Lord,”* think of the soul of each one of us, as being *“living stones”* (1 Peter 2: 5), built by virtues of every kind ... To trust my words about the war against sin, read the words of the apostle Paul: *“You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin”* (Hebrew 12: 4). Speaking of striving against sin till bloodshed, he means continue doing it until the end. The Holy Book confirms this, saying: Sanctify the war! *“Fight the Lord’s battles”* (1 Samuel 18: 17). What does it mean to sanctify the war, but

to kill all the enemies of our souls, namely, the deadly and wicked lusts. *“Put to death your members which are on the earth”* (Colossians 3: 5)¹.

3- Crucifying the king of Ai:

“So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation to this day. And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until evening. And as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his corpse down from the tree, cast it at the entrance of the gate of the city, and raise over it a great heap of stones that remains to this day.”(Joshua 8: 29)

The scholar Origen comments on that saying: [We said before that the king of Ai could refer to the devil; so how could he be hanged on a tree? The crucifixion of Jesus bore two aspects: The Son of God was crucified in flesh in a seen way; while the devil was crucified in an unseen way; *“Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them”* (Colossians 2: 15) ... And the apostle proclaims: *“Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross”* (Colossians 2: 14) Therefore, there are two meanings for the cross of the Lord: the first one is mentioned by the apostle Peter: *“Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example”* (1 Peter 2: 21); and the other is that the cross presents the cup of the conquest of Christ over the devil]².

If the Lord Christ was nailed to the cross to proclaim the perfection of the love of God; *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3: 16); so on the cross the Lord nailed our eternal debt, and destroyed the might of the devil, taking us away from his kingdom, so that he no longer has any authority over us (Colossians 2: 14, 15). By the cross we accepted to be crucified together with our Lord Jesus; in order to crucify every wicked lust and every vain worldly love, in us. That is why the apostle says: *“But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”* (Galatians 6: 14). It is as though the cross bears two sides: the side of divine love, offered by the only begotten Son, through accepting it for our sake, in obedience to His Father; which motivated us to accept the fellowship of crucifixion

¹ Ibid. hom. 8: 7,8.

² Ibid 8: 3.

with Him, as a proclamation of our love to Him. The second side is the nailing of the devil, his works, his darkness, and his deceits, so that they would have no authority over us! In other words, the Lord Christ was lifted up on the cross, to draw us by His love, and to nail our spiritual enemy! **St. Jerome** says: [On the cross Satan and all his army were brought to shame; while Christ was indeed crucified in flesh, He nailed the devils on the cross] ¹.

It is interesting that hanging the king of Ai on the cross, was connected to the burning down of Ai, and turning it into an eternal heap; as though the crucifixion of the forces of darkness, and the deprivation of their kingdom, would also be by an opening of an everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25: 41). **The scholar Origen** comments on saying “*Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation to this day*” (Joshua 8: 28), saying that this phrase applies to the spiritual meaning more than the historical one. The location occupied by the devil will be devastated, and his kingdom will be burnt, when the Lord reigns, and when He judges the world. Nobody would then trespass, and sin would have no more places; He would say to the conquerors of the two groups (the Jews and the Gentiles):

“*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*” (Matthew 25: 34)

While to the others, He would say:

“*Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*” (Matthew 25: 41)

I wish our true Joshua would enter, a Conqueror and a Vector into our heart; and in case He finds in it a place for the devil; namely an “inner Ai”; He would burn it down with His Holy Spirit, and would turn it into an eternal heap, would devastate it forever that sin will have no room there; and would crucify its king, to take away his authority in us! Let our Joshua hang him on a tree, to see it as “*The tree of the knowledge of good and evil*” (Genesis 2: 9); On it the Lord Christ is crucified to grant us power and life (2 Corinthians 13: 4); and on it, evil would also be crucified, to perish and to die for us!

4- Building an altar to the Lord:

Having entered into the land of promise, and realized the conquest over Jericho and Ai, Joshua consummated what Moses commanded, concerning the building of an altar of stones: “*Then Moses*

¹ On Ps. Hom 21.

with the elders of Israel, commanded the people, saying, 'Keep all the commandments which I command you today. And it shall be, on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the land which your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall set up for yourselves large stones, and whitewash them with lime. You shall write on them all the words of this law' (Deuteronomy 27: 1 - 3). He fixed its location, and the way to build it, with great accuracy (Deuteronomy 27: 4 - 8). In the building of that altar, it is to be noticed:

(1) God, beforehand, fixed its location on 'Mount Ebal'; and the timing of building it, after crossing over the Jordan, and before finishing the wars and feeling relaxation. Mount Ebal is "Mount Salamieh nowadays on the northern side of Nables (elevation 3077 feet above sea level); of rocky surface, where olives can be planted only at its bottom. It is parallel to Mount Gerizim, where only a narrow valley separates them, (Deuteronomy 27:12,13) and is close to the terebinth trees of Moreh (Deuteronomy 11: 30), and to Shechem (Genesis 12: 6, 35, 4) ¹. God chose that mount, for the people to ascend on it after seizing Jericho and Ai, and before starting the rest remaining wars, in order that their hearts would be lifted up high, once they start to enjoy God's promises, before they get preoccupied with the land itself, or its material fruits, of milk and honey; to set forth to the heights, to offer God their thanksgiving, and to ask for His help to complete their strife, and to enjoy the consummation of the inheritance. It is not fitting for them to wait until they end all their wars, to set the altar of God in Jerusalem, but they should, from the early beginning come to enjoy the encounter with God through the sacrifice, in order to enjoy all His promises.

The altar of God in Jerusalem was to be built later on by king Solomon, when all are settled; as though it represents our entrance into heaven itself to enjoy God's presence, face to face through the eternal sacrifice; while the altar of God in Ebal represents our entrance into a sort of a pledge of heaven, during our strife on earth, so as to enjoy being permanently in the presence of God, through faith, and not face to face, through the holy sacrifice!

How much are we in need, amid our strife -- after conquering Jericho, and after our fall then our recovery in Ai -- to rise up on Mount Ebal, to offer God a sacrifice of thanksgiving; in order to enjoy Him personally, as the ultimate goal of our strife, and the secret of our

¹ *The Westminster Dict. Of Bible*, p. 236.

spiritual conquest ... By that, our goal amid our spiritual strife would be well defined, so as not to deviate from it, until we complete the days of our sojourn on earth, to set forth to the altar of the higher Jerusalem.

(2) This altar is to be built “*of whole stones over which no man has wielded any iron tool*” (Joshua 8: 20). What are these ‘whole stones’, over which ‘no man has wielded any iron tool’, but the believing souls that encountered their Christ, who made them into whole stones, to unite together through Him -- “the Corner Stone”; having become in Him, ‘whole’, after being destroyed by the evil one. No man has wielded over them any iron tool; because being attached to their Groom, Jesus, the Lord of Glory, no enemy shall be able to approach them with an iron tool (evil); but they will be kept in the hands of the Savior (John 10: 28), not to be touched by the wicked one (1 John 5: 18). These are the stones that connect together as holy living stones, to build one altar and a holy temple for Him, where He dwells with His Spirit!

The scholar Origen talks about these ‘whole living stones’, saying: [All of us who believe in Jesus Christ, are called (living stones), according to the words of the holy Book, saying: “*You also, as living stone, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 2: 5). As far as the earthly stones are concerned, we first place the most solid and firm stones, to set over them the whole building; to be followed by less solid ones, and so on until we reach the least solid of all on the top, close to the roof. That is also what we understand concerning the living stones for our spiritual building. What are the most solid stones that we place on the foundation? These are (the apostles and the prophets), according to the words of the apostle Paul: “*Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone*” (Ephesians 2: 20). To be close to these stones set on the foundation, you should know that Christ Himself is the foundation on which the whole building is built; which is confirmed by the apostle Paul, saying: “*For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 3: 11); Blessed are those who can build a holy and pure building, over such foundation of whole purity]¹.

He also says: [But, in this building, namely, the Church, there has to be a temple; I believe that any of you, who is a living stone, can be a

¹ In Jos. Hom 9: 1.

temple; through his prayers, offering, day and night, the sacrifice of his supplications; By this, God would build His temple]¹.

And he talks of the concept of ‘whole stones over which no man has wielded any iron tool’, saying: [What does a ‘whole stone’ mean in your opinion? It is the conscience that should be whole in everyone, with no defilement or spiritual uncleanness, so as to be counted among those, over whom ‘no man has wielded an iron tool’; namely, those who have not been wounded by the (flaming arrows of the evil one), but have protected themselves against them by the shield of faith; those who have not gone through the irons of war, namely, of fights and conflicts, but lived in peace, as is fitting for the humility of Christ. Those are the living stones, by which Christ our Savior builds His temple: the whole stones, over which no man has wielded any iron tool; over which to offer sacrifices to the Lord. I also believe that the undefiled whole stones, could be the saintly apostles, who, all together have built one temple, through the unity of their hearts and souls. The Book says: “*These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication*” (Acts 1: 14). They opened their mouths to say: “*You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all*” (Acts 1: 24). They could pray together with one accord, with one voice, and one spirit; that is why they could easily build one temple, in which Jesus may be offered as a sacrifice to God the Father! As far as we are concerned, we should seek to have the ‘one saying’, the ‘one soul’, and the ‘one mind’ (1 Corinthians 1: 10); “*nothing to be done through selfish ambition or conceit*” (Philippians 2: 3)².

I wish that our true Joshua would accept each of us believers, as a living stone, to be welded to Him, sanctified in Him by His Holy Spirit; to be counted as whole stones with no blemish; to unite in love together, with one integral accord, as one temple, on which His holy sacrifice would be offered, the pleasure of His Father!

(3) “***And there....., he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses.***” (Joshua 8: 32)

Thus, the altar melds with the law; or the worship with the commandment. No acceptance of our life as a sacrifice of love for God, by worship alone, without obedience to the divine commandment; and no obedience to the commandment, except by the work of God in us through the sacrifice and worship. Our life with God is one unit that cannot be divided into a life of worship and a life of behavior; but it is a

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid 9: 2.

life in the One Jesus Christ. When we worship God we present our life of behavior as a sacrifice to Him in Jesus Christ, the unique sacrifice; and in our Christian behavior, we practice that behavior, to present it as a sacrifice to God in Jesus Christ, the Leader of our souls.

If we, by our true Joshua, become living stones in His holy temple, it is that we carry in us our slain Lord Jesus Christ; And if our Joshua writes down His commandment unto us, it is that we receive within us our Lord Jesus, the living Word of God. He is both the sacrifice and the commandment; in us He is proclaimed, both through the sacrifice of His cross; as well as through His commandment.

What Joshua did, writing down the law of Moses on the stones of the altar, refers to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, by which is presented to us, the holy sacrifice, inseparable from the word of the bible and the commandment. That is why this Sacrament is not done without the liturgy of the Catechumens, in which we receive the word, written and proclaimed through the Holy Book] ¹.

5- Joshua writes the law of Moses on the stones and reads it:

Having built an altar for the Lord on Mount Ebal; and having written the Law of Moses, on its stones, in the presence of the children of Israel; the inspiration says:

“Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them were in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the Law.”
(Joshua 8: 33, 34)

Such was the great celebration, where 6 of the tribes of Israel stood on Mount Ebal; Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali; and 6 tribes on Mount Gerizim; The group of Mount Gerizim proclaims the blessings of the Lord, to those who obey the commandments; while the other group of Mount Ebal, proclaims the cursing on those who commit crimes and trespasses, and who deviate from the commandments of the Lord.

¹ راجع كتابنا: المسيح في سرّ الأفخارستيا.

We have previously spoken about Mount Ibarim; but as for Mount Gerizim, it is rocky and sloping, forming the southern border of the valley where Nables and Shechem are located. Its elevation is about 2894 feet above the Mediterranean Sea level, and 700 feet above the city; 40 miles north of Jerusalem¹.

Josephus, the Historian says that in the days of Alexander the Great, 'Sanballat' built a temple on Mount Gerizim facing Jerusalem; because the Jewish priests warned Manasseh, his daughter's husband and the brother of the High priest, that they would not receive him in the temple unless he divorces Sanballat's daughter; So he built that temple to avoid divorcing her. That temple is considered the origin of the Samaritan temple, which the Samaritan woman referred to, in her talk with the Lord Christ (John 4: 20, 21). The well of Jacob was at the foot of the mountain, known nowadays as the Mount of Tor².

Moses had already received the law written on two tablets of stone; So why now is Joshua writing it on the stones of the altar? **The scholar Origen** says: [Joshua wrote the second law, because the first one became obsolete! Hear what the Bible says: "*You have heard that it was said to those of the old: ... But I say to you*" (Matthew 5: 33). That is the Torat that Joshua wrote on living and whole stones, so "*You are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stones, but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart*" (2 Corinthians 3: 3) ³] Thus, after Moses received the law written on two tablets, not of the altar, Joshua came as a representative of our Lord Jesus to write it on whole and living stones, that is, on our inner hearts, the hidden altar of God. **The scholar Origen** continuing his comment on this says: [Up till now, Joshua writes the law through our words, on the hearts of those receiving the word with sound faith, whole spirit, good ear, and thought; and abiding to what we say to them; as the Torat has to be written on "whole stones" ⁴].

After writing the law on the living stones, a magnificent celebration took place, during which half of the congregation of the children of Israel stood on Mount Gerizim -- the Mount of blessing, while the other half stood on Mount Ebal -- the Mount of cursing. It is to be noticed that the tribes of higher honor and prestige were those lifted

¹ *Antiq. 11: 8,2,7.*

² *The Westminster Dic., p. 325.*

³ *In Jos. Hom 9: 3.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

up to Mount Gerizim, to utter the blessing to come unto believers who walk in obedience of the law; While the other tribes, of less prestige stood on Mount Ebal, to utter the cursing to come unto the rebellious and the wicked. **The scholar Origen** believes that that celebration refers to the existence of two categories of believers, one of which is of more zeal and more initiation toward the Savior: [The first category is enflamed with a longing toward the heavenly promises; demonstrating great zeal and enthusiasm, so as not to lose the eternal blessing. They are not only wishing to gain the blessing, and to “*partake of the inheritance of the saints*” (Colossians 1: 12); but also to be always in the divine presence, with the Lord. The other category, on the other hand, is satisfied with just trying to avoid getting into eternal hell, and to be “*cast out into outer darkness*” (Matthew 8: 12) ... Those who approach Mount Gerizim, are chosen for the blessing; because they approach it, not out of fear of judgment, but out of hope for the blessing and for observing the commandments; while the others, who approach Mount Ebal -- chosen for the cursing -- represent those who approach the Savior and consummate what is written in the law, out of fear of judgment and condemnation. God alone knows who among us belongs to either of these two categories¹].

The divine inspiration confirms that Joshua the son of Nun was the one who read the book of the Torat, or the Law of Moses, before all the congregation of the children of Israel, the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them (Joshua 34, 35). Here we notice the following:

(1) Joshua himself read the Torat of Moses; as though representing our true Joshua, our Lord Jesus, who came to reign on us after the death of the Mosaic letter; to read unto us the Mosaic Law; but not through the veil, nor through the symbols and shadows, but to bring us into its hidden secrets, by an exalted spiritual mind. The scholar Origen says: [Joshua revealed the secrets of the law. We, the members of the (catholic) Church, do not despise the law of Moses, but accept it, yet on one condition, that it should be read by Jesus Himself, in order to understand it properly, and to comprehend its statutes and views. Yes, was not Paul following the way of thinking of Jesus, when he said: “*We did not take the spirit of the world, but that of God, to know these things given to us by God*”. So also the two disciples from Emmaus, who said

¹ *Ibid* 9: 7.

to one another: “*Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us on the road, and while he opened the Scripture to us? “* (Luke 24: 32); as the Lord Christ, “*beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself*” (Luke 24: 27)]¹.

(2) **Joshua talked to “the congregation of Israel, the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them” (Joshua 8: 35).** Whom does He mean by these categories?

a- He talks about Israeli men, as being “*the congregation of Israel*” ; and as we previously mentioned in the Book of Numbers, that every member of the Church, namely, “the congregation of the new Israel”, either it is a man, a woman, an elderly, a child, or a young man ..., should be committed to spiritual manhood, namely, to maturity, with no feminine nor childish attitude. That is why the apostolic command to all members was to “be men”. And that is why the census of the people in the old came to include only males, without women or children (Number 1).

b- While Joshua is talking to the congregation of Israel, as mature men, who accept the divine commandment; who enjoy the solid food; who, “*by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*” (Hebrew 5: 14); yet he also provides suitable food to women, and special milk to the little ones. And as **the scholar Origen** says: [The category of women, children, and strangers, refers to the weak souls that are still in need of milk]². If men represent the strong souls, with well-trained senses; women, on the other hand represent weak souls, who are in need of support to follow the example of strong souls. Our true Joshua does not reject these souls, but He Himself will talk to them, in order to lift them up from the state of indulgence and lavishness to a level of persistence and maturity. As to children, spiritually, our Lord Jesus does not despise them, but He rather embraces, and sustains them with milk, until they mature and become capable of enjoying the solid food. The Lord does not disregard even the strangers; namely, the Catechumens, who seek membership in the holy congregation; He talks to them, to bring them up to His holy Body; to be counted as true sons to God.

For fear that the text before our eyes, would be understood as discrimination between men and women, according to gender, the **scholar Origen** says: [The Holy Book does not discriminate between

¹ *Ibid* 9: 8.

² *Ibid* 9: 9.

men and women; and before Christ, there is no difference between the two genders; but the difference is realized in the heart, that may divide believers into men and women. Many women before God are counted just like strong men, and many men, like negligent women!! Don't you think that we should count as women, those men who say: I can't sell all what I have to give to the poor; I can't offer my other cheek to the striker; I can't bless him who curses me, or pray for him who does me wrong, nor can I bear with him who persecute me? ¹].

Anyway, whatever the condition of our soul is, we should listen to the true Joshua, while He talks to us; If we are men, we should listen to abide in Him, and grow up to reach the measure of His stature; and if we are women, we should hearken to let Him take away our negligence, and to bring us up to spiritual maturity; and if we are children, let us hasten to Him, to let Him lift us up to spiritual manhood; while if we are still strangers, let us come to Him, to let Him embrace us, to bring us in Him to His heavenly Father.

¹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 9

THE CRAFTINESS OF THE GIBEONITES

Having seized the central section (Jericho and Ai), the people started to advance in the direction of the south (Chapters 9 and 10). But the Gibeonites, dwelling southwest of Jericho, hastened through deceit, to make a treaty with the Israelites, in order not to perish; to which Joshua and his men innocently fell victims.

- 1- The surrounding nations gather together against Israel 1-2**
- 2- The craftiness of the Gibeonites 3- 13**
- 3- Joshua and his men deceived 4- 20**
- 4- Humiliating the Gibeonites 21- 27**

1- The surrounding nations gather together against Israel:

“When all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland and in all the coasts of the Great Sea toward Lebanon -- the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite -- heard of it, they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.” (Joshua 9: 1, 2)

Crossing over the Jordan was not the end of the strife, but rather it's beginning. Hearing of it, the peoples dwelling in Canaan, were incited, and gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord. That attitude increased with every new conquest of Israel. Thus, brethren, our entrance into Baptism, is not just an enjoyment of God's possibilities that became ours, to boast about and to discuss; but it is to be used in our spiritual strife; and with every spiritual conquest, we have to expect a more fierce war and affliction. Whenever the Lord Christ comes to reign on the members of His body, the evil one together with his hosts would become incited.

When the kings of the surrounding nations heard about their crossing over the Jordan, and their seizing Jericho and Ai, all of them gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel; namely with Jesus and His Kingdom. The divine inspiration fixed the locations of those kings, to be on the hills, in the lowland, and along all the coasts of the Great Sea toward Lebanon; which reveals the extent of agitation of the devils, the kings and forces of darkness against the Lord of glory and His believers. Some of them dwell on the high mountains, where the spirit of vain haughtiness and pride are in man; others dwell in the lowland,

where the souls are overcome by despair, and collapsed through smallness of the soul; and a third category dwell by the sea coast, where souls are brought down to the sea of this world to get confused by its waves and currents; while those who dwell in Lebanon, refer to the spirit of luxury and looseness, that deprive the soul of its seriousness to acquire salvation. Anyway, all these gather together against the striving soul, to fight according to the circumstances and capabilities of each man. War may begin with pride; in case man is religious, and has a long history of worship and ministry; or may begin with despair, in case he is terrorized by sin, etc. ...Anyway, the Hittite, the Amorite, and the Canaanite, etc. ... all gather together to fight with our inner Joshua, and to try to destroy, by corruption, all our capabilities and possibilities.

But what we should notice in the Book of Joshua, is that the attacks of the enemy do not only get more fierce, after the crossing over of Baptism, and after gaining successive conquests, but Joshua and his men were themselves, likewise aggressive against evil and opposing it...The Christian, realizing that his heart is the land of promise, over which the true Joshua should reign, will not stop resisting every evil, to leave in himself no place for it. Concerning this, **Bishop Caesarius** says: [Before the fall of Adam, our body and soul were both the land of promise; But after the sin, it became the land of Canaan; What used to be the land of virtues became a place for thieves; driving virtues out, and left the place in us to wickedness. Anyhow, through the coming of the Lord Jesus, we should hasten to seek his help to drive out the opposing nations. If we do not forsake anger, then we give no way to patience. Unless we enslave pride, greed, envy, and looseness in us, namely, in our land of promise, we shall not be able to set in ourselves a place for holy virtues. Unless you, with the help of God cast out from within yourself all wickedness, namely from your land that was sanctified by the grace of Baptism, you would not be able to accept the perfection of the promised inheritance. Indeed we have inside us, thrones of wickedness -- the spiritual Canaanites, that continuously attacks our soul every day; recognized by the apostle who says: "*The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh*" (Galatians 5: 17); That is why, brethren, we are committed to contemplate in how we should watch and persist on doing good, in order to root out all wicked nations in our land, to bring the war to an end] ¹.

¹ Sermon 116: !: 1.

2- The craftiness of the Gibeonites:

Being aware of the danger before them through the advance of Joshua and the people of God, and having heard of what God has done with them,

“They worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and moldy. And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, ‘We have come from a far country; now therefore make a covenant with us...’ “ This bread of ours we took hot for our provision from our houses on the day we departed to come to you. But now look, it is dry and moldy. And these wineskins which we filled were new, and see, they are torn; and these our garments and our sandals have become old because of the very long journey.’ (Joshua 9: 4 - 13)

The Gibeonites realized what Rahab the harlot has realized; when they saw the strong hand of God working with His people, all of them sought salvation; Yet the Gibeonites did not reach up to the level reached by Rahab, although they did rise above the rest of the surrounding nations. Rahab, by faith, not only could be saved from death, together with her household, but also could enter into the membership of the congregation, to represent the Church of the New Testament that comes from the Gentiles, as a holy bride and a virgin of the Lord. She even got the great honor to have her name included in the genealogy of the Lord, something that many of the great early women believers could not have; and had been counted by the apostle among the men and women of faith (Hebrew 11: 31). The Gibeonites, on the other hand, got saved through deceit, only to enter into the midst of God’s people as woodcutters and water carriers for the entire congregation and for the house of God (Joshua 9: 21, 23). Indeed they were not destroyed like the other nations, but they could not rise to the glory of Rahab. The spirit of fear and craftiness led them; while she was led by faith and love. They attached themselves to everything old and torn, from dry bread, to old wineskins, to worn out sandals and garments; while she attached herself to the two messengers, raised her heart with them up to the roof among the stalks of flax (purity) and advised them to get to the mountains and not to the lowlands. It is as though the Gibeonites, even with their attachment to the people of God, were bound to the worn out

things of the world; while Rahab lifted her heart up to the heavenliness, to the exalted and pure life. In other words, the Gibeonites came to represent men who worship God, out of fear of losing the worldly blessings; while Rahab came to represent someone who casts away the old lusts of his body underneath his feet; takes off the old man with all his works, in order to seek the eternal glory, and longing to resemble God Himself. While the Gibeonites used craftiness with the children of God, in order to enjoy the worldly benefits, something that deprived them of many blessings; Rahab, although she likewise used lies and craftiness with the messengers of the king of Jericho, something rather abominable; yet she was frank and straightforward in dealing with the children of God.

The scholar Origen believes that the Gibeonites represent the lowest level of faith, and the least to enjoy glory; He comments on this chapter, saying: [*“In My Father’s house are many mansions”* (John 14: 2). In the resurrection from the dead, the glorified bodies will differ among themselves: *“All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory”* (1 Corinthians 15: 39 - 41). There are several ways to demonstrate the differences between those who get salvation. ! In my opinion the Gibeonites represent those who get the least of its glory; something that does not spare them blame and bad reputation. Look how they were condemned to become woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation and the house of the Lord, because of their deceit; ... They did not seek from Joshua, except to save their skin] ¹. **The scholar Origen** goes on to say that the Gibeonites refer to the believers in God and His work of salvation, yet they do not translate their faith to a practical life. He says: [In the Church, there are true Christians; who believe in God, do not argue His commandments, consummate their religious duties, and are always ready to minister; Yet in their personal life and behavior, they are not pure but are unclean; They did not *“put off the old man with his deeds”* (Colossians 3: 9); but are like the Gibeonites, who put on their old garments and torn sandals. They believe in God, and show respect toward the Church and the ministers of the

¹ In Jos. Hom 10: 1.

Lord; yet they do not demonstrate in their behavior, any sign of inner renovation. They wish that God might grant them salvation; yet this salvation does not spare them the shame that befalls them. In a book by the name of 'The Shepherd'¹, we find a similar portrait of this category of people; It speaks of the tree stem that does not produce fruits, yet the vine climbs over it producing plenty of grapes; Although the tree stem itself is barren, yet its role is important and of benefit, in serving the vine! The same we see in the Gibeonites; though not putting off the old man with all his deeds; yet we find them ministering to the saints (as woodcutters and water carriers), which make them have a rather important role. That is why they received salvation from Joshua, according to the covenant he made with them. We do not want to receive such salvation; we do not wish to become woodcutters or water carriers; we want to be true Israelites, to enjoy the inheritance, and to have a portion in the land of promise]².

3- Joshua and his men deceived:

“Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the Lord. So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them. And it happened at the end of three days, ... they heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them.”
(Joshua 9: 14 - 16)

For the second time, Joshua and his men fell to the same error that is working without asking the counsel of the Lord. Indeed the Israelites harbored some doubt toward the Gibeonites; and should have sought the counsel of the Lord; yet they used their human wisdom, and entered with them into a debate, saying: *“Perhaps you dwell among us; so how can we make a covenant with you?”* (Joshua 9: 7); But *“They did not ask counsel of the Lord”* (Joshua 9: 14); so they were deceived.

In their first battle with Jericho, through faith and obedience to the Lord, they could destroy its mighty walls; But in their second battle, when they underestimated Ai, as a little, unfortified village; and by leaning on their human arm, they fell down and collapsed; until they got sanctified, and obeyed the Lord, to come back to defeat it. But here, in the ‘battle of deceit’, as the enemy pretends to be a friend who seeks entering into a covenant, the mighty men who overcame Jericho and Ai

¹ للأب هرماس (من رجال القرن الثاني).

² In Jos. Hom 10: 1.

were defeated. That is why the apostle Paul says: “*But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*” (2 Corinthians 11: 3). And St. John the Evangelist says: “*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world*” (1 John 4: 1).

The fathers of the Church often spoke of the deceit and craftiness of the enemy, to warn us against him; of how, he sometimes appears strong, fierce, of authority, and fortified by high walls like Jericho, in order to terrify us into despair; and sometimes he appears so helpless, to take him lightly, like Ai, and to disregard preparing ourselves to encounter him; and still other times he appears as a friend, or even as an angel of light, to deceive us into entering with him into covenants, as the Gibeonites did. **St. Augustine** says: [Do not assume that the devil has lost his fierce nature; Whenever he compliments you, you should get more cautious of him] ¹. And he says: [Here, the tempter comes to me as an angel of light; but in vain he tries to deceive me, as You rebuke him, and grant me the capability to recognize your divine light] ². And he also says: [He is crafty and deceitful, and without your light, we cannot know his twisted ways, nor distinguish his various faces. Sometimes we see him here, and other times there; sometimes he appear as a lamb, and other times as a wolf; sometimes as light, and other times as darkness. He knows how to be versatile and how to change his plans, according to man’s different circumstances, times and locations. In order to deceive those burdened with grief, he grieves with them; and to draw to him the joyful hearts, he corrupts the atmosphere of their joy; and to destroy those hot in spirit, he appears to them as an angel of light; and to disarm the strong souls, he appears as a lamb; and to devour the shy, he turns into a wolf ... Who can distinguish the various ways of his craftiness? ! Who can reveal his several identities? ! Who can count the number of his fearful teeth? His arrows, he conceal in his sack, and his tricks, he hides till the right moment. O Lord! My hope! Without Your light, by which we can see everything, it is impossible for us to expose the maneuvers of the devil!] ³.

¹ خواطر فيلسوف في الحياة الروحية، ص 234.

² مناجاة 16.

³ مناجاة 17.

Joshua erred to believe them and to swear to them. That is why St. John Chrysostom warns us against using oaths that are indeed snares by the devil¹!

And although **St. Ambrose** criticized Joshua for hastening to believe those men, and for not asking counsel of the Lord, Yet, he saw in his behavior a sign of his good heart; having judged them according to his simple heart; saying: [Who can blame the saints in such a case? They assume that others harbor the same feelings they do, and that none of them lie; They do not know deceit, and with joy they believe others, because they themselves are honest; They never doubt others, for what they do not themselves have ... Instead of blaming their swift believing, let us commend their goodness]².

After three days, Joshua and his men discovered the deceit of the Gibeonites; and heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them. Now we go back to the secret of the three days, which we often dealt with in this and previous chapters. Through our belief in the Holy Trinity, we can expose the tricks and deceits of the devil. When we receive God as our Father, through abiding in His only begotten Son, as members of His holy body; and through the work of His Holy Spirit in us, by Baptism, as well as in repentance, etc. ... the enemy cannot deceive us, nor draw our hearts away from our heavenly Father. Our practical living faith, and our enjoyment of the secret of the Trinity, not as a philosophical thought or mental dogma, but as the secret of our fellowship with Him, will protect us against all attacks of the devil. The three days also refer to the secret of our resurrection with Christ, having also been buried with Him three days, to rise with Him. Man, who has the risen life in the Lord, and who enjoys its joy, will always live above all deceits of the enemy!

Therefore, let us escape from the deceits of the Gibeonites, by receiving the Holy Trinity, as our secret of life; and by enjoying the risen life of our Lord Jesus Christ, raised from the dead.

4- Humiliating the Gibeonites:

Having made a covenant with the Gibeonites, the rulers said to the entire congregation:

“We have sworn to them by the Lord God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them...let them live,... but let them be

¹ In Acts hom. 13.

² Duties of Clergy 3: 10.

woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation,... Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them, saying, 'Why have you deceived us ... ? Now therefore, you are cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves -- woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God.' (Joshua 9: 19 -23)

Joshua had to let them live, as he did with Rahab and her household; Yet, each of them took as much as his faith deserves: those remained as slaves: *"You are cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves,"* for they came to him out of fear; But as for her, she became a member in the new Israel, having received its message with love. Indeed, some of the Gibeonites became water carriers for the house of God; received some sort of stature instead of death; Yet to them applied the saying of Isaiah: *"Instead of thorn shall come up the cypress tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; And it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off"* (Isaiah 55: 13).

Finally, **the scholar Origen** warns us against entering into faith on the level of the Gibeonites, to live as slaves -- woodcutters and water carriers -- instead of being on the level of God's children, working according to His will, and walking by His Spirit resembling Him; saying: [In case one of the people has his faith limited to coming to the Church, bowing before the priest, respecting the ministers of the Lord, and partaking of decorating the Church; yet without doing anything to straighten his behavior, correcting his habits; burying evil, practicing pure life, controlling his anger, greed, coveting what is others', and getting away of uttering bad words and destructive judgment; Such a person will be referred by God to the Gibeonites ...Therefore O brethren, I beseech you, as ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5: 20); as long as there is still time and a possibility for correction, to strive and hasten to cast away the worn out garments, and the defilement, that are not fitting for the freedom of the Israelites (the New). Do you want to realize the greatness of this freedom? According to the law, no Hebrew slave should remain in servitude for more than six years; in the seventh year, he should be set free (Exodus 21: 2); the law cares for freedom. If we take this text by its spiritual concept, we shall find that the Hebrew slave is 'you', having fallen into servitude, according to the expression of the Holy Book: *"Whoever commits sin is a slave of the sin"* (John 8: 34). The perfect virgin soul does not fall; into that sin, but the immature negligent soul. So, if you are the Hebrew slave, who, after gaining

Baptism in the Church, fell into the servitude of sin; you should regain your freedom, to become no more a slave, after seven years, through the commandments. If the figure 7 refers to biblical commandments, the figure 6 refers to the creation of the earth (Genesis 1: 31); as long as you covet things on the earth (Colossians 3: 2), and set your mind on things of the flesh (Romans 8: 5), you are surely living as a slave to sin. But once you reach the figure 7, you would seek your freedom, and return to your father's honor. ... I ask you, if you might be a son of an elite family, would you choose to be a slave to this world? No doubt, you will say No. So, if nobody in this world wishes to be a slave, and all seek freedom, wealth, and honor; not only for himself, but also for others, ... we should, as St. John says, work the work of our Father who sent us "*while it is a day*" (John 9: 4), to be "*worthy of the Spirit of adoption*" (Romans 8: 15); and to have a place with the children of God; "*that in all things, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen*" (1 Peter 4: 11)]¹.

¹ In Jos. Hom 10: 3.

CHAPTER 10

STRIKING THE FIVE KINGS

When Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Jericho and Ai, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon made peace with Israel, he sent to the kings of the Amorites, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, and made a pact with them to strike Gibeon. The Gibeonites pleaded to Joshua to come and save them; which he did, and took over the cities of these kings with all the region of the south.

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1 Gibeon and the five kings:

If the Gibeonites refer to fainthearted among believers, who partake of Christian worship, yet, did not cast off the works of the old man; they are exposed to a certain kind of spiritual war, that is the war of the five senses against them; It is as though the five kings who fought against Gibeon refer to that war. Those kings were once friends and allies of Gibeon, then turned enemies when it made peace with Joshua. The scholar Origen says: [When the human soul enters into a covenant with the Word of God (Joshua), the enemies will soon come against it; and the friends of yesterday will turn into enemies. Do not expect that to happen just from people, but the forces of evil, and the evil spirits, would surely also come down to fight. Likewise, when man seeks friendship with Jesus, he will have to expect animosity from many. That is confirmed by the apostle Paul, saying: "*All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution*" (2 Timothy 3: 13); as well as by the wise Ben Sirach (2: 1), saying: (Son, if you come to minister to the Lord, be prepared for temptation). Therefore, the inhabitants of Gibeon are still under siege to this very day, because they entered into a covenant with Joshua; whatever their weakness is, even if they are woodcutters and water carriers. This means that any man in the Church, whatever his stature may be, will be subjected to the aggressiveness of

the five kings, as long as he is in a relationship with Jesus. Yet even though the Gibeonites were weak (and slaves); they were not forsaken nor despised by Joshua or the rulers ... who hastened to support their weakness. Is it not still the same thing; the apostle exhorting us *“to warn those who are truly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all”* (Thessalonians 5: 14)? That was how Joshua dealt with the overseers of his men; exhorting them to support the weak against the forces of evil, for the sake of his name; not only through strengthening them to strive, but also by lengthening the hours of daylight, and delaying the coming of darkness (Joshua 10: 12 - 14)] ¹.

After speaking about the incitement of the five kings, against the souls that entered into a covenant with the true Joshua, **the scholar Origen** confirmed the support of Joshua and his men to those souls, even to the extent of lengthening the hours of the day and of delaying the coming of the night. He spoke of the symbolic meaning of these kings, saying, [We often say that Christians have two kinds of strife: A strife like that of the saints, as that of Paul and the Ephesians, who says: *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places:”* (Ephesians 6: 12)...As to those of less strength, and who still have their faults, their wrestling would be against flesh and blood; being still confronted with trespasses and carnal weaknesses. I think that this is the meaning of that context. We said that the five kings declared the war against the Gibeonites, who, in our opinion refer to the imperfect Christians. Five kings, who symbolize the five senses of man, surround these, seeing, hearing, taste, touch, and smell; man does not fall to sin except through one of these senses. So, these five senses are compared to the five kings who surround the Gibeonites, namely, the flesh-worshippers] ².

2- The Gibeonites plead for Joshua’s help:

“The men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp of Gilgal, saying, ‘Do not forsake your servants; come up to us quickly, save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the mountains have gathered together against us.’ So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor.” (Joshua 10: 6, 7)

¹ In Jos. Hom 11: 2.

² Ibid 11: 4.

St. Augustine speaks of the possibilities of man, who although he is capable of taming and training the wild beasts to obey his orders, yet he is totally unable to control his own faculties, especially his tongue¹. So, if the five kings refer to the senses rebelling against the inner man, nobody can tame these wild beasts except the true Joshua, the Creator and the sanctifier of senses! There is no way to salvation for the Gibeonites², other than crying out to Joshua in Gilgal, to roll away their shame and to take away their weakness.

I wish, with our senses moaning from the war of carnal lusts, through sight, touch, or any other senses, that we resort to the true Joshua, pleading to Him to come quickly to save and help us; Being the One who created our senses, He is alone capable of sanctifying them, to get them back to their original course, and to quench the flames of their wicked lusts. That is why **St. Jerome** exhorts us to resort to prayers as a sure remedy against these lusts: [Prayers quench the fire of the soul; and so also the trusting in the Lord]³. And **St. John El-Dargy** confirms: [When we are unable to pray against those wicked spirits (the devils), they will attack us]⁴.

St. John El-Dargy exhorts us to resort to our Lord Jesus Christ, when we feel the impact of war; especially that of adultery; without getting into debates and discussions with the enemy. [Do not assume that you can overcome the demon of adultery by debates and discussions. That would be a totally vain effort; If God does not destroy the house of body lusts, and does not set up that of the soul, the prayers and fasting of that man would be in vain. ... Present the Lord with the weakness of your nature; realizing completely your inability, in order to accept from Him the imperceptible gift of purity]⁵.

3- The Lord casts down large hailstones:

Joshua ascended to fight against those kings; encouraged by the Lord Himself, saying:

“Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you’. Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly, having marched all night from Gilgal. So the Lord routed them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at

¹ Sermons on N.T. Lessons

² لأن جلال تعني دحرجة.

³ On Ps. Hom 33.

⁴ Ladder 15: 80.

⁵ Ibid 15: 24-26.

Gibeon, chased them along the road that goes to Beth Horon, and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. And it happened, as they fled before Israel and were on the descent of Beth Horon, that the Lord cast down large hailstones from heaven on them... There were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the children of Israel killed with the sword.” (Joshua 10: 8 - 11)

The conquest over those kings was realized both by the sword, and by the hailstones coming down from heaven. Thus if those kings refer to the five senses that became defiled and came to war against the inner man; In order to conquer them, we have to sever by the sword of the Spirit, all evil, to cut down its presence in our senses. We need as well, heavenly hailstones, that the Spirit sends down over the senses, to quench the fire of evil in them; to grant them coolness for all that are earthly, and enflame anew all that are heavenly. The hailstones kill the love of earthliness; yet they descend from heaven to lift up the senses to what are heavenly.

4- Lengthening the hours of the daylight:

Having overcome the Amorites, Joshua beseeched the Lord to delay the descent of darkness until victory is complete; saying:

“Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and Moon in the Valley of Aijalon’. So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jasher?... And there has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord heeded the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel. (Joshua 10: 12 -- 14)

Some scholars assumed that the battle had been so fierce, that the children of Israel imagined that the day was longer than usual¹. But it is obvious from the words of inspiration that the sunset had been delayed; quoting the Book of Jasher. The book of Jasher is not one of the books of the Holy Scripture; but most probably written by an author, who was fond of poetry; in which he recorded certain important religious and historical events. Having seen or heard of the delay of sunset, he recorded that in a poem in his book. And the author of the Book of Joshua, used in recording that amazing event, a testimony of that Laic author. It is to be noted that in certain historical records, there were some reference to that particular event. Herodot says that Egyptian priests showed him documents that recorded a day that was longer than usual.

¹ قاموس الكتاب المقدس، ص 1069.

Chinese writings spoke of a similar day in the reign of their Emperor Yu, a contemporary of Joshua. And in Mexico, there are documents that tell of a long day that happened in a year around that of Joshua's wars¹.

The scholar Origen believes that in that event, there is a symbolic portrait of the work of the true Joshua in our life, where he lengthens our day to work on our salvation, and delays the night of darkness, to save us from the attacks of the enemy; saying: [I wish, if possible to clarify how the Lord Jesus stretches the hours of light and lengthens the day for the sake of the salvation of souls and the destruction of the forces of evil. When the Savior came to earth, the end of time was approaching; as He Himself says: "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matthew 4: 17). Yet, that day had been delayed; for, as God the Father saw that the salvation of the nations would not be realized except through Joshua, He said: "*Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession*" (Psalm 2: 8). Until that promise of the Father is realized, and the Church grows through the joining of nations, all the righteous and for the salvation of Israel, the day has to be lengthened and its end has to be delayed. The sun will never set, but will shine forever; namely the Sun of righteousness, that shines the light of Truth in the hearts of believers. But when the count of believers is consummated, the evil time would come -- the last generation, in which the love of many would cool off, because of selfishness and lack of righteousness. Then, only a remnant of believers would remain; and the days would be shortened (Matthew 24: 22). Yes, God alone knows, when to lengthen the days in the time of salvation, and when to shorten the time in those of affliction and loss. As far as we are concerned, I wish we walk honestly in the brightness of the day, and do the works of the light, as long as we enjoy the day, and we have the time] ².

Once more **the scholar Origen** says: [While we wrestle against our enemies, "*against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*" (Ephesians 6: 12); the Sun of righteousness would not stop shining on us, and would never forsake us. He does not hasten the sunset; saying by Himself: "*I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28: 20). He is not with us, only for a double day, but all

¹ المرجع السابق، ص 1069.

² In Jos. Hom 10: 3.

the days, even to the end of the age, until we overcome our enemies (the devils)]¹.

Anyway, what happened then proclaims the amazing work of God through His ministers. And as **St. Athanasius** says: [If the sun stood still over Gibeon; and the moon in the valley of Aijalon; that was not the work of the son of Nun, but that of the Lord who listened to his prayer; He who rebuked the sea; and, on the cross, He brought darkness over all the land (Matthew 27: 45)]².

5- The five kings hiding in a cave:

“These five kings had fled and hidden themselves in a cave at Makkedah. So Joshua said, ‘Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them.’ And do not stay there yourselves, but pursue your enemies, and attack their rear ranks; Do not allow them to enter their cities, for the Lord your God has delivered them into your hand.”(Joshua 10: 16 -- 19)

Why did they hide in a cave at Makkedah? If those five kings refer to defiling the senses, or to the attacks of their wars against believers, the goal of that war is to bring man into the cave, namely to get him down to the depths of the earthliness to lock him in them, to keep him from setting forth to the heavenliness. **The scholar Origen** says: [A cave is a place dug in the depth of the earth; So, if we speak of the senses of man, preoccupied with the earthliness, and with nothing but what the body covets, away from ministering to the Lord, we can say that his senses are hidden in the depths of the earth]³. That is why it is fitting for us to set ourselves free from the authority of these kings, to give their place instead to Jesus Christ; so as not to enter into the cave, but soar up to heavenly life.

The war of these kings is as old as man himself; The serpent came crawling on the earth to draw the heart of Eve to the cave, instead of rising up to eternity..., and it was not possible for the devil to captivate the hearts of Adam and Eve, if they had not descended to the earthliness, and coveted the worldliness. **St. Ambrose** says: [The serpent represents the carnal lusts that make men crawl on earth; those “*whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame*” (Philippians 3: 19)]⁴. **St. Agnatiu Bereashaninov** says: [Behold brethren what the devil does!

¹ Ibid 1: 5.

² Paschal Ep. 29.

³ In Jos. Hom 11: 2.

⁴ Paradise 15 (74).

He takes away the mind of man from the spiritual heaven to material things; he binds his heart to earth and earthly interests. Behold and beware!] ¹. That is why **St. Bresnovius** says: [If you wish to be saved, commit yourself to death to everything earthly. Count yourself as nobody; strive for the sake of what is ahead, lest, under the appearance of good work, the devil may preoccupy you by untimely disturbances]. And **St. John Chrysostom** confirms our commitment to soar up to heaven while we are still on earth; not to be deceived by the tricks of the devil, but to bind ourselves to our heavenly King, saying: [Do not assume that there is anything that binds you to earth; Your body may still be on earth, but your head dwells up there! Yes, the Lord first came here, and brought His angels with Him, He meant to take you to depart with Him to up there! So that you may realize that, even before going to that place, you can still be on earth, as though you are there in heaven] ².

If the defilement of senses intends to lock us up in the earthliness, and strangle our souls as though in a cave; it is fitting for us, under the leadership of Joshua, to lock the defilement up in a cave, to lay large stones against the cave's mouth, set men there to guard it; proceed to pursue our other enemies, until Joshua reigns, then to go back to destroy the defilement completely. We should not give the defilement a chance to enter with us into debate, but lock it up in a cave, lay large stones against its mouth, set spiritual guards on our senses, and perform the positive work of the Lord, so that evil would have no power to resist us. It is fitting for a Christian to care for the positive side more than the negative; So, if we care for example to let Joshua reign on the eye, to sanctify it by the Holy Spirit, to look always to the heavenliness, the war of defiled vision will no more be a burden on the soul! Let us then care more for Joshua to reign in us, and let us not concentrate our strength on fighting the negatives in our life. **The scholar Origen** says: [We should know that the kingdoms whose kings, Joshua had defeated, and made them hide in a cave; these same kingdoms have partaken later on, of the inheritance of the saints, and have been counted as "portions for the Lord"; as for example, Jerusalem, Lachish and Hebron. That, in my opinion, means that the five senses of the body, after being defeated by Joshua;... after the death of sin in them, having forsaken her servitude to sin, these five senses, will be in the service of the Spirit to do righteousness. So was Jerusalem that was governed by an unhonorable

¹ *The Arena*, p. 194.

² *In Matt. Hom 12*.

king come to be governed, later on by the strong David, and the wise Solomon] ¹.

Jesus the Lord of Glory, who raised Lazarus from the grave, longs to loosen the bonds of every man, and to release him from the grave of the worldly interests and carnal lusts. We see Him here, through the symbol, commands the laying of great stones against the mouth of the cave, and the setting of guards, in order to receive the kingdom Himself; He wishes to set us free, yet He does all that without resorting to debates with the evil one, as I previously said; and as **St. John Kelimacus** says: [Do not assume that you will stop the devil of wickedness through debating with him] ²; and: [Close your secret place, concerning your body, the door of your tongue, concerning talking; and your inner gate, concerning the evil spirits] ³.

6- Striking the kings and killing them:

Joshua commanded his captains to put their feet on the necks of those kings, strike and kill them, hang them on five trees until evening; and at sunset, to take them down from the trees, cast their corps into the cave where they had been hidden, and lay large stones against the cave's mouth. These commands carry the following symbols:

a- Joshua commanded his captains to put their feet on the necks of the kings, saying:

“Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage; for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.” (Joshua 10: 25)

As though he is our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave us the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10: 19); presented us with the possibility of conquest and triumph over the authority of evil; and to fight against sin with no fear; strengthened by our victorious Jesus. The enemies might have reigned in our hearts, yet through Joshua, we shall trample them under our feet, and He reigns in us. **The scholar Origen** says: [Let us pray then, that our feet be strong and good enough to trample on the necks of our enemies, and to crush completely the head of the serpent, before it strike our heels] ⁴. And: [I wish that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, grants me the

¹ In Jos. Hom 11: 5.

² Ladder 15: 24.

³ Ibid 27: 18.

⁴ In Jos. Hom 12: 2.

grace of crushing the spirit of evil, the tendency to anger, violence, and the devil of meanness and pride] ¹.

b- Hanging them on trees, reminds us of hanging the king of Ai, that we saw as a symbol of crucifying the devil and depriving him of every authority, through the cross of Jesus Christ (Colossians 2: 14) ². Crucifying those kings refer to crucifying the defilement of carnal lusts; so that killing evil would let the senses rise up, sanctified in the Lord. And according to the apostle: *“Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God, in Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Romans 6: 11).

c- They brought down the corpses of the dead kings into the cave in which they were hidden ... They went down by their own choice to the depth of earth; and now, they are brought down as corpses to the same place against their will ! Many fathers of the Church confirm to us, that sin carries its fruit in it; Whoever chooses the earthly cave, will involuntarily, go down to its depths; as though his eternal perishment is a natural extension of what he did on earth; and whoever lives in vain, while on earth, will become vain in the coming world; while to him, who loves the heavenliness, has his heart soar above the cave, and closes its mouth by great stones; thus the cave of hell would not be able to swallow him, nor the gates of Hades to await him; but God would grant him the wish of his heart; namely, to soar above the earthliness.

d- Killing the five kings refers to the conquest of our lusts by the Lord Christ. **St. Ambrose** says: [Joshua the son of Nun, who humiliated the five kings and submitted the Gibeonites, is a symbol to Him who has the same name, who is coming to us; by whose authority all carnal lusts will be defeated, and all nations will submit to follow faith in Jesus Christ, instead of their old lusts] ³.

7- Conquest of the Southland:

Things did not end at killing the five kings, but Joshua attacked with his men the kings of the south, and took over their cities, mountains, and valleys, etc.

The scholar Origen talks in some detail about these wars, and the symbols they carry of the spiritual war, and the enjoyment of the eternal inheritance.; saying: [If the old symbols, from the tabernacle of the meetings and the sanctuaries, to the whole rites of worship, are called

¹ In Jos. Hom 12: 3.

² تفسير يش 8: 29.

³ On Christian Faith 5, prol.

the beginnings and shadows of the heavenliness; the same can be said of the wars led by Joshua, in which he killed the kings and enemies; that they are likewise the beginnings and shadows of the heavenliness; namely, shadows of the wars fought by our lord Jesus Christ, against the devil and his angels; leading His armies and his hosts: the believers under His command. Actually, Jesus, through Paul and the Ephesians, fought “*against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*” (Ephesians 6: 12). Do you see how the new things conform to the old? The old people received a promise of a kingdom in the holy land, that flows with milk and honey; lands that were dwelt by sinners and hateful kings. Joshua came together with the army of the Lord and the rulers of Israel, fought them all, conquered and killed them, and received their kingdom as a price of his conquest. As for you, the Bible does not promise you a kingdom on this earth, but one in heaven; which is not vacant nor with no inhabitants ... Listen to what was said: “*against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*” Do you know those whom you have to drive out, through spiritual violence and war, in order to acquire an inheritance in the heavenly kingdom? Is that not what the Lord meant by His words: “*From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it*” (Matthew 11: 12)... If we are worthy, the Lord Jesus will open the palace of His wisdom, and will bring us into the treasures of His knowledge ... Then, you would realize, what the kings of Makkedah, the king of Lachish, and the king of Libnah, symbolize; and would realize what inner wickedness and spiritual vain they represent, those whom the people of God led by Joshua, have killed]¹. And he also says: [The Jew who reads about those events; and here I speak of the Jew according to appearance, he who is circumcised in his flesh, and not in his heart; he will not find here except a description of wars, of killing enemies, and of conquests of the Israelites, who seized the possessions of strangers and heathens, under the leadership of Joshua. On the other hand, the Jew by heart; namely, the Christian, follower of Christ the Son of God, and not Joshua the son of Nun, will understand those events, as representing the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. He would say: [Today, my Lord Jesus Christ is also fighting the forces of evil, and driving them out of the cities they occupy; namely, driving them out of our souls. He kills the kings who were

¹ In Jos. Hom. 12: 1,2.

governing them; so that sin will no more reign in us; so that, after our souls are set free from their reign, they would become temples to the Lord and to the kingdom of God; then to hear the words: “*The kingdom of God is inside you*” ... Therefore, let us understand correctly, that, if Joshua killed the kings of Jericho, of Ai, of Libnah, of Lachish, and of Hebron; that was all in order that these cities would submit to the commands of God, after having practiced the law of sin, submitted to wicked kings] ¹.

The cities taken over by Joshua, each carries a double spiritual meaning: one is suitable to its wicked king, who reigned over it; and the other is fitting to a new concept, after Joshua reigns over it. These cities are actually our life, over which our Joshua reigns; to Whom we say: [Here I am presenting to You my spirit, my heart, and my body, in their wholeness and with no reservation. All that lives in me is but living in You, O Grantor of life! In order that You receive all my capabilities, to entirely possess] ². The most important of these cities are:

a- **Makkedah**: A Canaanite name, that means (place of the shepherds); that probably was where Kherbet El-Khechm, north-east of Tel-Zecharieh is today. That was where the five kings hid in one of its caves; so it was the location for such wicked (shepherds), the corrupters of senses. But Joshua crucified those kings and buried them in the same cave, to turn it into a sacred place for him; for nobody but him to reign on, and where nobody but his believers to dwell in; “*He utterly destroyed them (its kings), and all the people who were in it, He let none remain*” (Joshua 10: 28). It actually came to be the place for the shepherds, yet not for the wicked shepherds, but for those shepherds who follow Joshua, and work on the account of His spiritual Kingdom. When the devil reigns over the heart, he would provide fierce overseers as shepherds; But when our Lord Jesus Christ reigns in it, He would send shepherds after His heart, to work in His name, and through His divine capabilities.

b- **Libnah**: A Semitic name that means (whiteness); located on the coast between Makkedah and Lachish; probably where Tel-Bornat is now, two miles north-west of Beth Gebrin; although some scholars believe it to be Tel-Elsafi . **The scholar Origen** comments on the name of this city, saying: [Libnah means whiteness; that could be understood in two contradictory ways: There is the whiteness of Leprosy; and there

¹ Ibid 13: 1.

² مناجاة 18.

is that of light; under the reign of the wicked kings, it had to mean the whiteness of Leprosy; yet, after having been destroyed and affiliated to the Israelites, it turned into the whiteness of light] ¹. Therefore ‘Libnah’ represents an inner city set inside the life of every man; if he were an unbeliever, his Libnah would refer to the whiteness of the leprosy of sin that defiles the soul, corrupts the life, and isolates it from all sanctity. And as the law says:... he is a *leprous man*. *The priest shall surely pronounce him unclean; his sore is on his head; ... his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, ‘Unclean, Unclean’!...he shall dwell alone; his habitation shall be outside the camp*”(Leviticus 13: 44- 46). But, if man is a believer walking with Christ Jesus by spirit and truth, the whiteness of his Libnah would be that of light, shining in him through the sun of righteousness, who dwells in him; would be “*as white as the light*” like the clothes of the transfigured Christ (Matthew 17: 2).

c- **Lachish:** A fortified city, located 16 miles to the north-east of Gaza, and 11 miles to the south-west of Gebrin. The scholar Origen believes that its name means (way). And he comments on this, saying: [In the Holy Book, the word (way) could be either good or bad; as for example: “*But the way of the ungodly shall perish*” (Psalm 1: 6); and, “*He led them forth by the right way*” (Psalm 107: 7). We can say that Lachish had been before, a way for the (ungodly); yet, after being struck and destroyed, it was rebuilt anew as a (right) way, under the reign of Israel².

d- **Hebron:** It was known before as ‘Tetrapolis’; built 7 years before ‘Zoan’ in Egypt; known in the days of Abraham (Genesis 13: 18; 35: 27); Isaac and Jacob sojourned in it for a while (Genesis 35: 27; 37: 14); and Moses’ spies went to it and there found the descendants of Anak (Numbers 13: 22) ... Afterwards, Caleb the son of Jephunneh requested and got all the region of Hebron as his portion of inheritance; though Hebron, itself , became one of the cities of refuge.

The word ‘Hebron’, according to the scholar Origen, means (marriage), [The spirit that was married before to the devil as a wicked husband, after his death, it was wedded to the man of righteousness, the lawful husband, described by the apostle Paul: “*For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*” (2 Corinthians 11: 2).

¹ In Jos.13: 2.

² Ibid.

It is to be noted that the work done by Joshua to those cities, represents that of the Lord Jesus; namely, ‘destruction and construction’; destruction of the old man, then construction, in us, of the new man; destruction of evil, down to its foundation, to lay down a new foundation for the new building. . **The scholar Origen** says: [The first work of the Lord is uprooting the evil found there; namely, the evil and thorns of wickedness; For, as long as the land is infested by the roots of evil, it is impossible to sow in it the good holy seeds. Thus, the first indispensable task of God is uprooting the roots of sin, and all what does the heavenly Father; not plant; and burning it in fire. The second task would be plantation. What does God plant? Moses says: “*God planted a garden (paradise)*” (Genesis 2: 8); and He is still planting it every day in the souls of believers; uprooting anger, to plant peace; uprooting pride, to plant humility; uprooting defilement, to plant purity; and uprooting ignorance to plant knowledge. Thus, the first task of the Word of God is destroying what the devil had built in the human soul; having set in each of us, heights of pride, and high walls of haughtiness. But the Word of God destroys those buildings, and let them collapse; in order for us to become, as the apostle says, the temple and vine of God (1 Corinthians 6: 19); “*having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone*”, on whom the whole mighty building is set, to become in the Spirit a “*holy temple for the Lord*” (Ephesians 2: 21) ¹.

¹ *Ibid* 13: 3,4.

CHAPTER 11

THE GREAT PLOT

As Joshua occupied the whole middle and southern provinces, 'Jabin' king of Hazor sent to the kings around him, especially those of the northern and eastern provinces, persuading them to join him to fight Joshua on one accord. Yet God delivered all of them in his hand, and gave all their land an inheritance to Israel.

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1- Jabin and the great plot:

Hearing about the conquests of Joshua, Jabin king of Hazor sent to the kings around him, in the north and the east; so *"they went, they and all their armies ..., as many people as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude, and very many horses and chariots"* (Joshua 11: 1 -- 5), to fight against Israel.

The word 'Jabin', according to some scholars, is a special title of all the kings of Canaan; just like 'Pharaoh' in Egypt, 'Abimalech' in Palestine, and 'Hareth' in northern Arabia. But, according to the language of Canaan, it means (God watches). **The scholar Origen** believes that it means (thoughts) or (shrewdness). And the city of Hazor meaning in Hebrew (a sheep-fold), but according to **the scholar Origen**, meaning (a palace), was located at the Waters of Merom, which probably is Tel-Elkadh, 4 miles west of the ridge of Jacob's daughters; the remains of which were discovered from the days of the Canaanites and the Hebrews.

The scholar Origen believes that what Jabin the king of Hazor did, symbolizes what the devil or the evil thoughts do, inciting spiritual wars in the world, he considers as his palace or his sheep-fold; giving as examples the thoughts he put in the heart of the king of Babylon, when he fell in pride, and intended to destroy and rob the treasures of the cities and nations... He saw in Jabin a symbol of the serpent, the most cunning among the animals of the earth, that managed to corrupt the life of mankind, to destroy their peace, and to deprive them of their paradise!

Therefore, Jabin, meaning thoughts or shrewdness, refer to the haughty thoughts of the devil, or to his tricks and shrewdness to deceive mankind. As to 'Hazor', meaning (sheep-fold) or (palace); according to the scholar, [The whole earth is the palace of that king (the devil), who got authority over it; ... In the gospels, it is written, that the strong sleeps peacefully in his palace, until he, who is stronger than him comes, to tie him up, and deprive him of his possessions. Therefore the king of the palace is the ruler of this world] ¹.

2- The allies of Jabin:

Jabin persuaded the rest of the kings to go to war; as though the deceiving and haughty thoughts of the devil, incites all the energies of man, and the circumstances around him, to work on the account of his kingdom, instead of, on the account of the true Joshua. Of those kings:

a- **'Jobab' king of 'Madon':**__ Jobab, in Hebrew, means (screams); while Madon, in Canaanite, means (animosity). It is most probably, 'Darbet Madin', close to 'Hettin' in Galilea. **The scholar Origen** believes that 'Jobab' means ((animosity), and 'Madon' means (bitterness). So he says: [The devil dispatches 'Jabin' to another opposing power, naturally referred, to the rebellious angels; namely, to the king of bitterness. Through that king and his works, bitterness and difficulties come on the poor mortal humans. All kinds of sin are actually bitter, even though, according to King Solomon, they may carry at the beginning some sweetness... On the contrary, righteousness, that may taste bitter at the beginning, yet its end is sweeter than honey; as it presents the fruits of virtue] ². Thus, the devil, carrying the nature of hatred, especially against man, that weak vessel, the object of God's love, who replaces the devil and his angels before their fall -- does not stop to agitate everything bitter against him, in order to let him lose his joy in the Lord, his spiritual pleasure, and his inner peace.

b- **The king of Shimron:** According to the scholar Origen, the word 'Shimron' means (listening). Comparing between Shimron and Samuel; the later is the fruit of God's listening to the voice and prayers of man (1 Samuel 1: 20); while 'Shimron', represents (listening to the voice and commandments of the devil). Thus the devil, with all his energies seeks to set for himself a kingdom among mankind, to submit to his law, that is in its essence, both defilement and oppression!

¹ In Jos. Hom 14: 2.

² Ibid.

c- **The king of Achshaph:** ‘Achshaph’, according to **the scholar Origen**, means (How fast will this come to an end !); as though the kingdom of the devil is based on what will quickly come to an end; yet he uses all his deceit to draw mankind to his kingdom, giving them that ! If Shimron draws man to listen to the voice of the devil, the King of Achshaph, on his part, presents, what is really nothing! **The scholar Origen** says: [The exact words of the devil were: “*All these things I will give you, if you fall down and worship me*” (Matthew 4: 9); so if you are Jesus’ servant, you would answer him: ‘I worship no one but my Lord and my God’. The followers of the devil would listen to him, as King Shimron did, who listened to Jabin and went to fight Joshua] ¹. And got nothing but death and perishing? ! We also, if we listen to the voice of the enemy, seeking worldly pleasures, opposing the work of our true Jesus, what would we receive? The scholar Origen says: [How fast will pleasures come to an end? and how near is their end; those that sinners assume to have no end] ².

d- **Kings who were from the north in the mountains:** As the holy mountains refer to the Kingdom of God, on which the city of God is set, not possible to be hidden; and on them the Lord is transfigured before his prophets and disciples, in both the Old and the New Testaments, both living and dead; So also the devil has his mountains, on which he reigns; that are the haughty thoughts of pride; toward which he brings the souls, to descend from them to the abyss.

e- **King of Araba in the plain south of Chinneroth:** The scholar Origen believes that the word ‘Araba’ means (treason), and the word ‘Chinneroth’ means (like lamps); It is as though the devil, using every twisted way to deceive us; appears sometimes as a shining lamp or an angel of light, although he actually is darkness ! The scholar says: [He persuades the powers of treason, not to attack the spirits of men openly, but to approach them with twisted ways ...But, like St. Paul, we are aware of all his tricks] ³.

f- **king of ‘Dor’ on the west:** Both in the lowlands and on the heights. **The scholar Origen** believes that the word ‘Dor’ means (conversion); yet not a conversion from evil to good, but one, incited by Jabin, to deviate believers from the truth, under the veil of the gospel, as what happened in Galatia. The apostle says: “*I marvel that you are*

¹ *Ibid*14: 3.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even, if we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1: 6 -- 8). That is the work of the inhabitants of ‘Dor’, to fight believers secretly through the gospel, by presenting false and perverted concepts, far from the spirit of truth.

g- Kings of the Canaanites: ‘Canaanites’ mean (riot); namely those who create an atmosphere of riot and incitement in every occasion, in order that believers would lose their inner peace; as though living amid waves¹.

h- Kings of the Amorites: The word ‘Amorite’ means (to become bitter). The work of the evil one is to turn the souls of believers to bitterness, to deprive them of every spiritual consolation inside them; to destroy them with boredom and despair.

Therefore, through an invitation of Jabin king of Hazor, the kings with their armies gathered together: *“as many people as the sand of the seashore in multitude, with very many horses and chariots”* (Joshua 11: 4). The spiritual wars are fierce and bitter; as the enemies are very numerous, with many horses and chariots; Some of them approach with hostility and animosity, to embitter our life, like Jobab king of Madon; and some who use every way to get us to listen to the voice of the enemy, like King Shimron; and others who persuade us with mortal things, like the King of Achshaph; and who fill us up with thoughts of vain glory and pride, like the kings of the mountains; and who deceive us as shining lamps, like the king of Araba, south of Chinneroth; and still others who create disturbances around us, like the Canaanites; or embitter the circumstances surrounding us, like the Amorites ... How numerous are the ways of the devil, trying to destroy us. That is why the apostle St. James says: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Peter 5: 8, 9).

3- The battle of the Waters of Merom:

“And when all these kings had met together, they came and camped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel. But the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Do not be afraid because of them, for

¹ Ibid.

tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.” (Joshua 11: 5, 6)

If, with every conquest, the forces of darkness become agitated, likewise with every agitation of these forces, the Lord confirms anew, that He grants a new conquest on a higher level...The Book of Joshua is a series of successive wars; or, actually, it is a series of successive conquests; through which the believer sets forth from glory to glory, until he reaches “*the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4: 13). Then, all the Church would be beautified, and prepared with glory for the eternal wedding.

The Lord confirms to Joshua:” *Do not be afraid;*” as He wants us, in our spiritual war, to be full of confidence in Him, that He is the conqueror, and by Him we conquer. He wishes to work by His believers, and not by nonbelievers; to support the souls, that depend on Him, and not those who fear...

Why does God say: “***For tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain***” (Joshua 11: 6)? “Tomorrow” refers to the time “after the time”. For, although we gain successive conquests, and enjoy a spiritual authority over the forces of darkness, that increases with our spiritual growth; yet we remain in a continuous war that has no end, until “tomorrow” comes, when the devil would be cast in the lake of everlasting fire. The scholar Origen says: [It is the time when all the adversary forces would perish, and would be utterly defeated; when you see those on the left hand, being told: “*Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matthew 25: 41). It will be, the same time, when we shall also have; if we are conquerors; namely, if we gain the conquest with our fellowship with our Lord Jesus -- the Kingdom He prepared for His saints, who have kept God’s commandments and did righteousness; to enjoy it from the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has the glory, and the power to the age of ages. Amen] ¹.

“So Joshua and all the people of war with him came against them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and they attacked them. And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who defeated them and chased them to Greater Sidon, to the Brook of Misrephoth, and to

¹ Ibid.

the Valley of Mizpah eastward;they attacked them until they left none of them remaining.” (Joshua 11: 7, 8)

Victory was realized to Joshua and his men by striking Jabin and his army, until none of them was left remaining. In that battle, it is to be noticed:

(1) As the adversary kings gathered together under the leadership of Jabin king of Hazor, likewise the men of war under the leadership of Joshua gathered together; for our spiritual war is on the account of our true leader, our Lord Jesus Christ. If we enter the war under His leadership, we will conquer; but if we depend on ourselves, on our capabilities, and our weapons, we will fall and be defeated. Let us always cry out to our Joshua; for only He, is aware of the tricks of the devil, and has the authority to destroy them utterly.

(2) If this war refers to the spiritual war set in the heart, it is therefore, not a private war against each of us, but it is the war of the kingdom of the devil against the Church as a whole, being the kingdom of God. That is why, as all the men of war gathered together with Joshua, it is fitting for us, in our spiritual strife, to carry that collective Spirit. In my strife, I should seek the prayers of my brothers striving with me, who have conquered and set forth! Every conquest realized in the depths of my soul, is but a conquest for the whole Church, through which her entry into a greater and a more perfect beauty, is realized. And, on the contrary, every weakness I fall in would also be on the account of the congregation! Let us then, strive with a collective spirit, the spirit of unity and love in Jesus Christ our Lord.

(3) Joshua and his men carried out an offensive war against Jabin and his men; came to them all of a sudden, and fell on them. The Lord Christ does not want from us to wait for the sin to come to us, then to defend ourselves; but He wants us to start attacking, with all our energy, against every sin, before giving it the chance to get a place in us, and to have authority over us. We should not take up a position of fear and weakness, but of firmness and strength, so as to conquer, and to chase it to the Great Sidon; namely to the place of hunting; to hunt it before it hunts us; and to leave none of it to flee to our senses or our inner heart, but destroy it completely.

(4) The Holy Book says: ***“They chased them to the Great Sidon;”*** The word ‘Sidon’, means (hunting); that is why the region of Sidon refers to the location where the enemy hunts the souls of believers; as the Psalmist says: ***“They have prepared a net for my steps”*** (Psalm

57: 6); That is why God allowed it for the devil (Jabin) to be chased to the Great Sidon, as though to let him fall in the snares, he himself has set for the believers; By the same strikes the enemy directs against us, we, believers, will gain victory and conquest, and will get the crown; while he will have his cup of evil full, and will fall to perishment.

4- Hamstringing their horses:

“So Joshua did to them as the Lord had told him; he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire” (Joshua 11: 9)

The scholar Origen wonders why God commanded them to hamstring the horses, and not to take them as spoil; while in the days of Moses, as they overcame Median, *“the children of Israel took as spoil all their cattle, all their flocks, and all their goods”* (Number 31: 9); and among the booty of the plunder which the men of war had taken, was 61,000 donkeys (Numbers 31: 32 - 34), that God allowed to take for their personal use; while He commanded them to kill the horses, Why?

St. Ambrose believes that man, through his falling underneath sins, became like donkeys; saying: [The donkey is a lazy and dumb animal, easily approached and devoured ... It is fitting for us to be more cautious, and not to live idiotically, lazy in body and mind like these animals! We should rather resort to faith that lightens our heavy burdens!] ¹. At the same time the same Saint also warns us from being like horses, saying: [Why would you deprive yourself of the reason granted to us by God?! ... It is God’s will to be what we are; saying: *“Do not be like the horse, or like the mule, which have no understanding”* (Psalm 32: 9) ².

The scholar Origen believes that donkeys are used by man to carry burdens and for travel to serve and console him; while he uses horses in wars for his perishment. That is why donkeys refer to mankind, while horses refer to the devil, the arrogant and destroyer. That is why the law cared for donkeys and not for horses: *“If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again; and if you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, do not refrain from helping it,”* (Exodus 23: 4, 5)... And in the Book of Zechariah, while he proclaims the entry of the Lord Christ, riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey; he confirms the

¹ Hexameron 6: 3.

² Ibid.

destruction of the military chariots and the horses, as a sign of the dwelling of peace: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off; He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be ‘from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth”* (Zechariah 9: 9, 10). The scholar says: [According to the prophet, He who rides on a colt, is cutting the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem. That is why I believe that the donkey and the colt refer to the believers among whom Christ sits; and the horses refer to those who were in heaven, then fell down because of their pride and haughtiness ... ; those who followed the one who says: *“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High”* (Isaiah 14: 14); That is why, I think the prophet David says: *“A horse is a vain hope for safety; neither shall it deliver any by its great strength”* (Psalm 33: 17). Likewise, it is said of those who trust in the devil: *“Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God”* (Psalm 20: 8). The comparison here, is not as though between the chariots (the horses), and the Lord, as two powers to whom we should pray; but here, he is clarifying that we seek from the true God, while they, on the other hand, beseech the chariots and horses; namely the devil]¹. Therefore the horses, that Joshua and his men are committed to hamstringing, and the chariots they are committed to burn with fire, refer to the powers of the devil, namely, the sin; especially the lusts of the flesh, that corrupt the Spirit.

We are committed to *“take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”* (Ephesians 6: 17), to strike with it the evil carnal lusts, as though hamstringing the horses. If Jabin, namely the devil, chases us with his horses, namely, with “care for the flesh” that is something against God; presenting us with his haughty thoughts that are *“philosophy and empty deceit”* (Colossians 2: 8); let us resort to our Joshua, to accept us as spiritual soldiers, who carry his weapons, that hamstringing the horses and burn the evil chariots.

In our study of the chariot of the Cherubim, that carries the divine throne, we saw it represents “the holy human life”, that becomes by the fiery Holy Spirit, a throne for God, and a holy temple for Him. All the details mentioned for the chariots, conform with our life that is sanctified

¹ In Jos. Hom 15: 3.

in the Lord; while the chariots of the devil, on the other hand, are the defiled hearts that persist on its wickedness, that work for him¹, and become a throne for him, carrying his thoughts and deceits ... These that will be burnt with him, by the fire prepared for the devil and his angels !

As long as we are still in this world, God can turn the hearts of the wicked, into a holy temple for Him, by His Holy Spirit; that is if they receive his fiery work in them, before being cast into another fire that is not fitting for believers; that not prepared for humans, but for the devil and his angels!

5- Utter destruction of evil:

“Joshua turned back at that time and took Hazor, and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor was formerly the head of all those kingdoms. And they struck all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them. There was none left breathing. Then he burned Hazor with fire.” (Joshua 11: 10, 11)

It did not stop at hamstringing the horses of Jabin, and burning his chariots with fire; but boldly, Joshua turned back with his men to take Hazor; to strike its king with the sword, to kill everyone in it, and then to burn it with fire. If Hazor that means (the Palace) was the center of Jabin’s kingdom; we are committed, after conquering the evil lust of the body, by our true Joshua, and burning every trace of it, to turn back with our Jesus to Hazor, where the devil was reigning; ... to our life, that was used by the enemy as a palace for his kingdom; to strike the devil by Jesus Christ, our Lord, the only conqueror. And as **the scholar Origen** says: [We were under the reign of sin (Romans 6: 12); under the reign of wicked lusts, according to the words of the apostle: *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3: 23). In every one of us there is a king who reigns and dwells: In one man, meanness dwells; in others, vanity, lying, carnal lusts, or anger; the apostle Paul says: *“ Do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts”* (Romans 6: 12). Before we have faith, there have been kingdoms of sin in each of us; but by the coming of Jesus, all the kings reigning in us were killed ... He taught us how to kill them all, and not to let any of them escape. For if we let anyone of them live, we shall be unworthy of being counted as followers of the sword of Joshua. If the sin of meanness, vanity, or carnal lusts, reigns in you, you would not be a

¹ للمؤلف: حزقيال 1981، ص 38-21.

soldier of Israel, and would not have obeyed the command of God to Joshua] ¹.

The divine command to Joshua, has been to destroy evil utterly, to leave no trace of it, lest it comes back to resume reigning on the heart. That was the command that Joshua obeyed:

“For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, and that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the Lord had commanded Moses.” (Joshua 11: 20)

The scholar Origen says: [It was not said that Joshua took one and spared the other, but took them all, and killed them; in the same way, the Lord Jesus has purified us of all kinds of sins, destroying them all. Actually, before faith, we were all, *“foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another”* (Titus 3: 3); but Joshua killed all those who went to war; There is not one sin, however big it is, that God can not forgive. *“He is the power of God and the wisdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 1: 24), who overcomes everything. Do not you join me in believing that sin with all its kinds has been taken away from us in the water of Baptism? That is what the apostle Paul intended to say; for after counting all those kinds of sin, he added: *“Such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Corinthians 6: 11)] ².

Once more **the scholar Origen** says: [How can the words of the Book, *“There was none left breathing”* (Joshua 11: 11), be realized in us?!... Suppose that a feeling of anger is rising in my heart; this feeling may not go far to the stage of action, for fear of anticipated reaction or punishment; yet, this is not enough. According to the Holy Book, I should try hard to eradicate any trace of this feeling in me; for if the soul is disturbed, even if the thought of anger does not develop into action, this disturbance, in itself, is not fitting for a soldier of Christ. The soldiers of Joshua should do their best to let nothing disturb their hearts; If something is left, either it is a habit or a mere wrong thought, it may with time, grow and develop, and may lead us to *“return to our own vomit”* (Proverb 26: 11); then, *“the last state would be worse than the first”* (Luke 11: 26). That is what is meant by the Psalm: *“Happy shall*

¹ In Jos. Hom 15: 4.

² Ibid 12: 5.

he be who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock” (Psalm 137: 9). Here, he means by the little ones of Babylon, the evil thoughts... those, that may initially look little and of no significance, we should take, cut, and dash against the rock, namely Christ (1 Corinthians 10: 4). We should kill them, according to God’s command, and leave none of them breathing inside us] ¹.

The Book says about Joshua and his men, that they “***struck all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them. There was none left breathing. Then he burned Hazor with fire***” (Joshua 11: 11). It should not stop at leaving no chance for any trace of evil to breathe inside us, but we should burn (Hazor) -- the palace of king Jabin -- with fire. What is this fire that Joshua throws on the palace, but that of the Holy Spirit, which burns in us all thorns that may strangle our souls; to make of our Hazor, a palace not for Jabin but for Joshua. In place of the kingdom of the devil, there will be the Kingdom of Jesus our Lord, with His fiery Spirit that sanctifies our inner depths.

Finally, it was from the Lord, that the adversary kings hardened their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, by which the cup of the devil and his angels would be full, and the kings would become worthy of utter destruction, and would receive no mercy. At the same time, the hearts of the children of God would strengthen to proceed on their spiritual war, to become worthy of the crowns of victory. Hardening the hearts of the kings, does not imply that God makes them hard, but He would lift His hand up from them, to let their fierceness appear, having temporarily pressed down for the sake of protecting His people; but at due time, He would let them act according to their will, to fall into the fruit of their doing.

6- Then the land rested from war:

The scholar Origen says: [In the days of Moses, this statement was never said, “***Then the land rested from war.***” (Joshua 11: 23)

Surely, that land, full of conflicts and wars would never rest from war except through a gift from the Lord Christ ... For in us, there is place for all the people of wickedness, who work and would never let us get any rest. Yes, we have inside us the Canaanites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, whom we should strive to drive away, through persistent

¹ Ibid 15: 3.

watching, strife, and patience; so that our land would finally rest from war] ¹.

In another place, **the scholar Origen** says: [How could it be confirmed to Joshua, that the land rested from war, although war had not come to an end in his time? That was consummated in the Lord Christ ... If you find in yourself that “*the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusts against the flesh*” (Galatians 5: 17); as you come to the Lord Christ, and gain the grace of Baptism for the forgiveness of sins, the land -- that is you -- would rest from war; on one condition that you “*always carry about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in your body*” (2 Corinthians 4: 10). By this, war would end in you, and “*you become a peacemaker, and be called a son of God*” (Matthew 5: 9). Yes, that will be yours, when war comes to an end, and you overcome your enemies; to get rest in your (vine), which is Jesus Christ, and “*under His fig tree*” (Micah 4: 4); namely, the Holy Spirit; then you will thank God the Almighty, “*to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*” (1 Peter 4: 11)] ².

¹ *Ibid* 1: 6.

² *Ibid* 15: 7.

CHAPTER 12

BOUNDARIES OF THE LAND OF INHERITANCE

After recording the land that had been taken by the people under the leadership of Moses, before crossing the Jordan, and the land of Canaan, under the leadership of Joshua after the crossing, the Holy Book finally gave a record of the boundaries of the land east and west of the Jordan:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1- Boundaries of the land east of the Jordan | 1 -- 6 |
| 2- Boundaries of the land west of the Jordan | 7 -- 24 |

1- Boundaries of the land east of the Jordan:

In our interpretation of the Book of Numbers (Chapter 32), we saw, how the request of the two and a half tribes from Moses, to grant them the land of Gilead east of the Jordan, was not haphazard; but it revealed the portion got by the Church of the Old Testament, that did not enjoy the Jordan of Christ; yet, through the symbols and prophecies, got a portion together with the Church of the New Testament (west of the Jordan) in the eternal inheritance¹. The River Jordan is the line of distinction, discerning the two; or in better words, the two categories of members belonging to one Church, that extends since Adam to the end of ages.

The divine inspiration intended to bind together, the talk of the inheritance east and west of the Jordan, to proclaim the unity of the Church; even though her early members enjoyed their inheritance through Moses (the law), who led them to the hope for the coming of the true Joshua; and the other members enjoyed theirs through Joshua Himself.

2- Boundaries of the land west of the Jordan:

The Holy Book mentioned the region that was taken by the nine and a half tribes west of the Jordan; with the names of the cities, together with the names of their old kings, defeated by Joshua the son of Nun. It is as though the inspiration confirms that, God the Father has several dwelling places, so that each of us will get his own holy place of rest,

¹ للمؤلف: سفر العدد 1981، أصحاح 32.

and his own inheritance in Jesus Christ. The wicked kings (the devils) have been driven out, so that we inherit forever! Each of those cities has its symbolic meaning, referring to a certain sin or to a certain devil; we are committed to crush, to keep him from inheriting anything in us, but to get back the inheritance that is ours in our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE SECOND SECTION

THE DIVISION OF THE LAND

(CHAPTERS 13 to CHAPTER 19)

CHAPTER 13

THE DIVISION OF LAND EAST OF THE JORDAN

The divine inspiration ended the previous section by recording the boundaries of land taken by the people OF God, both under the leadership of Moses and Joshua; revealing the kings who were driven out or killed, and their lands occupied by Joshua; a reference to turning the kingdom of the devil, that he had taken in our hearts, to the kingdom of the true Joshua. And now, advanced in years, he began to divide the land among the tribes, starting by that east of the Jordan between the two and a half tribes.

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1- Joshua advanced in years:

“Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the Lord said to him: ‘You are old, advanced in years,’ ” (Joshua 13: 1)

If Joshua was a symbol of Jesus Christ; why is it said that Joshua was old, advanced in years; although the Lord Jesus was never advanced in years? We can understand old age from two aspects:

(1) Old age, meaning advanced in years; and man enters into a state of weakness and helplessness that ends with his death. That is a state that did not happen to Jesus the Lord of glory; He ascended to heaven while physically He was still a mature man; So that, His Church uniting with Him, and carrying His features, will never carry in herself spiritual old age or spiritual weakness. Like her Bridegroom, she carries a maturity that will never get old; as an eagle, her youth is renewed. In other words, the true Christian, even if he grows old and gets physically weak, yet he stays, in his spirit and heart, a youth with no weakness in Jesus Christ who never gets old.

(2) Old age, meaning wisdom ... “wisdom of the advanced years”, which is not connected to age, but to maturity of mind and spirit. Adam lived long years on earth, yet, because of his fall into sin, he did not gain the title, ‘advanced in years’; as he did not benefit from his days, but rather lost them. The first to enjoy this title were Abraham and

his wife Sarah, being said that they were “*old and well advanced in age*” (Genesis 18: 11), when they received the Word of God and His two angels in their tent. Their life turning into a heaven, where God and His angels dwell, they became worthy of receiving the promise to get Isaac, the symbol of Jesus Christ. It is as though man becomes old and advanced in years, when he carries inside him the heavenly nature, receive God to dwell in him, and become open on the Heavenliness as beloved to him! Here also, as Joshua begins to divide the land of inheritance, as though, through the symbol, he presents the heavenly inheritance to believers, to be said of him, that he is old, and advanced in years. In that, Joshua symbolized Jesus Christ, not as a helpless old man, but as the wisdom of God, who grants us in him the eternal inheritance.

The scholar Origen is credited with a beautiful comment on the expression: “*was old, advanced in years*”, saying: [Here we find the Holy Spirit proclaim that Joshua was old and advanced in years ... an expression that does not apply to a sinner; as the sinner is not advanced in years; as he will never “*forgets those things that are behind, and reaches forward to those things which are ahead*” (Philippians 3: 13); but he always, “*looks back*” (Luke 9: 62); that is why he, “*is not fit for the kingdom of God*” (Luke 9: 62). On the contrary, when we reach forward to those things, which are ahead, seeking perfection, we would be advanced in years]¹.

That title, that was granted to Joshua the son of Nun, by the Lord Himself, is a testimony of recognition, a sign of his reaching forward to those things which are ahead, not only to enjoy inheritance, but also to extend the inheritance to others. He does not only carry the heavenly nature, but, by his glorified deeds, he extends it also to his brothers and children. And from the other side Joshua became advanced in years, because he as a symbol of Jesus, the Son of Righteousness, got a new day full of glorious deeds with every sun shine; as though he is adding to his life, those spiritual years he worked by the Lord, to be called “advanced in years”.

2- The land remaining to be possessed:

How can the Book say: “***The land rested from war***” (Joshua 11: 23), then says: “*There remains very much land yet to be possessed*” (Joshua 13: 1)? The land Joshua came to tread with his feet, he reigned

¹ In Jos. Hom 16: 1.

on it, driving out the adversaries, to rest from the war. Those are the congregation of believers, who received the Lord Christ into their spiritual and physical life, to forgive all their sins, and to give them peace with God the Father, as well as peace with each others, and peace inside man himself, between spirit and flesh, through sanctifying all! That is the true rest that came to be, for every true believer, in his relationship with God his Father, and his human brothers; as well as in his relationship with his own body, emotions, and inner feelings.... He enjoys an exalted rest in Jesus Christ. As to proclaiming that there remains very much land to be possessed; this is natural, as there were still much land that the true Joshua did not enter ... There are still a multitude of Atheists, who have not yet enjoyed the entrance of the Lord in their life to reign in them; according to the confirmation of the Psalmist: “*All nations will serve Him*” (Psalm 72: 11); and also: “*He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River to the end of the earth; Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before Him*” (Psalm 72: 8, 9).

We can also say that the Lord Christ -- the true Joshua -- as he was lifted up on the cross, descended to Hades, to reign over those who died on hope, to bring them over to His paradise, this allows us to apprehend the phrase, “*The land rested from war*”: Christ, the Head, had, on behalf of all humanity, conquered by His cross, and by His conquest, He offered the Church along the generations, the possibility to conquer, to destroy Hades, and to set forth with every soul to Paradise. ... And to apprehend the phrase, “*There remains very much land yet to be possessed*”: The Lord, as He was in flesh, reigned on earth; and still reigns, as He is, amid His Church along the generations, presenting the victory to believers; opening the door of hope to all generations.

3- Dividing the land by lot:

“...only divide it by lot to Israel as an inheritance, as I have commanded you.”(Verse 6) Lot has been used in the Holy Book during both the Old and the New Testaments. It was not used in the form of haphazard ‘lottery’, but was practiced following prayers to God; to stop the human will, to let that of God work. **The scholar Origen**¹ criticized his contemporaries; namely, men of the second century AD; because they did not use it in the ordinations of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; presenting from the Old and New testaments, proofs of its use.

¹ *Ibid* 23: 2.

(1) **In the Old Testament:** In the Book of Leviticus, it came: *“Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the Lord’s lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness”* (Leviticus 16: 8 -- 10). Joshua used it in dividing the land given by the Lord to His people. In the Book of Jonah, as the mariners felt completely helpless before the deadly storm, they cried out to their gods, and finally they cast lots, by which they came to know that Jonah was the cause of their trouble (Jonah 1: 7). In the Book of Proverbs, it was written, *“Casting lots causes contentions to cease, and keeps the mighty apart”* (Proverb 18: 19); as though it helps to reveal the truth.

(2) **In the New Testament:** When it was necessary to choose someone to replace Judas as an apostle of the Lord, *“Men proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, ‘You, O Lord, who knows the hearts of all, show which of these two you have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles”* (Acts 1: 23 -- 26). **The scholar Origen** comments on this, saying: [By using it, the apostles demonstrate that if used with absolute faith, together with prayers, it clearly reveals the hidden will of God] ¹. Yet, some people assume, once the Holy Spirit descended on the Church, it was given the Spirit of discernment and apprehension of God’s will, through prayers, together with a holy life; and so overshadowed the need for casting lots; as it happened in choosing the Deacons (Acts 6: 2, 3) ².

God might have allowed the use of casting lots in the division of land, so that personal factors would not interfere with the division; and in order that any of the tribes would not suppose that what it earned is a favor from anyone; but is a gift from God Himself; the gift of God is free, so no one great or small could humiliate a certain tribe, that he has given it something of his own.

4- The portion of the two and a half tribes:

¹ Ibid.

² الحب الرعوي: ص 233، 234.

It was not possible for the two and a half tribes -- who represent the Old Testament -- to get their inheritance before the other tribes; but they had to receive the inheritance from Joshua himself; The apostle Paul says: *“And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us”* (Hebrew 11: 39,40).

Their inheritance was fixed in the days of Moses, but they crossed to fight with the rest of the tribes so that all possess the land in due time, when Joshua gets old and the land rests from war. As **Origen** says that this-[refers to our beloved deceased who show strife along with us through prayer on our behalf till we all acquire the inheritance.]¹

¹ In Jos. Hom 16:5.

CHAPTER 14

THE PORTION OF CALEB

As the land east of the Jordan was divided among the two and a half tribes, Caleb the son of Jephunneh' asked for the mountain that was promised to him by Moses, for his honesty and faith, when he came to spy the land forty-five years before. He had asked for the mountain before Joshua started to divide the land west of the Jordan.

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1- An introduction about the way of division:

The scholar Origen believes that it is impossible for the divine Book to care for the exact dimensions of the land allotted to every tribe in detail; just for the sake of knowing the situation of those tribes in the new land. But, as the Jewish rites came, a copy and shadow of the heavenly things (Hebrew 8: 5); the division of the land, names of regions, cities of refuge, cities of the Levites, and the establishing of the temple later on in Jerusalem, etc... these things in their details, carry heavenly secrets, that the Holy Spirit reveals to us. The scholar says: [When you, O, Jew, come to Jerusalem, and find it destroyed, and turned into dust and ashes, do not cry like a child (1Corinthians4: 20). Do not grieve, but seek a city in heaven instead of that which you seek on earth! Lift your eyes up, and you will find the Higher Jerusalem, our mother. Do not get depressed when you see the temple deserted; and do not despair when you find no priest; as in heaven there is an altar, and priests of the coming goods, who walk before the Lord, according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrew 5: 10). It is through the love and mercy of God, that He relieved you of the earthly inheritance, to let you seek the heavenly one] ¹.

I am not intending to go into much details, but I shall only present some of the spiritual concepts of the division, hoping that the Spirit of God will support and guide you; will turn even what seems to

¹ In Jos. hom 17: 1.

be something concerning the old land, into what concerns the salvation of the people of God and their eternity.

In this chapter, the divine inspiration discerns between three categories of God's people, as far as the division of the land is concerned (1-3):

a- **The first category:** Those who accepted to inherit the land, they came to have in the days of Moses, namely, through the law; including the two tribes of Reuben, of Gad, and of half the tribe of Manasseh; although this category would not receive their inheritance except through the hand of Joshua. It represents the category of men of the Old Testament, who also lived through the new Joshua. And with some freedom, we can say that this category embraces also those who are in the era of grace, but unfortunately behave as though they are still under the law; literal in their understanding of the law and the word, and narrow in their thoughts. How miserable are those who crossed the Jordan together with Joshua, but, with their life and thoughts, they backslid to what is behind the Jordan, to live spiritually like immature kids; they liken a mentally sick young man who sticks to childish behavior, to play with toys and to drink milk, instead of enjoying solid food and serious behavior.

b- **The second category:** Those who accepted to inherit the land, they got in the days of Joshua; namely, in the era of grace; including nine and a half tribes. They represent someone who was lifted up from under the law, to set forth from the letter to the Spirit. Those, would not inherit, together with the two and a half tribes, the pasture land of Gilead, but would inherit the land that flow of honey and milk; where the believer sets forth from herding sheep, namely, the animal and carnal thoughts, to the everlasting inheritance, where the new food is.

c- **The third category:** These are the Levites who get no portion of land, as the Lord is their portion (Joshua 13: 2); those who could be described as "the category of the perfect"; who live with Joshua, who do not seek land or blessings, even the heavenly ones; but seek the Lord Himself as their portion. If the first category represents those who worship for the sake of worldly blessings (those under the law); and the second category represents those who worship for the sake of spiritual blessings; the third category do not seek but God alone, as their whole life, joy, and crown. **The scholar Origen** says: [The Levites got their inheritance neither from Moses nor from Joshua, because the

God of Israel is their portion ... There might be a great number among the people of God, who have a simple faith in the fear of God; who please God by their good deeds and honest behavior; But few and rare, are those who have got the wisdom and knowledge; who keep their hearts pure, who plant in their souls the best virtues; and who have the possibility to enlighten the way of others ... Those could surely be called Levites and priests, whose portion is the Lord; the Wisdom they have chosen above everything] ¹.

I wish we become like the Levites and priests, with no portion of the land of inheritance; but to have the Lord Christ as our portion; being “*the wisdom of God*” (1 Corinthians 1: 30); as He is “*our righteousness*” (Jeremiah 23: 6; 1 Corinthians 1: 30); “*our peace*” (Ephesians 2: 14); and “*our redemption*” (1 Corinthians 1: 30).

2- Caleb asks for his portion:

“Then the children of Judas came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: ‘You know the word which the Lord said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land...’” (Joshua 14: 6, 7)

Before Joshua starts casting lots for dividing the land among the nine and a half tribes, Caleb, the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite approached him to remind him of the promise he received 45 years before, as he returned together with him to Moses after having spied the land, to speak honestly and faithfully about the land of promise, in contrary to the other spies who let the hearts of the people melt with fear. Caleb did not enter into the lot together with the rest of the people, but asked for a special privilege, that he has got from the Lord Himself, on the tongue of the prophet Moses; the secret of that privilege is:

a- In our study of the Book of Numbers, we saw that the word “Caleb” means (heart); and that the melding of Joshua with Caleb, is a melding of faith in Christ the Savior, with the practical purity of heart, in order to enjoy the everlasting inheritance². **The scholar Origen** believes that “Jephunneh” means (conversion)³, and that “Kenizzite” means the (despised). We can say that Caleb’s privilege, is because he represents the heart emerging from conversion from despise. By that he preceded

¹ Ibid 17: 2.

² للمؤلف: سفر العدد.

³ In Jos. hom 18: 2, 20: 6..

others in the enjoyment of inheritance; not because he is any better than them, but because he, who is despised, has converted from this life, to lead with a pure heart in the Lord. We are all the children of the Kenizzite, namely of the despised; as, *“through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned”* (Romans 5: 12). But Caleb knows how to replace that one man who brought on him despise and death, by another Man -- our Lord Jesus; to come to have the gift of righteousness, and to enjoy the right of possession. And as the apostle says about that conversion: *“For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one; much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5: 17). It is as though the apostle says in that chapter (Romans 5): [After having been, because of our father Adam, possessed by death, we came, by our Lord Jesus Christ, to possess life in Him! After having been a subject of inheritance for sin, we came to inherit the everlasting Kingdom.

We all, were indeed referred to the ‘Kenizzite’, that is the (despised); yet, in our reference to ‘Jephunneh’, that is the (conversion), we were converted from the physical fatherhood of Adam, to the spiritual fatherhood of God in His Son Jesus Christ, to enjoy the first inheritance.

b- The relation between Caleb and Joshua; and we have previously discussed the relation between the heart and the faith; No purity of heart outside the faith in Christ, and no conquest without Him. As we relate, as hearts, with the true Joshua, we are opening up to Him to reign in our inner man, and to sit on the heart as His throne. And just as He reigns in us, we also reign by Him in His eternal inheritance. Let us relate to our Joshua, and deliver our life to Him, to reign in us, and we to reign in Him; and as **St. Augustine** addresses the Lord, saying: [Receive all my capabilities to possess them completely ... Restore to me my whole sovereignty] ¹.

c- Caleb encounter with Joshua had been in Kadesh Barnea; ‘Kadesh’ means holiness. Our encounter with our Lord Jesus Christ, would not truly be, except through holy life. Many assume that they know the Lord, and encounter Him, probably through preaching Him, and probably through performing miracles in His name; Yet, unless they encounter Him in a holy life, He would say to them: *“Get away from Me, you cursed; I do not know you.”*

¹ مناجاة 18.

d- Although Caleb had got the promise from God through Moses the representative of the law, yet, the realization of that promise would not be except by Joshua, who alone could grant the reward. **The scholar Origen** says: [Moses taught Caleb first, and then did Joshua who helped him. Caleb says to Joshua:

“You know the word which the Lord said to Moses the man of God.” (Joshua 14: 6)

Nobody could comprehend the word spoken by the Lord to Moses except Joshua only; and nobody has the comprehension of the law like Jesus in His teaching; He is the One who taught us and revealed everything to us. And He is the One who inspired to Paul that *“the law is spiritual”* (Romans 7: 14)] ¹. Our Joshua is the One who knows the commandment, through which we get the reward, not as a personal worthiness on our part, but through our Lord Jesus, who presents to us the commandment, who supports us to observe it, and who grants us the reward for it.

e- Caleb realized that in his inheritance, he is a joint heir with Joshua; as he says to him: *“You know the word which the Lord said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me”*. Our true privilege in enjoying the inheritance is that we are *“joint heirs with Christ”* (Romans 8: 17); what we get is the inheritance of Christ Himself, and His glories, which we enjoy in Him, namely, through our membership in His body. In ourselves, we have no right of inheritance, but if we abide in Christ, He would grant that right to us. The apostle Paul says: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”* (Ephesians 1: 3); confirming that *“the glory of His grace by which He has made us accepted, is in the beloved”* (Ephesians 1: 6). If Christ is the beloved to God the Father, to whom the glory is; we, being in Him, have got the grace of that glory that is His! In other words, the apostle goes on to say: *“in whom also we have obtained our inheritance”* (Ephesians 1: 11).

f- If Caleb’s inheritance is a fruit of his unity with Joshua, to enjoy the glory by and in him; yet, this does not mean a negativism or negligence on Caleb’s part, in fulfilling the commandment; He says: *“But I wholly followed the Lord my God”* (Joshua 14: 8). As though he is saying: [From my side, I accepted the commandment of my God, with whom I encounter on a personal level, to become referred to me, as ‘My

¹ In Jos. hom 18: 2.

God', and completely observed His commandment. If God's grace is very rich in giving, yet, it is not given to the negligent in observing the divine commandment].

We finally say, that Caleb is calling God "My God". Whoever accepts God as a personal God, and referred to him, he is receiving God's glories, as his own glories, and God's features, as his own; Getting our inheritance is the fruit of our possession of God, and His possession of us: "*I am my beloved, and my beloved is mine*" (Song 6: 3).

3 - Caleb above time:

"The Lord has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the Lord spoke this word to Moses while Israel wondered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was on the day that Moses sent me." (Joshua 14: 10, 11)

If the inheritance that the believer enjoys, is the everlasting life which soars above time, an extension of a life lived here by man, it is fitting for us, in order to enjoy that inheritance, to enter now in the circle of eternity, not to attach ourselves to the circle of time, that by its rolling, from time to time, would lift us up and bring us down; and to live, while still on earth, with a heavenly thought, that time can never corrupt or weaken. Caleb got the promise when he was forty years of age, strong in the work of God; and now, he is approaching Joshua, eighty-five years old, and still as strong as he was then. And as we previously said, the believer would never know weak old age; "*Even though his outer man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day*" (2 Corinthians 4: 16).

The scholar Origen comments on Caleb's words, "*just as my strength was then, so now is my strength*" (Joshua 14: 16), saying: [A saint actually bears the same strength as before; in the new, as well as in the old things; in the gospels, as well as in the law; as though he is saying that he bears the same strength in the days of Joshua, as he used to, in the days of Moses; the alert heart apprehends the secrets of the two Testaments, with the same strength]¹.

4- Caleb, the striver:

"Just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in" (Joshua 14: 11)

¹ Ibid.

If Caleb got the promise in the days of Moses, he got it because, in his spiritual strength in the Lord, he says: *“I wholly followed the Lord my God”* (Joshua 14: 8); he was strong in following the commandment of the Lord; getting the promise increased his spiritual strength; and time could not make his zeal or his arms weaker; but he says: *“so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in”* (Joshua 14: 11); As though he is saying: [I am not claiming the inheritance while relaxing, but I am spiritually trained to strive, and to fight the forces of darkness; on how to come out of the wilderness, to enter the land of promise. I succeeded when Moses sent me to spy, and now I trust in God, to let me succeed to enter into the place I inherit...]. This trust and this strength is not his own, saying:

“For you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said.”(Joshua 14: 12)

Caleb’s strength is consistently strong to go out and to come in; namely, in spiritual war, through which he goes out of the shame of servitude, to enter into the glory of freedom. His life is going out and coming in, as one integral and consistent process; going out of the works of the old man, namely crucifying him, and coming in into those of the new man, namely enjoying his resurrection; a going out of the self (the ego), by crucifying it, and a coming into Jesus Christ, the Grantor of resurrection; A going out of the love of worldly things, and a coming into the heavenly life.

5- Caleb and the holy mountain:

“And therefore give me this mountain of which the Lord spoke in that day.” (Joshua 14: 12)

The scholar Origen says: [The Saint does not ask for a lowly thing, nor seeks what is in the bottom of lowlands; but asks for a high mountain, on the top of which are great and fortified cities. The Book truly says: *“The Anakim are there, and the cities are fortified”* (Joshua 14: 12). Therefore, that was his request; He used to know the art of war; according to the Scripture: *“A wise man scales the city of the mighty; and brings down the trusted stronghold”* (Proverb 21: 22). Do you think that the wise Solomon, intended by that to teach us that the wise man seizes cities, and brings down walls built of stones?! By cities and walls he meant dogmas and claims by which the heathen Philosophers build their defiled thoughts, against the divine law ... What are the cities that

the wise bring down, as they raise the word of truth? They are the cities of lies, that should be brought down by truth; according to the saying of the apostle: “*casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God*” (2 Corinthians 10: 5). Today, the very wise Caleb, stands before Joshua, to promise that he will be strong in war, ready for struggle; asking him for permission to attack the wise of the time, who confirm the lies instead of the truth; to contradict and overcome them, and to cast down all the buildings of their false claims. Seeing his zeal, Joshua, boldly and willingly, “*blessed him*” (Joshua 14: 13). You too, if you dedicated your life to studying and contemplating on the law of God, with the spirit of wisdom, you would be a heart (Caleb), meditating on God’s law; capable to bring down the great and fortified cities; namely, to cast down the claims of liars; and therefore to be worthy of the blessing of Joshua, and to receive ‘Hebron’ in him] ¹.

That mountain acquired by Caleb, was the holy Mountain, to be proclaimed at the end of time; “*to have all nations* (and the righteous) *flow to it*” (Isaiah 2: 2 – 4); namely, the Lord Christ Himself! This is our true inheritance that we yearn to enjoy!

6- His enjoyment of Hebron:

“Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance.” (Joshua 14: 13)

As we talked in the tenth chapter about the cities that were taken by Joshua, we saw him taking Hebron from its king (Joshua 10: 37); and said that the word ‘Hebron’ means (matrimony); After the soul was attached to the devil as her bridegroom, carrying his evil; features, and sharing his wicked thoughts and works, it became under the law of Joshua, as his bride, united with him, to bear his thoughts and features! That is the reward gained by the honest Caleb in following the Lord; to enter into a state of spiritual matrimony with our Lord Jesus Christ²!

The scholar Origen has another comment, saying: [‘Hebron’ means union or matrimony; and that might be the significance of that province. The double cave that was set by Abram, is found in this city, where he and the rest of the fathers together with their wives are buried: Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 23: 19); Isaac and Rebecca; Jacob and Lea. Therefore Caleb was worthy of gaining the remains of those fathers as inheritance. By his wisdom, his strength that in the days of Joshua, was

¹ *Ibid* 18: 3.

² *Ibid*.

the same as that he used to have in the days of Moses; he comprehended the meaning of that unity between the fathers and their wives; he comprehended why Sarah alone found rest beside Abraham, while Hagar and Caturah were denied this honor; and why Lea alone rested beside Jacob ... The scholar Origen probably believed that Caleb, with his wisdom, comprehended that by gaining Hebron, he is gaining the everlasting inheritance together with Jesus Christ, on the level of the unity between those fathers and their wives; but with a greater and deeper spiritual concept.

CHAPTER 15

THE PORTION OF JUDAH

If the west of the Jordan represents the Church of the New Testament; Judah occupies in it the place of prominence, as being the tribe from which the Word of God came incarnated. The lot came to it first; and Caleb the son of Jephunneh had his portion in the midst of the children of Judah.

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1- The portion of Judah:

In the division of the land of Gilead, east of the Jordan, they possessed through the law (that is to say in the days of Moses), the lot began by 'Reuben;' the firstborn according to the flesh. But here, as the division refers to the inheritance of the New Testament, there is no commitment to the first birthright according to the flesh, but to that according to the spirit. That is why the lot came first on the royal tribe (the tribe of Judah), from which our Lord Jesus Christ comes according to the flesh, "*The lion of the tribe of Judah*" (Revelation 5: 5). It was necessary for the first birth according to the flesh to disappear, and that according to the spirit to appear; as a proclamation that our Lord Christ would occupy the place of prominence as the Firstborn of humanity, in place of the first Adam; something for which the Holy Book has prepared through several symbols, as when Jacob took over the first birthright instead of Esau, Isaac, the son of the promise, instead of Ishmael ...etc. And now, having crossed the Jordan, and having got the new land as inheritance, our spiritual Firstborn proceeds as the Leader of the whole Church, Who grants her His feature; as through Him, She became "the Church of the firstborns". The first birthright in the New Testament does not deprive the others of that grace; as is the case according to the flesh, where only the one firstborn gets it.

I wish we do not seek to have our inheritance among the tribe of Reuben, he who "*tore his clothes*" (Genesis 37: 29), and lost his first birthright; but among that of the spiritual tribe of Judah, through abiding in the Lion coming from it; so as to be worthy of getting the first portion

of the inheritance of the New Testament. Let us approach Joshua, together with Judah, to acquire our portion in Him, and to take our lot, after the war stopped and we enjoyed peace; having been said concerning our flesh, “*The land rested from war*”!

The divine inspiration clarified the boundaries of Judah from every direction, something that bears deep spiritual concepts. Here we have in mind what the scholar Origen says: [Despite our inability to understand and to interpret every secret; we shall try our best, with the help of the grace of God] ¹.

From one aspect, the boundary of the portion of Judah is: “***The border of Edom at the wilderness of Zin southward***” (Joshua 15: 1). In our interpretation of the Book of Ezekiel, we saw that the word ‘Edom’ is taken from ‘Adam’, meaning (earthly) or (bloody), and that ‘Adam’ is intended to be ‘Esau’ or ‘Seir’²; referring to the evil one, who brings our heart down to dust, to let it live with earthly thoughts, with his bloody nature that loves fighting us. **St. Augustine** says: [Do not expect any peace, as the enemy will be always chasing you; if not with a clear anger, it would be with concealed shrewdness; that is why he is called a lion or a serpent. He was called a lion, because of its angry roar; and a serpent, because of his concealed shrewdness.] ³. So, if, in Jesus Christ, we are going to enjoy inheritance, yet the enemy is standing on the border, like Edom on the border of Judah, as though at the door, longing to deprive us of our heavenly nature, to bring us down to the love of the earthliness. He stands as an adversary seeking our perdition, and would never rest except with shedding our blood spiritually.

Before designating the boundaries of the portion of Judah, they started by revealing the presence of the border of Edom and the wilderness of Zin⁴; the later referring to temptation. No access to the land of Judah, to enjoy the inheritance, except after first, crossing the wilderness of temptation; the road is narrow and difficult, surrounded by consistent temptations; Yet all that, increase the strength of our strife; and amid the affliction, the Lord proclaims Himself, as the secret of our true comfort. That is why **St., Augustine** says: [Temptations and afflictions, even when numerous, is your way to perfection, and are not a cause for perishment]; and he says: [The bunch of grapes dangles from

¹ In Jos. Hom 19: 1.
(St Jerome: on Pshom 34).

² للمؤلف: حزقيال.

³ خواطر فيلسوف ص 234.

⁴ سفر العدد 1981.

the vine, and the olive fruit is attached to its branch; and as long as they are so connected, they would enjoy the open air; so that the grapes would never become wine, nor the olive fruit become oil; unless pressed by the press. Such was the state of mankind, whom God called before ages to make them in the likeness of His Son; who appeared more conspicuously in his Passion, as though a precious vine] ¹.

The Book completes its talk of the border of Judah as follows: ***“And their southern border began at the shore of the Salt Sea, from the bay that faces southward. Then it went out to the southern side of the Ascent of the Akrabbim, passed along to Zin, ascended on the south side of Kadesh Barnea, passed along to Hezron, went up to Adar, and went around to Karkaa.”*** (Joshua 15: 2, 3)

As though it says, that whoever wishes to enjoy the royal tribe will have to cross through those bitter places, to cross peacefully over to the inheritance. He will have to cross over Edom, Zin, the Salt Sea, and the Ascent of Akrabbim! What is meant by crossing the Salt Sea, but overcoming the disturbances of this life and its roundabouts; In the Salt Sea would be found, “Leviathan”, the marine serpent (Psalm 104: 26), that the Lord Christ destroyed through His entrance into the water, to crucify it in its dwelling place! Therefore, let us destroy the serpent through our crucifixion together with our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to cross over peacefully to our land of inheritance. As to the Ascent of Akrabbim, it refers to the battles of the enemy against us; as ‘Akrabbim’ means in Hebrew, (scorpions). God has given us the authority to tread over the serpents and the scorpions, and all the forces of darkness and nothing hurts us (Luke 10:16) . **The scholar Origen** says: [If we want to enter into the land of inheritance of the tribe of Judah, we have to practice that sort of ascent, in order to tread over and crush the scorpions on our way. That no doubt was the way crossed by Ezekiel, to whom the Lord said: *“You dwell among scorpions”* (Ezekiel 2: 6)] ².

These are the regions around the portion of the land of inheritance of Judah: consistent temptations (Zin); disturbance (the Salt Sea); wars of the devil as scorpions (Ascent of Akrabbim); and violence from (Edom). Yet, the inside is utterly joyful; where we encounter the waters of the fountain of (Beth Shemesh) (Joshua 15: 10), and (Jerusalem) the city of the Great King, and the symbol of the heavenly life.

¹ خواطر فيلسوف: ص 238، 239.

² In Jos. Hom 19: 3.

The scholar Origen says: [What does this sun (Shemesh) refer to? It is that of which is written: *“To you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness shall arise”* (Malachi 4: 2). As you start surpassing the Salt Sea, you will find yourself in the land of Judah, where the fountain of the sun is. What is this fountain? Surely it is that of which the Lord Christ said: *“Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life”* (John 4: 14). And as we encounter the fountain of the sun, we shall find the city; as it is written in the Book. It is said that in Egypt there is likewise a ‘Beth Shemesh’; yet that city in Egypt took this name from that sun which the heavenly father *“rises on the evil and the good”* (Matthew 5: 45); while that of Judah concerns only the saints, being the city of God, in which there is the fountain *“whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High”* (Psalm 46: 4)] ¹. We can therefore differentiate between Beth Shemesh of Egypt, and that within the border of Judah: The first is found in the soul that worship the stone idol of the sun, which have only the image of the sun, without its light or splendor; while Beth Shemesh of Judah represents the soul that becomes a home for the sun of righteousness, namely a temple for the Lord who enlightens her life; He who lets the water of the fountain of the Holy Spirit, flows in it; The prophet Ezekiel says: *“Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar”* (Ezekiel 47: 1). That is what the Book of Joshua called *“the water of Beth Shemesh”*; namely, the water that springs through the house of Christ, the sun of righteousness].

If Jerusalem came to be within the inheritance of the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18: 27); yet it is on the boundary between the two tribes; that formed together, later on, an independent kingdom (The Kingdom of Judah); and Judah enjoyed dwelling in Jerusalem (Joshua 15: 63); about which **St. Augustine** says: [That earthly Jerusalem is but a shadow of the heavenly Jerusalem] ². God has chosen Jerusalem to be the place where His name dwells (1 Kings 11: 13; 2 Kings 21: 4); the holy city where the throne of God is (Jeremiah 3: 16; etc.); and a sign of His dwelling in the midst of His people; that is why whenever He

¹ *Ibid* 19: 4.

² *On Ps.* 12.

intended to chastise His people, He threatened to destroy and devastate it (Jeremiah 9: 11, 13; 9: 27; Ezekiel 4: 5; Micah 3: 12). The prophets talked about it, as a center for messianic work, to which all nations shall return (Isaiah 2: 2, etc.; 66: 18 - 20; Micah 4: 1 - 3; Haggai 2: 7, etc.). And in the New Testament, the Lord Christ proclaimed His longing for its salvation; and became for the early Church, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, a center of Christianity, where the apostles and disciples meet ... Yet, the eyes of believers were more concentrated toward the Higher Jerusalem (Galatians 4: 26; Hebrew 12: 22; Revelation 14: 1; Revelation 21) as a goal for their worship] ¹.

It is amazing that the Book adds to the boundary of Judah as such: ***“This is the boundary of the children of Judah all around according to their families.” (Joshua 15: 12)***

The Book grants Judah, not only the spiritual firstborn status, and the waters of the fountain of Beth Shemesh, but also, that its boundary is to be “all around”. We know that a circle refers to eternity, having no beginning and no end ... Thus what Judah inherited, is the eternal life; namely the enjoyment of the heavenly feature, that is above all the boundaries of the world; as though, whoever enters spiritually into that tribe, through his union with the Lion who comes from it, sets forth to what is beyond world inheritance, and soars above all earthliness, to have his heart and all his boundaries all around!

Indeed, the tribe of Judah, as the royal tribe, bears the power inside it, through having the heavenly nature; even though surrounded by enemies on all sides: Moab on the east; Edom on the south; Amalek on the south-west (although a little far); and the Philistines on the west!

2- Caleb and Kirjath Arba:

In the last chapter, we saw how Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kinizzite, claimed his right promised to him by the Lord on the tongue of Moses; namely, the possession of the mountain, where the fortified cities are, and Hebron, meaning (matrimony). And now, having received Hebron -- also called ‘Kirjath Arba’ -- meaning (city of the four).

“Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak from there: Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi.” (Joshua 15: 14)

If Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kinizzite, who refers -- as we said -- to the heart that converted from despise and entered into glory; has obtained Hebron as a reward, to enter into a holy (matrimony), in

¹ Mckenzie: Dict. Of Bible, p. 431.

which the soul unites with her Groom forever; Hebron is also called 'Kirjath Arba'. The figure 4 refers to the world with its four corners: East, West, North, and South; and refers as well to the body taken from the earth of this world. He who has the holy heart, that converted to his eternal Groom, drive out of it the three sons of Anak, to let the Lord reign over it. It is not enough to have our hearts or our inner life holy; but we should behold our bodies with a holy way; as we present to the Groom our inner hearts, we should also present Him our bodies; so that man would work in his wholeness with harmony. **St. Gregory of Nyssa** likens man to a guitar that carries several strings, yet produces through the Holy Spirit, a harmonious piece of music that gives pleasure to God's heart.

The scholar Origen believes that "Anak" means (arrogant); "Sheshai" means (away from); namely, away from the Saints, and away from God, the Truth itself; "Ahiman" means (my brother is far from wisdom); and "Talmi" means (suspended over an abyss) ¹. Through these meanings, we can say that our Hebron, namely, our earthly body, if controlled by "Anak", namely, by the spirit of pride and arrogance; he would be controlled by three of his offspring, reigning together as kings over it: (getting away from God, the Truth; and hence from wisdom; something that makes man as though suspended over an abyss, or sloping into it). I wish we come to be like Caleb, driving out from ourselves the pride, the origin of the disease; so as not to be anymore away of God, the secret of our life; not to become deprived of His divine wisdom; and not subsequently be sloping into the abyss. On the contrary we return to God, to enjoy His wisdom, and to be lifted up by Him from the abyss, to the everlasting life.

3- Caleb and Debir:

"Then he went up from there to the inhabitants of Debir (formerly the name of Debir was 'Kirjath Sepher'). And Caleb said, 'He who attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give Achsah my daughter as wife'. So Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb took it; and he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife. Now it came about when she came to him, that she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. So she dismounted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, 'What do you wish?' She answered, 'Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the south, give me also springs of water'; so

¹ In Jos. Hom 15: 20.

he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.” (Joshua 15: 15 -- 19)

Caleb, as a representative of the holy heart, said that whoever strikes and takes ‘Kirjath Sepher’; namely, (city of the Book); to him he will give ‘Achsah’ his daughter a wife; His brother Othniel the son of Kenaz did that; He took Kirjath Sepher, that became ‘Debir’, namely, (utterance) or (ordinance), so he married Achsah. The word ‘Othniel’ means (God’s responds or listens); nobody can approach the ‘Kirjath’ of the Holy Book, nor to understand its deep secrets, unless God responds or listens to him; our understanding of the Book, is a gift or a grace from God, granted to those who seek it; and as Othniel got the Book, or Kirjath Sepher, it became Debir to him; namely, transformed from a literal Book, to utterance, inner understanding, and living ordinance in him... Namely, he converted from the killing literality of the law, to the Spirit, the grantor of life. His marriage to Achsah, the daughter of Caleb, means his attachment to the daughter of the holy life, which asks humanity to enter into (the city of the Book), to have God reveal its secrets to them. Achsah herself, as a daughter of the holy life in the Lord, also refers to the knowledge of spiritual secrets; It is as though Othniel, attached himself to the secrets of the Book, not only as a city to live in, but also as a wife, a partaker of his life!

What did Achsah, namely, the secrets of the divine Word, do to her husband Othniel, to whom the Lord responded? She asked her father for a field, as a blessing, to present to her husband. And again she dismounted from the donkey, to ask for springs to her husband; and her father gave her the upper and the lower springs. What a splendid portrait of the soul, attached to spiritual knowledge, a daughter of the holy life; through this daughter, the soul enjoys the field, namely, the entrance into the Holy Book, being the field in which she works on account of the Lord, and rejoice in the fruits of the Spirit. We see that the inner knowledge dismounts from the donkey, namely from caring for the body, in order to seek the springs of water, or the fruits of the Spirit; to be granted fruits of a higher heavenly level (the upper springs); and enjoy the fruits by which it lives during its sojourn here on earth (the lower springs).

4- Names of the cities:

The Book mentioned the names of the cities in the boundary of Judah; as though the divine inspiration intends to confirm that the inheritance is wide enough to him who seeks; and that, “*In the Father’s*

house, there are many mansions” (John 14: 2) ... I wish we believe and strive with great hope, to find in one of these cities, a mansion for ourselves.

5- The dwelling of the Jebusites amid the children of Israel:

“As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.” (Joshua 15: 63)

“To this day,” in the Holy Book means (to the end of days). So, will the Jebusites dwell in Jerusalem with the children of Judah to the end of days? If we interpret this spiritually, although bitter, yet it is an actual fact that the tares (the Jebusites), are to remain together with the wheat (the children of Judah) in the Church, namely in Jerusalem, up to the end of the world, when the time of harvest comes; then this will be separated from that. The Lord Christ advised: *“Let both grow together until the harvest, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them”* (Matthew 13: 29, 30). **The scholar Origen** says: [As you hear in the Bible, how the wheat grow together with the tares; likewise, in Jerusalem, namely the Church, there are the Jebusites who lead a bad life; those corrupted in their faith, as well as in their works, and all their ways of life. It is impossible to purify the church completely of every single sinner or unfaithful, as long as it is on earth. That does not imply that we should let those with obvious sins stay in the Church; but as far as those with concealed and hidden sins, there is no easy way to reveal them.]¹.

If the word ‘Jebusite’ means (to trample with feet)²; everyone of us should be aware, lest, in his heart, there would be something to be trampled by feet; any sin that could humiliate the heart, and defile its hidden sanctuary. I wish we have no Jebusites within us; those who walk in the heart as *swines that trample our pearls under their feet, then turn and tear us in pieces* (Matthew 7: 6).

¹ *Ibid* 21: 1.

² *Ibid*.

CHAPTER 16

THE PORTION OF EPHRAIM

After Judah, there was a lot for the tribe of Ephraim:

1- The border of the children of Ephraim according to their families 1 -- 9

2- The Canaanites dwelling among the Ephraimites 10

1- The border of the children of Ephraim according to their families:

The word 'Ephraim' means (the increasing fruits); as though that tribe embraces the congregation of believers, who receive the gift of Christ, His Holy Spirit, to dwell in them, and to grant them His increasing fruits. These indeed, are worthy of being connected with their brothers, the children of Judah; For, if Judah refers to the enjoyment of the union with the Lord Christ, who came from this tribe, and the reference to Him; the children of Ephraim, represent the increasing fruits in Jesus Christ, by His Holy Spirit, Who "*takes of what is His, and declares to us*" (John 16: 14); who grants us the features of the Lord Christ Himself: the love of Christ, His joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, etc.... (Galatians 5: 22); all that through bringing us into abidance in Christ, or our union with and in Him. Hence, the fruits of the spirit are inseparable from the union with God the Father in Jesus Christ. It is as though Ephraim has to be accompanied by, and attached to Judah. In other words, I wish every believer, referred to Ephraim, and has got the fruits of the Holy Spirit, would set forth, through these fruits, to a deeper union with the Lord Christ.

St. Jerome encourages us to attach ourselves to this tribe, as we have, together with it, a portion in the divine inheritance or the crown, saying: [You should also be an Ephraim; be fruitful, in order to produce the good works, and get the crown of the Lord]¹.

As far as the division of the land of promise is concerned, it is to be noticed that Ephraim and half of Manasseh, took the middle of Canaan (Samaria); where Shechem had been designated by Jacob to Joseph (Genesis 48: 21, 22; Joshua 24:32); and in it his bones were buried; it became a portion for Manasseh, while Shiloh became a portion

¹On Ps. Hom 34.

for Ephraim; Both Shechem and Shiloh have special spiritual memories for the old people. We shall speak here only of 'Shiloh', having been a portion for Ephraim; 'Shiloh' most probably meaning (the place of comfort), was about 9 miles north-east of Bethel, and 17 miles north of Jerusalem; might have been where 'Silon' is nowadays.

Ephraim enjoyed Shiloh, being the city that represents God's presence amid His people; it has been chosen by Joshua as a location for the Ark and the Tabernacle; and in it Joshua divided the land among the tribes (Joshua 18: 1, 8 - 10); The Tabernacle remained in Shiloh for about 300 years. In the time of Judges, the people used to gather there together every year to hold the feast, and probably to offer the sacrifice, as a sign of their joy in the Lord who dwells among them. While the girls of Shiloh were dancing in celebration of one of these feasts, the Benjamites caught 200 of them and married them (Judges 21: 19 - 23; 1 Samuel 1-3). Shiloh used to be the dwelling place of Eli, the High Priest, and of the prophet Samuel; but has been rejected by the Lord, to become an example before all the people; If God has loved Shiloh all those years, yet by persisting on doing evil, He deserted it and allowed for its destruction. That is why God warned Jerusalem later, against becoming like its sister Shiloh! It was like someone who used to enjoy the abundance of God's love and His free gifts; his judgment would be greater, if he persists on his rebellion and defiled life. God rejected the Sanctuary of Shiloh; the Ark did not return there, but was taken by David to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6); and the Tabernacle was moved to Nob in the south (1 Samuel 21: 1 -- 9); and from there to Gibeon, then to Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 1: 3, 4); there the prophet Abijah dwelt (1 Kings 14: 1 - 16). It seems that Shiloh was in ruin in the days of the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 7: 12 - 14 ; 26: 6, 9); as well as in the days of St. Jerome. The Danish excavations (1030 -- 1032) revealed that Shiloh had been destroyed about the year 1050 B. C., and stayed that way for several centuries; most probably by the hands of the Philistines after the conquest of Afik¹.

If we have in us the fruits of God's Spirit, and are counted as members in the spiritual tribe of Ephraim. "Shiloh" would be inside us -- of which we should be aware not to have it ruined or destroyed, because of negligent or corrupt life on our part, that would let the Lord take away his blessing, and to seek another Jerusalem in its place! Let us be

¹ Mckenzie, p. 807.

apprehensive of God's presence in us, so as not to get deprived of Him within us forever.

2- The dwelling of the Canaanites among them:

Just as Judah have let the Jebusites dwell among them; so also the Ephraim left the Canaanites to dwell among them in Gezer; the Book says:

“They did not drive out the Canaanites who dwell in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwell the Ephraimites to this day, and have become forced laborers.” (Joshua 16: 10)

The scholar Origen warns us against those Canaanites who dwell among the Ephraimites, saying: [If you truly bear the fruits of the Lord (like Ephraim), and see someone who lives negligently and disorderly, be sure that he is one of the Canaanites. So, if you fail to drive him out of the Church, as the Ephraimites failed to drive the Canaanites from among them, you should at least follow the principle of the apostle: *“We commend you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us”* (2 Thessalonians 3: 6) ¹.

The scholar Origen believes that ‘Gezer’ means (a narrow union), and that the Canaanites represent the flesh, and Ephraim represent the spirit. If the soul lets the flesh set its evil lusts free, it would be as though united with it in Gezer, namely, through a (narrow union), which makes of us, forced laborers. Therefore, I wish our soul in its union with the flesh, would never enter with it into Gezer, namely, into a narrow union, but receive it sanctified in the Lord, so that man would live wholly free in body and spirit, and would not be embittered by lusts of the body nor sins of the spirit.

Anyway, although the portion of Ephraim has been considered the richest and the most beautiful, yet, it harbored a danger, represented by the presence of the Canaanites. Thus, together with the gift, there would always be oppression!

¹ In Jos. Hom 21: 2.

CHAPTER 17

THE PORTION OF MANASSEH

After Ephraim, there was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh; the daughters of 'Zelophehad' sought to be given their portion according to the Lord's command to the prophet Moses (Numbers 27); the children of Joseph were known for their zeal to get a greater portion through strife.

1- The portion of Manasseh the firstborn of Joseph	1- 12
2- The portion of the daughters of 'Zelophehad'	3- 4
3- The Canaanites stay among the children of Manasseh	13
4- The zeal of the children of Joseph	14- 18

1- The portion of Manasseh the firstborn of Joseph:

As far as the spiritual inheritance is concerned, there is no commitment to the firstborn status according to the flesh, but to that of the spirit; so Judah occupied the first status, although he is not the firstborn according to the flesh; and now we find that Manasseh comes after Ephraim, who is younger according to the flesh. The firstborn status has been taken away from Manasseh and given to Ephraim to enjoy inheritance, because Ephraim means the (increasing fruits), while Manasseh means (forgetting the world). We can say that Joseph's children, Ephraim and Manasseh, represent one integral work: Ephraim offers the positive side, namely, fulfillment by the fruit of the spirit, and entrance into the heavenly life; while Manasseh offers the negative side, namely, forgetting the world with its pleasures. There is indeed, no fulfillment with the heavenliness, without forsaking the love of the worldliness, nor there is forgetting the worldliness without enjoyment of the heavenliness; yet the positive side has the priority.

In more than one occasion, the two tribes: Ephraim and Manasseh are connected together; The Psalmist says:

"Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up your strength, and come and save us!" (Psalm 80: 2)

And **St. Augustine** says: [God appears before Ephraim and Manasseh ... You appear before him who is fruitful; as well as before him who forgets, not to go back, but to have the memory that saves him]¹.

¹ On Ps. 80.

St. Jerome comments on the word “Manasseh”, saying: [It means (forgetting) ... The son who took his inheritance, wasted it, and forgot what is mine; and now he remembers Me; I call him ‘Manasseh’, from forgetting; because he did not forget to return to his Father] ¹. It is as though the tribe of Manasseh refers to someone who returned to his father after forgetting him for so long; but he remembered him and would never again forget him.

The son who returns to his father, enjoys the portion of Manasseh, that includes in its border the city of ‘Shechem’, that was given to the Levites, and was chosen as one of the cities of refuge (Joshua 20: 7). Shechem has holy memories in the minds of the old people; as near it, Abraham set his tents (Genesis 12: 6); Jacob purchased a lot of land to set his tent (Acts 7: 16); Joseph’s brothers herded their flocks of sheep (Genesis 37: 12, 13); and Joshua read the Book of the law (Joshua 8: 30), and his farewell speech (Joshua 24: 1)...And as God hated Shiloh because of its transgressions, He also hated Shechem, where an altar for the Baal was erected (Judges 8: 33, 9, 4); There ten tribes of the children of Israel rebelled; made ‘Jeroboam’ their king (1 Kings 12); and Shechem the capital of Israel (1 Kings 12: 25), and a center for the Samaritans....; It turned into a symbol of dissension, and departure of the spirit of love and unity among the people of Israel.

‘Shechem’ in Hebrew means (mountain shoulder); probably because of its location at the foot of the mountain of Gerizim (Judges 9: 7), in the valley between it and the mountain of Ebal. With the beginning of the twentieth century, there was little doubt that it was located at the location of ‘Tel-Elbalata’, one and a half miles east of Nables, that some believe that it was itself the old Shechem; this later was 41 miles north of Jerusalem, and 5 miles and a half south east of Samaria. In this region, there are few Samaritans, with a special temple, where they worship on the Sabbaths, as well as a school for learning the Samaritan language] ².

2- Portion of the daughters of Zelophehad:

In our interpretation of the Book of Numbers³, we saw how the daughters of Zelophehad came to enjoy the inheritance of their father; and how, because of them the statute of inheritance in Israel was changed. Their story carried spiritual symbols that we already dealt with in some detail.

¹ *On Ps. Hom 34.*

² *Mckenzie, p. 797; New Westminster Dict. Of Bible, p. 861.*

³ سفر العدد 1981 أصحاح 27.

3- The Canaanites stay among the children of Manasseh:

If the tribe of Ephraim were not able to drive out the Canaanites, and left them to dwell in their midst in Gezer; so also their brothers the children of Manasseh did, and left the Canaanites to dwell in the land, and put them to forced labor (Joshua 17: 12, 13).

4- The zeal of the children of Joseph:

The two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, being both the children of Joseph, spoke together to Joshua, saying:

“Why have you given us but one lot and one portion to inherit, since we are a great people, inasmuch as the Lord has blessed us until now ? “Joshua 17: 14)

Their getting together and speaking with a spirit of unity, got them the admiration of Joshua; as there is nothing that makes our prayers holy in the eyes of the Lord, and our petitions accepted by Him, like getting together in one spirit in the Lord, and our talking to Him with one heart; just like the union of several members to one head! By this He grants us His mercies to enjoy a greater portion. The Lord Himself confirmed that if two or three of us get together in His name, He shall be in their midst.

The children of Joseph were privileged by their holy zeal in the Lord; through their union, the increasing spiritual fruits (Ephraim) encountered with the forgetting of love and worries of the world (Manasseh); to make the heart aflame, yearning for a greater portion of the heavenliness. . Through this, *“the Kingdom is taken by force”* (Matthew 11: 12). The Kingdom of heaven is not granted to the negligent and the lukewarm, but to the hearts that believe in their right in God, those that incessantly strive, to enjoy a greater heavenly portion.

The secret of the success of the children of Joseph, lies not only in their unity in the Lord, and in their strife filled with a holy zeal, but also in their realization of their new position and their right in the Lord; saying: *“We are a great people, inasmuch as the Lord has blessed us until now”*. Indeed, how great it is for the believer, to realize that, even if he is nothing by himself, yet, in Jesus Christ, he is (a great people), blessed by the Lord. He harbors in his heart and body a great people, of feelings, emotions, will, and abilities, ... etc. all sanctified in the Lord. In him there are mighty energies that are the gifts of God who blesses him. Through this realization, the believer, as a son to God, seeks to enjoy more; as whoever has got, will be given more, and whoever has not, what he already has will be taken from him.

“Joshua answered them, ‘If you are a great people, then go up to the forest country and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and (the Rephaites) the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you.” (Joshua 17: 15)

The scholar Origen says that the word ‘Perizzites’ means (giving fruit), and the ‘Rephaites’ means (negligent mothers). So, if the children of Joseph asked Joshua for a greater portion, he opened before them the forest country to go up and clear a place for themselves, by cutting the fruitless trees, and those with bad fruits, and planting instead good and fruitful trees. The inheritance is to be realized on two aspects: crushing evil, and practicing goodness in the Lord; rejecting the works of the old man, and enjoying those of the new man! Let us drive out the Perizzites, who although they give fruits, yet they are those of the deadly evil; then, let us bring ‘Ephraim’ instead, who has the (productive Spirit). Let us also drive out the Raphaites, the (negligent mothers), who produce love and pleasures of the world, and bring instead the children of Manasseh, who forget all worldly love!

If our heart is still a coarse land (forest), that is because it is under the control of the Perizzites, those who produce evil fruits, and the Raphaites, mothers of the weak and negligent thoughts, in the spiritual strife ... But we, by Jesus, in place of the coarse land, there will be a paradise of God, where there are no evil fruits, nor a place for negligence; but in it are the children of Ephraim and Manasseh, the good fruits and the rejection of the worldliness.

The scholar Origen comments on those words of Joshua, saying: [Let us make the mountain in us alive; by uprooting the trees without value and without fruits, to plant instead a new field, that is constantly renewed, to harvest a crop, “*some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty*” (Matthew 13: 8 - 23). About this teaching the Holy Book also says: “*And now, the ax is laid to the root of the trees, Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire*” (Matthew 3: 10). That was what Joshua the son of Nun taught our ancestors, concerning the barren trees that should be cut down, and that was what the Lord God commanded in His Holy Book] ¹.

¹ In Jos. Hom. 22: 5.

CHAPTER 18

THE PORTION OF BENJAMIN

Unfortunately, as much as the three tribes “Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh”, raced to enjoy the greatest possible portion of the inheritance, the rest of the tribes were negligent.

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| 1- Negligence of the seven tribes | 1- 10 |
| 2- The portion of the Benjamites | 11- 28 |

1- Negligence of the seven tribes:

“Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of meeting there. And the land was subdued before them. But there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance. Then Joshua said to the children of Israel: ‘How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you?’ “ (Joshua 18: 1 - 3)

As ‘Shiloh’ came to represent God’s presence in the midst of His people, there the tabernacle of meeting was set up, and sacrifices to the Lord were offered. That is why the whole congregation assembled with Joshua in the presence of God, to see that the land was subdued before them, and that the inheritance was already set. It is a living portrait of how we, as the Church of God and His people; should assemble together with and in the true Head, as members of His body (Ephesians 5: 3), in order to realize our new possibilities: the land is subdued, our body is sanctified for the Lord, and our whole life became His, to inherit as His possession, and for us to inherit His glories in the true Shiloh -- the Church of the New Testament. There we do not set a tabernacle of meeting, but the Holy Spirit in us turns us into His holy temple; we do not inherit a land taken away from human kings, but everything is subdued before us, to inherit the heavenliness, and to enjoy the everlasting Kingdom.

It was hard on Joshua’s heart to see how negligent some of his people were, who have crossed over the Jordan, brought down the walls of Jericho, defeated Ai with its king and inhabitants, and overcame all the adversary cities ... Everything was set, and nothing remained except for the rest of the tribes to receive their inheritance ! The Lord has set the banquet, invited the guests, who have nothing to do except to come to enjoy it; yet they were unwilling to come (Matthew 22: 3). That is what

brings grief to the heart of our true Joshua, who prepared everything for us, did not let us in need of anything; fought for our sake and conquered, died and rose to make us rise with Him; opened up the doors of paradise before our human nature, that was, for a long time, stranger to heaven; and offered us His Holy Spirit a support and helper; So we have no more excuse. ...The Kingdom became very close to us, yet, we are still negligent to enter into His inheritance that He granted us.

Joshua commanded them to pick out from among them three men from each tribe, to rise and go through the land, survey it according to their inheritance, and come back to him (Joshua 18: 4). Joshua designated their tasks for them: “to rise, to go through the land, to survey it according to their inheritance, and finally to come back to him to divide it among them”. Who are these men? And what are these tasks? Those men picked out from the tribes, represent in the life of man three aspects: thought, talk, and work. So the whole Church stands, as though it is the seven tribes; for each of its members to present his thoughts, words and behavior, in the hands of our living Jesus, who is capable of sanctifying us; those three men becoming a sign of our sanctity in Jesus Christ by His Holy Spirit. If we are judged for every hidden thought, lust, or look (Matthew 5: 28), for every idle word (Matthew 12: 36), and for every wicked behavior; we would be deprived of his everlasting inheritance. On the contrary, if we have these energies sanctified, we would be crowned and would inherit forever!

As to works, they have first to “rise”... Approaching our Joshua, by our inner thought, our tongue, and the rest of our members, He would set them in Him, as holy tools, that practice His resurrected life, as a life for us. Let us then approach, with all what we have, the true Joshua, the One capable of granting us the resurrection, as a continuous daily process; in order to live according to His life, and to bear His features in us, and to be worthy of the fellowship of His glories! And as I often said, the Book of Joshua, as the Book of inheritance, is the Book of resurrection; there is no inheritance without the inner life, resurrected in and by Him.

After resurrection, He says: “go through the land”; namely, set forth to the land of inheritance; We are invited, after having enjoyed the secret of burial and resurrection in Baptism; and are enjoying resurrection with every new day, through the continuous daily renewal; to go through the holy land, namely, to taste the pledge of heaven, while we are still on earth. He then told them to “survey” it, namely, to realize

its dimensions as far as they could, and to recognize its incomprehensible secrets; then finally to “come back” to Joshua ... Every time we discover the secrets of the eternal life, we should come back to our Jesus, to enter into His depths, and to live in Him on new levels, until we encounter Him face to face. He probably meant by coming back to Joshua, to divide the land, coming back to Him in the great day, to encounter Him as the Grantor of inheritance, for each one of us to enjoy his everlasting portion!

2- The portion of Benjamin:

The tribe of Benjamin, although counted as the smallest in number of all the tribes, yet its lot among the seven tribes came the first. *“The territory of their lot came out between the children of Judas and the children of Joseph”* (Joshua 18: 11). Benjamin, the youngest of Jacob’s children had a special position in the heart of his brother Joseph; being his only brother from his father and mother; He gave him a double portion, when he came to Egypt with his brothers; and not bearing to see him, he went to his chambers and bitterly wept! These same emotions passed on to their children. Yet, later on, the tribe of Benjamin got merged with the tribe of Judah, to form together the Kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem, that was within the portion of Benjamin, to become its capital. The merging of Benjamin with Judah was not a strange thing; as Benjamin, meaning (the right hand), refers to the Lord Christ, who comes from the tribe of Judah, and who sits on His Father’s right hand.

CHAPTER 19

THE PORTIONS OF THE REST OF THE TRIBES

After Benjamin got its portion, the lot came to decide those of the other tribes; and finally Joshua the son of Nun got his among the children of Israel.

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| 1- The portions of the rest of the tribes | 1 -- 48 |
| 2- The portion of Joshua the son of Nun | 49 -- 51 |

1- The portion of the rest of the tribes:

We said that the scholar Origen believes that everything that happened in the land of promise, carries a special symbol of the heavenly life, even though we may not apprehend it now. Anyway, the rest of the land was divided among the following six tribes by order:

The tribes of Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and lastly Dan.

If you do not find a place for yourself among the previously mentioned tribes, you should seek to get referred to one of the rest: As the tribe of 'Simeon' meaning (a listener), embraces those who listen to the commandment, and obey God; that of 'Zebulun' meaning (a dwelling place), embraces those whose hearts open to God as His dwelling place; that of 'Issachar', meaning (reward), refers to those who seek the heavenly reward; that of 'Asher' meaning (joyful), embraces those filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit; and finally that of 'Dan' meaning (to judge), embraces those who judge themselves, and not the others¹.

2- The portion of Joshua the son of Nun:

“When they had made an end of dividing the land as an inheritance according to their borders, the children of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nun.” (Joshua 19: 49)

It is not strange, for Joshua to wait to get his own portion among the people of God, after they enjoy theirs; not out of lack of interest in the inheritance, but because he counts what everyone gets as though it is his own; he waits to occupy his portion among them, so that the people themselves would be his portion. That is a living portrait of the way of thinking of Christ Himself, who counts what we all possess as His own,

¹ سفر العدد 1981 ص 15.

being our Head that is glorified in His honored body. ... He remains as though the last of all, to rejoice in all His elect, His fellows in the eternal inheritance.

Concerning this, **the scholar Origen** says: [What beauty and humility does that phrase reveal about Joshua!! He was truly worthy to bear the name 'Joshua', our Lord and Savior. The Book says:

"The children of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nun. According to the word of the Lord, they gave him the city which he asked for, 'Timnath Serah' in the mountain of Ephraim; and he built the city and dwelt in it." (Joshua 19: 49, 50)

He was the one who gave the inheritance to all the children of Judah, to Ephraim and to half of the tribe of Manasseh; he is the one who gave the inheritance to Caleb the son of Jephunneh; and who sent three men from each tribe, to go through the land, to set the plan of division, and to come back to put it in his hands. He is the one who decided the fate of all, yet he let himself have the last place! Why was that? That was to confirm that he would be the first of all (Matthew 19: 30). He did not take the inheritance by himself, but, as the Book says: *"The children of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nun"* (Joshua 19: 49). *"All these things happened to them as examples"* (1 Corinthians 10: 11), that is also given to us, to take notice of the principles that Joshua followed in his works; according to the saying: *"Be more humble, to become greater, and to gain God's pleasure"*

(Sirach 3: 7); and *"If you are chosen a ruler, do not get haughty, but let yourself be as one of them"* (Sirach 32: 10). Behold how Joshua ruled the people: Although he was the one who brought them into the holy land, the land of promise; and was the successor of Moses; yet, he did not allow himself to take his portion of the land by himself, but waited to get it from the people. He is the ruler of the people; yet, being worthy of his name, he built the city he got, to let it be worthy of being God's gift, and a spiritual inheritance]¹.

If Joshua symbolizes the Lord Christ, I wish we do like the children of Israel: to present to our Joshua a portion of land among us; to offer him our heart, the center of our life, to receive it as His land; to build in it His holy city, to dwell in it (Joshua 19: 50). If we can not build in us a city for Him, as the Most High does not dwell in buildings

¹ In Jos. Hom 24: 2.

set by hands, He, by His Holy Spirit, will set in us His own fortified spiritual city to dwell, turning our heart into His holy heaven. That is what the Lord Himself confirmed, by saying: *“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him”* (John 14: 23).

THE THIRD SECTION

**THE CITIES OF REFUGE
AND
THE CITIES OF THE LEVITES**

(Chapters 20 to 22)

CHAPTER 20

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

We have already dealt with the statutes of the cities of refuge, in our interpretation of the Book of Numbers (Chapter 35).

CHAPTER 21

THE CITIES OF THE LEVITES

The Levites were denied a portion in the land of inheritance, to have the Lord Himself as their portion and their only inheritance; and as we previously said, they acquire God as their wisdom, their righteousness, and their redemption, etc... Yet, though they are denied the land, yet God gave them 48 cities, to live among all the tribes, to testify to Him by the law of God; as though they are lamps that emit His divine light on all the tribes, to enlighten all the congregation by God dwelling among them.

1- The Levites demand the cities with their common-lands 1 - 3

2- The Levite cities divided among the tribes by lot 4- 24

3- God's promises fulfilled 43- 45

1- The Levites demand the cities with their common-lands:

“Now the heads of the fathers of the Levites came near to Eliazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel. And they spoke to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying: ‘The Lord commanded through Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with their common-lands for our livestock. So the children of Israel gave to the Levites from their inheritance, at the commandment of the Lord, these cities and their common-lands.’ (Joshua 21: 1 - 3)

The priests and the Levites, represented by the heads of their fathers, came to demand their rights to dwell in the midst of the whole congregation; and not isolated from them. Being a living member in the congregation, and their minister who works on their account in the Lord, a priest should not create a barrier between himself and them, otherwise his vitality would be lost, his mission would stop, and his people would stumble. If he is a priest of God, yet he is a priest for God's people, in the Lord, the greater High Priest. And as the greater High Priest prayed amongst us, as one of us, in order to embrace and lift us up to His heavens; so it is fitting for every priest in the Lord, to live not isolated

from the holy congregation, so that all would enjoy together the everlasting inheritance. From another aspect, living in their midst, he should not get with them a portion of the land, lest he would be distracted from his spiritual mission. The scholar Origen says: [Not getting a portion of the land, while living among the children of Israel who got theirs, the Priests and the Levites would get from their congregation the material things that they do not have; and the congregation, in return would get from them the heavenly things, they need ... Unless the Priests and the Levites receive their material needs from their congregation, they would not be able to keep away from world commitments, to dedicate themselves to the word and the law of God; in which case you yourself are in danger. The light of knowledge in them would dim, just as when a lamp is short in oil; a case to which the words of the Lord apply: that *“If the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch”* (Matthew 15: 14); and also: *“If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness ? ”* (Matthew 6: 23).]¹

2- The Levite cities divided among the tribes by lot:

The same way the division of the land and cities among the tribes by lot -- reveals certain spiritual concepts, and shadows of the heavenly life; according to the scholar Origen, what took place in the land of promise, carry true shadows of spiritual locations, and exalted glories, unutterable by man, that the believers would gain in eternity -- so also the division of the Levite cities among the tribes by lot, was not haphazard nor meaningless; but we notice the following:

The lot came out for the Priests of the rest of the children of ‘Kohath’, of ‘Gershon’, of ‘Merari’, according to their level, in harmony with that of their tribes. Occupying an exalted spiritual position, the cities of the priests related to the families of the ‘Kohathites’, and the children of ‘Aaron’ the priest, came to be a portion of Judah, the tribe that represents the new spiritual leadership; on account of the incarnation of the Word of God from it; and whose location was all the time to the east of the camp². Those related to the rest of the children of ‘Kohath’, enjoyed their cities among the portion of Ephraim, that represents the

¹ In Jos. 17: 3.

² سفر العدد: ص 23.

(increasing spiritual fruits). Those related to the children of ‘Gershon’, had their cities by lot among the families of the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and half the tribe of Manasseh in Bashan. Those related to the children of ‘Merari’, who represent the bitter aspect of the cross¹, had their cities among the tribe of Reuben, who lost his firstborn status to the tribe of Judah.... and so on.

¹ المرجع السابق: ص 30.

CHAPTER 22

AN ALTAR WITH NO SACRIFICE

Then Joshua called the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, those who represent the Church of the Old Testament, that strove in the days of Moses under the law, and with love partook of the strife of the New Testament; Joshua called them to grant them their inheritance, after all the rest of the tribes got theirs. He did not send them away empty-handed, but said to them:

“Return with much riches to your tents, with very much livestock, with silver, with gold, with bronze, with iron, and with very much clothing. Divide the spoils of your enemies with your brethren.”
(Joshua 22: 8)

Men of the Old Testament share the inheritance with us, and enjoy with us the divine gifts and the fellowship of glories.

Some see in that action a prophecy about the anticipated return of the Jews to the Christian faith, in the end of days, after the fullness of the Church of the Gentiles; according to the words of the apostle: *“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved”* (Romans 11: 25, 26).

As to building a replica of the great altar of the Lord on the other side of the Jordan, although not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifices; this refers to the great temple of the Jews, which, by the sacrifice of the New Testament, carried the appearance but not the essence; and being without burnt offerings nor a sacrifice, it became not more than an image. The tribes that represented the Old Testament, acknowledged that the true altar is the one set, where Joshua is; while the other altar is just a witness between men of the two testaments, a sign of the unity between them... But actually, there is only one true altar, one Shepherd, and one flock, where the true Joshua dwells among them.

THE FOURTH SECTION

THE FAREWELL ADDRESS

(Chapters 23, 24)

CHAPTER 23

DELIVERING THE TALENT OF FAITH

The task of the successful shepherd concentrates on delivering the talent of faith, vivid and practical throughout his ministry; for the generations to follow and receive from him the spirit of straightforward faith, translated in a vivid flaring worship, and a practical behavior in the Lord ... And here, Joshua, at the end of his life, is calling all the elders, heads, judges, and officers of Israel, to deliver to them his farewell commandments, that conformed with his faith, worship, and practical behavior; hence had their activity... Indeed the message of the Church is to keep the talent of faith, to deliver it along the generations, a vivid thought, a spiritual worship, and a behavior in the Lord.

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|---|---------------|
| 1- Reminding them of what God has done to them | 1- 5 |
| 2- Reminding them of God's commandments | 6 - 8 |
| 3- Reviving the spirit of hope | 9 - 11 |
| 4- Warning them against spiritual relapse | 12- 16 |

1- Reminding them of what God has done to them:

"You have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all the nations because of you, for the Lord your God is He who has fought for you. See, I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, as far as the Great Sea westward." (Joshua 23: 3, 4)

It is wonderful, for a shepherd to forget all about himself, even at the last moments of his life. Joshua does not remind them of his honest care, his bearing of their troubles, nor his watching over them; but concentrates their eyes on God who performed miracles for their sake; fought for them, and cared for giving them the inheritance. When the shepherd's heart flares for the salvation of his flock, and yearns to see them greater than himself, as far as eternal glory is concerned, he does not speak of himself, but of God's salvation work, in order to make every heart aflame with the love of God, and to set forth with every soul toward the heavenliness, longing to gain its portion in the everlasting inheritance.

2- Reminding them of God's commandments:

The first words of God to Joshua, as he received the spiritual leadership were: *“Be strong and of good courage ... Only be strong and very courageous ... Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage”* (Joshua 1: 6, 7, 9). These divine words remained echoing in Joshua’s ears, uttering them by his tongue, keeping them in his mind, and embracing them in his heart, being his divine treasure. And now, in the moments of his departure of this world, he finds nothing more valuable than to deliver the talent he received as it is, to present it with his tongue, as he did during his life; saying:

“Only be strong and very courageous that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left.”(Joshua 1: 7)

The essence of the tradition or the holy delivery, is to present to the future generation, the word of God with no deviation, as we received and lived it, and as the previous generation have received and vividly lived. Here, Joshua presents what he received from Moses -- the Book of the law, in order to revive in them the spirit of hope and strength: *“Be very courageous”*.

Here, we want to confirm that the tradition we receive and deliver, are not something new beside the Bible; but it is in essence, the Holy Bible, proclaimed in the Book we received, in the life of worship that we practice, in our practical behavior, and in our dealings with others.

3- Reviving the spirit of hope:

The Church tradition or the holy delivery does not stop at just delivering the Holy Book isolated from Church life, that testifies to the Bible; but it is fitting to present it as a Book inspired by the Spirit; vivid and active; proclaimed in the life of the Church, especially in its spirit filled with hope. That is what we feel in the farewell words of Joshua the son of Nun; setting in his listeners the spirit, that he experienced and practiced; saying:

“For the Lord has driven out from before you great and strong nations: but as for you, no one has been able to stand against you to this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the Lord your God is He who fights for you, as He has promised you. Therefore take diligent heed to yourselves that you love the Lord your God.” (Joshua 23: 9 -- 11)

He is reviving in them the spirit of hope through the experience they lived, in that the Lord God has driven out from before them great

and strong nations ... It is good for man to remember his persistent weaknesses, in order to walk by the spirit of humility; Yet at the same time, he should not forget God's works with him; having driven out from before him great and strong sins, that had the upper hand on him for a long time! Let us thank Him for His goodness to us, and beseech Him to consummate it. Concerning this, **father Isaac the Syrian** says: [No gift with no increase except that with no thanksgiving]. That is why many people do wrong when they confess their trespasses and weaknesses, without also acknowledging God's works with them! **St. Augustine** confirms that it is fitting for us to confess on two angles: Thanking God for his goodness, and accusing ourselves of our weaknesses; saying: [We confess to God in our praise for Him, or in our accusation of ourselves; Both are a good confession, both in rebuking ourselves, we who are not without sin, and in praise for God, who is without sin] ¹. **St. Ambrose** says: [Beware not to oppose His commandments, so as not to fall in what the rebellious Jews fell; to whom He said: "*We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; We mourned for you, and you did not weep*" (Luke 7: 32) ². Therefore, let us listen to the joyful flute of the Lord, and dance spiritually, praising Him for the abundance of His goodness; He who drove out nations from our inner hearts; and let us also listen to His mourning on our sins, and weep, so that He may have compassion on us, to drive out every remnant of them within our souls!

Having presented to us an actual portrait of God's work with us, to revive our hope, he confirmed: "***But as for you, no one has been able to stand against you to this day***" (Joshua 23: 9); as though he is recalling God's promise to him at the beginning of his leadership: "*No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life*" (Joshua 1: 5). That promise might have been to Joshua, but actually it was a promise to the whole people along the generations ... a divine promise that revives our hope in the Lord, who defends us, and would never let anyone have the authority to stand before us, unless it had been given him from above; according to the words of the Lord Christ to Pilate: "*You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above*" (John 19: 11).

What is the meaning of: "***One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the Lord your God is He who fights for you, as He promised you***"? If the figure 1000, as we previously said, refers to the

¹ الحب الرعوي ص 382.

² الحب الرعوي ص 365.

heavenliness or the spirituals, it here refers to what is expressed by the apostle Paul as: *“the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 6: 12). If we, because of our weakness, compared to the possibilities of the devil, are counted as ‘one’ against ‘thousand’ yet, by the Lord on our side, we can drive that thousand away. That is the faith of the prophet Elijah, who said to his servant ‘Gehazi’, when Aram sent horses and chariots and heavy forces to surround the city to captivate the prophet: *“Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with him”* (2 Kings 6: 12). *“And Elijah prayed and said: ‘Lord I pray, open his eyes that he may see’; then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elijah”* (2 Kings 6: 17). I wish we do not fear the devil and all his hosts, as the Lord is fighting for us, to bring us to the perfection of his eternal glory. The devil is indeed horrible, because of his violent tricks, and the heaviness of sins by which he presses on man; yet he has no authority over us if we walk in the Lord, and carry in us His fiery Spirit; to have *“the authority to trample over the scorpions, the serpents, and all the hosts of the enemy”*. St. John Chrysostom speaks about the possibilities the believer has against the devil and his fearful tricks: [If the devil sees you attached to heaven and watchful, he would not dare even to stir in you], and [The pure life would close the mouth of the devil himself, and make him dumb] ¹.

The secret of our hope is the Lord our God, who commits us to pay Him back, love for His love: *“Therefore, take diligent heed to yourselves, that you love the Lord your God”* (Joshua 23: 11) ².

4- Warning them against spiritual relapse:

After talking to them of the positive aspects, namely, of God’s love, proclaimed through His persistent works for them, together with His divine commandments as their support and the secret of their hope, he started to talk to them of the negative aspect, namely, their commitment to beware against spiritual relapse, that can turn their spiritual conquest in the Lord into a horrible defeat, because of their connection to sins and transgressions, instead of connection to the Lord, the secret of their conquest; saying:

“Or else, if indeed you go back and cling to the remnant of these nations-- these that remain among you -- and make marriages

¹ In Philip. Hom. 4.

² الحب الأخوي: طبعة 1964، ص 84.

with them, and go in to them and they to you, Know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the Lord your God has given you” (Joshua 23: 12, 13)

When those nations with their violent defilements, were at their highest might, the people were feeling the need for God’s protection; and God fought for them; But as the remnants of those nations became weak forced laborers in their midst, danger began to threaten them, through making marriages with them, that could lead believers to deviate from worshipping God to paganism with all its defilement. Accordingly we say that, when sin fiercely attacks man, he resorts to God to give him authority over it; but when it humbly crawls to him, it enters through its pretense of weakness, into his heart; in which case man could be deceived, and could lose the precious possibilities of God for victory! We should fear sins that seem to us harmless and simple, as they are more capable of captivating the soul, than those that we think are big and dangerous! I wish, as we by the Lord, drive away the transgressions, would not leave remnants of them in the heart, to deceive us and draw our heart away from God, and to let us lose the secret of our life!

As we accept sin, and enter with it into relationships as though marriage relationships, God Himself would deliver us to it to humiliate us; so that the lust of our heart would itself turn into the secret of our perishing; and would be to us a snare and a trap. While we think that we are gaining something, we would helplessly fall into captivity. And while we think that it offers us pleasure and enjoyment, it becomes as though scourges on our sides, or thorns in our eyes, that makes us lose our spiritual insight, and deprive us of beholding the inner divine light... It would not leave us before we perish from the good land which God has given us; namely, until we lose every goodness in our bodies, and all their energies and feelings!

And in order to encourage them to strive, to hold fast to what they gained of good land, and of the destruction of defilement, he says to them:

“Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth” (Joshua 23: 14)

As though he is saying to them that the days of life are short, and all of us are crossing over from this world ... That is the way of all the earth. Feeling foreign would support the soul in its strife, making it

aware of the ultimate end of every lust and every worldly pleasure; and leading it not to care for its worldly life, as much as for its salvation and the enjoyment of the eternal things. That is why **St. John El-Dargy** says: [We should not spend one day in a true worship, without considering it the last day of our whole life]¹.

¹ سلم السماء: درجة 6: 24.

CHAPTER 24

THE STONE OF WITNESS

After delivering the talent of faith through his strife; and, in the moments of setting forth of this world, the spiritual leader also delivered the divine farewell message to the people of God, and set a stone of witness at the sanctuary of the Lord, to remind them of God's works with them, before departing by the body from them.

1- God's dealings with them	1 -- 13
2- Sanctifying the human will	14 -- 26
3- Setting a stone of witness	27 -- 28
4- Death of Joshua	29 -- 33

1- God's dealings with them:

After Joshua frankly talked to his people, presenting to them all what was in his mind, he again called the elders, heads, judges, and officers of Israel, to present themselves before God, and to utter to them all the divine words, directly before his departure. In these words, God confirms His honesty in realizing His promises to Abraham, the father of fathers, as He brought him to the land of Canaan, to live as a stranger and sojourner, and as He confirmed that He would grant it to him in the person of his descendants; a promise that is realized today. He brought them out of the land of Egypt, and let them cross the Red Sea, in which Pharaoh and his army perished; Then he delivered them from the hands of the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, etc., who were living in the promised land.

Joshua the son of Nun stressed the fact that Abraham was given the promises, despite the fact that his father worshipped other gods; as though he intended to confirm to them that their reference to fathers, either saints or wicked, would neither benefit nor harm them; but what would truly benefit them is their obedience to the Lord; and what would harm them is their rebellion against Him. St. John Chrysostom says: [This is my advice to you ... Do not use the wickedness of our fathers as an excuse; If we are watchful, nothing of that would affect us; as even though the father of Abraham was an unbeliever, yet he did not inherit his wickedness but became dear to God] ¹.

¹ In Matt. Hom 8.

God said to them: ***“I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow. I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant”*** (Joshua 24: 12, 13)

What does he mean by the hornet he sent before them? He probably means the Egyptians who attacked that region, destroyed the might of its kings, and prepared the way for the Hebrews who came shortly after them. The whole history and events go according to a concealed divine plan that works for our salvation. God’s care is exalted and above all comprehension! God allowed for Pharaoh’s attack, so that believers, who were not aware that that was for their sake, would enjoy their inheritance with no labor!

2- Sanctifying the human will:

The Book of Joshua embraces the exalted dealings of God with His people, to inherit and possess. He offers them His divine love to receive, and to pay Him back, love for love; Yet He does not seek their worship as a mandatory commitment on their part, but seeks their love, coming out through a completely free will. God sanctifies human freedom, being a living portrait of God, and a proclamation of God’s righteousness and practical love... He seeks man, yet not as a slave, but as a free son, who attaches to his Father with joy and pleasure. That is why Joshua the son of Nun confirms to them saying:

“If it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (Joshua 24: 15)

Presenting himself as a role model, saying to the people: ***“But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”*** (Joshua 24: 15)

They answered and said: ***“Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods”***(Joshua 24: 16)

Once more, Joshua intended to confirm that worshipping God should come out of free will; saying to the people: ***“You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins”*** (Joshua 24: 19)

Confirming to them, that if they served God, but not in a holy life, they would bring upon themselves His chastisement; to that, the people again proclaimed: ***“No, but we will serve the Lord”***(Joshua 24: 21)

St. John Chrysostom speaks about the free will, saying: [God does not force us to do anything; and the grace of His Holy Spirit does not commit our will; But He calls us, and waits for our response with our complete freedom; and in case we approach Him, He grants us all His help] ¹; [God does not force those who do not seek Him; but draws to Him those who do] ²; and, [God created our nature as its own master; In His mercy, He always grants us His help, aware of what lies hidden in the depths of the heart; He asks, advises, forbids, and warns us against wicked behavior; yet He does not force anything upon us; He offers suitable remedies, yet leaves the whole matter to the decision of the patient himself] ³.

3- Setting up a stone of witness:

Having made a covenant with the people in that day, in which they commit themselves to serve Him with their completely free will;

“He took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord” (Joshua 24: 26)

St. Basil says: [Joshua the son of Nun set up a large stone, as a witness to his words; as did Jacob in the old days (Genesis 31: 47) ... as it was assumed that the stones themselves, through the power of God, speak, to shame or to warn the rebellious] ⁴.

St. Cyprian believes that the stone of witness here refers to the Lord Christ Himself⁵. The Holy Book often spoke of the Lord Christ as the living Stone on which His Church is built⁶; that, having been rejected by the builders, became the cornerstone.... That, *“became a great mountain and filled the whole earth”* (Daniel 2: 31- 35); and about which the prophet Isaiah said, *“It shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established, ... and all nations shall flow to it”* (Isaiah 2: 2 - 4).

4- Death of Joshua:

This Book started with the death of Moses; as without his death it was not possible for the inheritance and the crossing over to take place; and ends with the death of Joshua; as without the death and resurrection of the true Joshua, salvation would not be realized.

¹ *De verb habents.*

² *De mut, nom PG 51: 143.*

³ *In Gen. PG 53: 158, 159.*

⁴ *On the Spirit 13.*

⁵ *Treat. 12 to Quirinus 2: 16.*

⁶ إيش 28: 16، 118: 21-26، زك 3: 8، 9، نث 27: 8.

The Book proclaimed the death of Joshua, the burial of Joseph's bones, and the death of Eleazar the son of Aaron the High Priest. If Joshua refers to Jesus the Savior, by His death, the bones of Joseph came to rest after waiting so long for that day; having said to his brothers: "*I am dying, but God will surely visit you and bring you out of this land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob., and you shall carry up my bones from here*" (Genesis 50: 24, 25). Joseph believed in God's promises to his fathers, and realized that there would be no rest for his bones in the strange land; so he took an oath from his brethren to carry up his bones from there. It is as though he represents the Church sojourning in this world that will never find complete rest, until our bodies ascend in the great day to dwell with the risen new Joshua; yet in a new nature that fits the eternity. As for the death of the High Priest Eleazar, meaning "My God helps", it refers to the fact that, by the death of the Lord Christ, He sets forth as a High Priest, as our God who, by His blood, intercedes for us before His Father, presenting us as members of His holy body.

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