

Lessons from Israel's Journey Toward Canaan

***“Because he loved
thy fathers,
therefore he chose
their seed after
them, and brought
thee out in his
sight with his
mighty power out
of Egypt; To drive
out nations from
before thee greater
and mightier than
thou art, to bring
thee in, to give thee
their land for an
inheritance, as it
is this day.”***

**—Deuteronomy
4:37,38**

In the May 2026 issue of *The Dawn* magazine, an article was published entitled “Israel’s Journey to the Red Sea.” It considered various lessons from the Israelites’ experiences from the time they were released from Egyptian bondage to the crossing of the Red Sea. In this article, we will consider further lessons from the Israelites’ subsequent journey of forty years toward Canaan, the land of promise.

Israel, as a chosen people of God, and various aspects of their culture, traditions, and religious observances, served as pictures and

provided lessons regarding future aspects of God's plan for the salvation and ultimate reconciliation of the sin-sick and dying world of mankind. This was especially true in connection with their Tabernacle arrangements, the Levitical priesthood, their sacrificial offerings, and many other details concerning their experiences as they journeyed to Canaan. These were designed by God to provide important instruction and guidance for the dedicated followers of our Lord Jesus during this present Gospel Age.—I Cor. 10:11; Rom. 15:4

The Christian's Journey

Our featured scripture points to another important aspect of the Israelites' experiences pertaining to their journey in the wilderness and their hope to reach the promised land of Canaan. Their travels served to illustrate the difficult and arduous journey upon which our Lord's consecrated people have entered, as they seek the promised spiritual haven of rest.—Heb. 4:11

Our minds are thus drawn to the footstep followers of Jesus who have accepted the heavenly calling and are striving for an inheritance in Christ's coming kingdom. The Apostle Paul explains that these consecrated believers "walk in newness of life" and aspire to new, higher spiritual goals and attainments.—Rom. 6:4; Col. 3:1-4

Obstacles and Besetments

The faithful child of God will encounter obstacles and besetments in their journey to the spiritual Canaan. These will challenge, oppose, and attempt to discourage them in their new spiritual life and growth in Christ Jesus. There are three main

obstacles that every child of God will need to overcome. Among these are the weaknesses and failings of the fallen flesh. We need to heed Jesus' instruction, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matt. 26:41) The faithful Christian is also required to overcome the temptations and allurements of this "present evil world." (Gal. 1:4; John 16:33; I John 2:15-17) Finally, followers of Christ must fight against the wiles of Satan, the great Adversary of the Lord's people, "the accuser of our brethren, ... which accused them before our God day and night."—Eph. 6:11; I Pet. 5:8,9; Rev. 12:10

A New Commitment

There are basic principles that the called in Christ must follow, as shown in the Apostle Paul's words: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."—Rom. 12:1,2

The apostle has also given special instructions to the followers of Christ Jesus to fight their individual Christian warfare. "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds)."—II Cor. 10:3,4

We are provided with our Heavenly Father's precious Word of Truth that contains the wonderful teachings of the Master. Therefore, we are strengthened to fight this battle, to know his will for us in

this narrow way of sacrifice, and to faithfully carry out our lifetime commitment of total consecration. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10

Specific Instructions

As God’s covenanted people, the Israelites were instructed to build the Tabernacle for their religious observances. God gave them very explicit directions: “According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.” (Exod. 25:9) Violations of God’s arrangements and instructions were punishable, in some cases by death. See Leviticus 10:1,2.

Like the ancient nation of Israel, as consecrated children of God, we are also required to follow the instructions of the Lord as we continue to the end of our life’s journey in Christ Jesus. Having made a commitment to our Heavenly Father to be faithful to our covenant of sacrifice, there can be no looking back, else we will not be prepared for a place in the promised land of Canaan—the heavenly phase of Christ’s kingdom. The seriousness of this commitment was addressed by the Master during his earthly ministry when a person who expressed his desire to follow him asked for time to attend to certain earthly affairs first. “Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”—Luke 9:62

Powerful Enemies

It was commanded of the Israelites that they drive out the various powerful nations that were occupying the land of Canaan. They were to dispossess them

so that they could enter the land and claim it in accordance with the will of God. The Canaanites had no rights to the land they occupied. The land did not belong to them because God had promised Abraham that the land of Canaan would be given to his seed. From the scriptural record, this is made clear. "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."—Gen. 15:18-21

The Canaanite people were engaged in some of the most corrupt forms of behavior, and this is brought to our attention by J. B. Rotherham in his *Emphasized Bible*. Immediately following his translation of the Book of Joshua, he includes a special note on the "Destruction of the Canaanite Nations." In his note Rotherham describes the level of sin, degradation, and depravity to which the people of Canaan had fallen. He points to their worship as being obscene, sensual, and of the utmost cruelty. Their sacred places had been turned into brothels, and, in honor of their unholy false deities, women surrendered their virtue. Further to this, in some cases, the sons and daughters that were born from these unholy rites were consumed by fire as sacrificial offerings to their false gods.—Deut. 12:29-31

Concerning the Israelites' possession of the land of Canaan, we note the following text of scripture: "On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying, The LORD our

God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.”—Deut. 1:5-8

Lessons for Spiritual Israel

We may consider the experiences of natural Israel, as they also pertain to the consecrated lives of spiritual Israel, lessons by which we are edified and built up in Christ Jesus. We have all inherited sin in its many ugly forms, and as consecrated followers of the Master, we must be engaged in fighting the Christian warfare to rid ourselves of them. We should strive diligently to make progress in overcoming the weaknesses of our flesh, and to walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:4; Eph. 4:22-24) As part of the spiritual seed of Abraham, we must learn the necessary lessons that pertain to our life of faith. Each of us will be examined by our loving Heavenly Father to determine the degree of progress that we have made.

As spiritual Israelites, we are counted as a “new creation” in Christ Jesus. (II Cor. 5:17, *New King James Version*) The Apostle John taught, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:

therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”—I John 3:1-3

In fighting the fight of faith, it is essential that we subdue our mortal bodies and bring them into conformity to the pure mind of Christ. (I Tim. 6:12; Rom. 6:12; I Cor. 9:27) This means that we must bring every thought into subjection. The Apostle Paul explained, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” (II Cor. 10:5; I Thess. 4:3) Sanctification is the process of being set apart in total consecration to God with the intention of rendering our best possible service to him. (I Thess. 4:3,4) Jesus prayed on behalf of his followers, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. ... And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”—John 17:17,19

Enemies of Righteousness

There are enemies of righteousness and truth harbored within our mortal fleshly bodies, and we are to remember that natural Israel serves as a pattern to the little flock of spiritual Israelites. In the conquest of Canaan, there were powerful nations that Israel was to dispossess, destroy, and with whom to make no covenant.

“When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites,

and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them.”—Deut. 7:1,2

There are seven nations in this reference, the number seven suggesting completeness. These nations, and the land which they occupied, may well correspond to the enemies of the New Creation, spiritual Israel. All who are of this little flock of God’s people must battle these formidable enemies of righteousness. (Luke 12:32) Our Christian warfare and our battles as Christians will involve driving them out so that we may go in and possess the spiritual land of promise—Christ’s glorious kingdom.

Further instructions were also given Israel concerning their enemies. “Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people.”—Deut. 7:3-7

Fallen Flesh Tendencies

It is suggested that the various Canaanite nations who needed to be dispossessed may represent different tendencies of our fallen flesh that have to be overcome and rooted out. For example, the name “Amorite” has the significance of publicity and prominence. Therefore, the Amorites, who dwelt in the mountains and high places, may represent the qualities of self-assurance, or being lifted up with pride. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.” (Prov. 16:18,19) Spiritual pride is one of the greatest of all enemies to be subdued by the consecrated child of God.

Those in Canaan who dwelt in the lower parts of the land may represent a jealous disposition, or one that is easily aroused to envy. “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.”—Song of Sol. 8:6

Dwellers of the best and most level landscape could represent those who believe they can achieve spiritual success with little regard to the fallen tendencies of the flesh. There is much danger in this attitude, as there are many weaknesses of the fallen fleshly nature that need to be striven against. Some of these include bitterness, wrath, anger, evil speaking, and malice. (Eph. 4:31) Discouragement is another weakness that needs to be continuously brought under control. Let us not be driven away from the Lord and our life of sacrifice by being easily discouraged. Peter said, “Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.”—I Pet. 5:7

Spying Out the Land

From Israel's encampment at Paran, Moses sent spies to search out the land of Canaan. This was permitted by God at the request of the Israelites. (Deut. 1:22,23) The spies travelled throughout the land. On returning, they all agreed that it was indeed flowing with milk and honey. (Num. 13:21-27) However, ten of the spies gave a faithless report that put fear into the hearts of the Israelites. Only Joshua and Caleb encouraged the people to go into the land, overcome their enemies, and possess it.

“Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.”—Num. 13:30-33

Joshua and Caleb brought back an encouraging report, but the spies who had travelled with them lacked faith in the wonderful providence of God and were overcome with the spirit of fear. Caleb said, “Let us go up at once, and possess it.” We also as spiritual Israelites, with the Lord's help, may overcome the giants of fear and discouragement in our lives, and share with our blessed Master in his kingdom when we reach the heavenly Canaan.

Paul wrote: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."—Phil. 4:13

God Provided

Throughout their journey to the land of promise, God provided for his people Israel in a most remarkable way. "The LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." (Exod. 13:21,22) Only when they finally crossed the Jordan River into Canaan was this phenomenon discontinued.

From the scriptural record, we learn that God's providence was with Israel when they met Amalek for battle. Moses stood on a hill overlooking the site of battle with the "rod of God" in his hand. "It came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed."—Exod. 17:8-11

God then showed his powerful hand, as we read, "But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword." (vss. 12,13) The support of Moses' hands by Aaron and Hur suggests the privileges that each of the Lord's followers have in comforting, edifying, and encouraging one another as they journey in the narrow way.—I Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:24

Examples For Us

The Apostle Paul enumerates some additional examples of God's overruling care over the people of Israel. "I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all to Moses were baptized in the cloud, and in the sea; and all the same spiritual food did eat, and all the same spiritual drink did drink, for they were drinking of a spiritual rock following them, ... but in the most of them God was not well pleased, for they were strewn in the wilderness, and those things became types of us, for our not passionately desiring evil things, as also these did desire."—I Cor. 10:1-6, *Young's Literal Translation*

As spiritual Israelites, we must fight against "evil things" until we reach the end of our course. However, it is only through our Lord's strength that we can cast out the enemies that seek to destroy us. Our enemies are mightier than we are, and we must rely upon the powerful hand of God to help us. Paul wrote, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."—Eph 6:10

Throughout our battles with the flesh, the world, and the Adversary, we are to trust in the Lord, who has promised to be with us. We must manifest his strength and glory in all our Christian warfare. Therefore, in any victory that may be gained, we must honor the Heavenly Father and recognize that it is through his strength, his Word, and his Holy Spirit that we may conquer and possess the long-promised spiritual Canaan. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—I Cor. 15:57 ■