



My immense thanks are due to our Lord Jesus Christ for granting me the gift of the art of writing His word and spreading it far and wide. I made use of this gift and already wrote two books with the titles "The Legacy of God's People", and the "Quest for the Living God". My hard work on those two books were well read in India as well as in the USA and appreciated by many readers and scholars of the Bible. With this encouragement, I proceeded further with the third book, "The Offsprings from the Tabernacle".

Regarding the second book, "Quest for the Living God" most of the matter was not found in the Bible. But it concerned with the stories of the Bible. I gathered this matter from historical books, theological commentaries etc., The

readers of the second book also expressed their happiness for the information I collected from various sources.

The third book, "Offsprings from the Tabernacle" contains the matter concerning the faithlessness of Israel towards God and how God came to their aid in great troubles and difficulties. I am sure the readers will find it as useful and inspiring as my first two books.

I am thankful to God for the loving encouragement that I received from my wife Mrs Grace Vijaya in bringing out this book. Its my sincere prayer that it would please our great God to use this book for His glory and for the spiritual enlightenment of many readers.

**Sundara Rao Ts.**  
Author

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*Offsprings from the*  
**TABERNACLE**  
*Sundara Rao Tsappidi*

# *Offsprings from the* **TABERNACLE**



**Sundara Rao Tsappidi**



*Offsprings from the Tabernacle*

# **OFFSPRINGS FROM THE TABERNACLE**

By  
**Sundara Rao Tsappidi**

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THE TABERNACLE**

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## **A TRIBUTE**



**DAVID RAVI TSAPPIDI**

Born 13th Oct. 1969

Promoted to Glory: 4th Sept. 2010

*David Tsappidi was born on October 13, 1969 to parents Sundara Rao Tsappidi and Grace Vijaya Tsappidi in India. He was nicknamed “Pedda Ravi” (bigger Ravi) within the family circle, given the hierarchy and popularity of his name.*

*As a child, he used to make the most of his life. He was an extrovert, inquisitive and had a deep affection for music. Following his high school graduation, he embarked on a career in Engineering, specializing in Printing and Graphics communications at Pune, India.*

*During his educational experiences, he loved to express himself through music by performing in multiple bands around the country. Subsequently, he relocated to New Delhi, India, for his first job, and continued his passion for performing music nevertheless.*

*On the 15th of May 1997, Ravi was married to Kavitha Rao at Hyderabad, India. He continued his career at New Delhi, until opportunities in the US came his way. Having made a transcontinental move to New Jersey in 2000, Ravi shifted his focus entirely on his career and family, and was blessed with his first child” Pranay P Tsappidi” in 2002. Subsequently in 2007, his second son “Praket P Tsappidi” was born.*

*His love for his family was well demonstrated by the degree of involvement in his kid’s sports leagues including soccer and baseball. Despite hardships at work from the current economy, he maintained his positive, cheerful attitude, commitment to his children’s activities and responsibilities to his family.*

*His deep passion for classic rock and motorsports, optimistic attitude in life, unquestionable generosity to his friends and family and his heartwarming smile behind the thick moustache, remain our most memorable recollections of him.*

*May his soul rest in peace!*

---

***This Book is fondly dedicated to the loving memory of our beloved son***

**David Ravi Tsappidi**

**Sundara Rao Tsappidi and Mrs Grace Vijaya**

**Parents**



### **Kavitha Tsappidi - Wife**

My husband was always happy and go lucky and he loved music. He was always happy laughing with friends. He was very friendly, very helpful, always first the first one who would end up at anybody's door if they needed help.

He enjoyed caring for his two sons aged 2 & 8 .He remained persistent in his job search. He was always optimistic.



### **Dr. Beaula Koduri, wife of Dr. Hemanth - Sister**

David Tsappidi's sad demise marks a great loss for all of us. Your love and support shown through your presence here, explains how much my brother meant to each and every one of you. I thank you all for your condolences towards me and my family at this time.

Before I begin I would like to read out a short tribute on behalf of my father. "All the world is a stage" Shakespeare said, "All men and women are mere actors on the stage. They play their part and depart from this material world". My son Ravi's life was like a lily of a day. He was an embodiment of all noble qualities and he was too good to live in this world. We will miss him dearly even as he continues to remain in our hearts.



Words fail me to talk about my brother. Be it through his patient listening or his ever ready to help attitude, Ravi always loved without expecting anything in return; and it was this unconditional love that made him such a great son, brother, father and uncle. Childhood seems like such a long time ago, but one thing that stands strong in my memory is his encouragement and support in everything I did. He was always proud of my achievements and his faith in me is what got me through a lot of life's struggles. Sometimes I wonder if his unending tolerance of my whining is why life seemed so stress free when he was around. He passed on the same love and support to my kids and always took time out for them. Maybe that's why "Ravi Mama" as they call him is an uncle they will always remember.

Humility was like second nature to Ravi. He was never malicious of anyone's success. In a world of stiff competition and betrayal, it is rare to find anyone who genuinely celebrates your accomplishments; but I was blessed to have experienced that sincere happiness for me in the form of my brother.

Every family has its ups and downs. They share griefs and joys that are outside the touch of time. Through everything that our family has been through, Ravi was that backbone with his big reassuring smile that could help us through anything: A smile that never let any of us know of his pain or sorrow.



I know that wherever he is, Ravi knows that we all loved him dearly.

“My grief may fade away and my tears may dry up but somewhere in a little corner of my heart your bright eyes and your hearty smile will always be alive forever. I love you Ravi. May your soul rest in peace.”

### **Samuel Kiran Kumar - Brother**

Good morning to all of you, and thank you for taking the time on a working weekday to spend a few moments with my dear brother for the last time. Your mere presence here signifies the indelible impressions left by him in your lives most certainly mine.

To me, he was actually the mediator in my family. He managed to bridge the differences in perspective and attitudes between my parents and myself. He successfully negotiated many issues and decisions made between my concerned parents and my stubborn self. And he did an excellent job of it.



There have been many lessons in life and otherwise that I'm grateful to him for

- placing priorities of others in need over yours - whether reciprocated or not
- the capacity to play hard, yet be responsible
- the ability to love someone unconditionally
- having the simple objective of happiness in life

Ravi, my permanent memories of you that I would cherish forever, would be your smiling face, your endless optimism, the cheerful demeanor, your undying loyalty, your boundless patience among other unique qualities from a brother - A brother I have no more.

You will be immensely missed - may you finally get your much deserved rest.

*Rest in peace.*



## FOREWORD

*“When I consider how my light is spent  
y’re half my days, in this dark world and hide,  
And that one talent which is death to hide  
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
My true account, lest He returning chide, \_”*

In the above lines, John Milton, one of the greatest poets of the English literature and author of “The Paradise Lost”, the second Bible, expressed his anguish for not writing great poetry in praise of God, his Maker. Though he had talent of writing poetry, he could not write for becoming totally blind. Yet, he wanted to write poetry in praise of God and submit his true account, lest, he should be punished like the third man in the parable of “The Talents” in the New Testament.

Similarly Mr Ts Sundara Rao, though he lost 40% of his eye sight due to illhealth and at the age of 74, strongly desired to contribute humbly something to his Master, Lord Jesus. As a result, the first book “The Legacy of God’s People” has come out. With much prayer and humility, he was able to bring out the second book, “Quest for the Living God”.

Unlike many people, who curse their old age and ill health, spending time like an idler in the USA, Mr Ts Sundara Rao offered his prayer with great submissiveness to the Lord and brought out the third book “Offsprings from the Tabernacle”. Though he lost his beloved son David Ravi in the United States, he clunged to the feet of the Lord for the rest of the soul of his son in the Abode of the Great Task Master, our Lord Jesus Christ, consoled by near and dear, on the fifth day itself he talked to me by phone regarding the book to be published with the title, “Offsprings from the Tabernacle”.

This book comprises 20 chapters starting from the history of the Tabernacle. Each chapter is unique of its kind. All the 20 chapters are very informative and provide more and more information about some men of God referred to in the Holy Bible. This book also tells us about how two worlds collide, the spiritual world and the



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world of flesh as well as the difference between Christianity and Islam. The information he provides in this book is thought provoking. All the articles in the book will help the reader as guidelines and a torch for better understanding of the Offsprings from God and His everlasting love for humanity.

Mrs Grace Vijaya Sundara Rao, his better half whose contribution and untiring support in bringing up this book along with their children late David Ravi, Beulah and Samuel Kiran Kumar is praiseworthy. May the blessed Lord bless him with good health and long life to write many books of this kind.

With all the best wishes,

**D.S. Sundara Rao,** M.A., M.Phil,  
Dept. of English, SAS Degree College  
Vijayawada - 1

## PREFACE

My immense thanks are due to our Lord Jesus Christ for granting me the gift of the art of writing His word and spreading it far and wide. I made use of this gift and already wrote two books with the titles “The Legacy of God’s People”, and the “Quest for the Living God”. My hard work on those two books were well read in India as well as in the USA and appreciated by many readers and scholars of the Bible. With this encouragement, I proceeded further with the third book, “The Offsprings from the Tabernacle”. Before I began writing the first book, I happened to visit the Holy Land and got the information which prompted me to start writing. I came to know that some non-Christians who read these books were impressed by their content and accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Regarding the second book, “Quest for the Living God” most of the matter was not found in the Bible. But it concerned with the stories of the Bible. I gathered this matter from historical books, theological commentaries etc., The readers of the second book also expressed their happiness for the information I collected from various sources. The third book, “Offsprings from the Tabernacle” contains the matter concerning the faithlessness of Israel towards God and how God came to their aid in great troubles and difficulties.

While I was seriously collecting the matter to finish the book at the earliest, some calamity took place in my family. It is the death of my eldest son. He is 40 years old, died under suspicious circumstances, leaving two sons, aged 8 and 3. This horrible incident pulled me back from the work for some time. But still I have decided to finish it at the earliest.

I would like to bring some of the salient features of the topics. for example, God told Moses to prepare the Tabernacle, called ‘Moving Temple’ which would contain the ten commandments, the ark of the covenant, the menorah and the table of shew bread. Then the glory of God called ‘Shekinah’ in Hebrew language. Moses first saw this Shekinah in the burning bush. And the same glory led the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years. In the priesthood it is said that the descendents of Aaron continued the priesthood with particular garments almost till the time Jesus Christ.

The book of “Esther” is important for two reasons. (1) Jews enjoyed complete freedom, (2) They got a new festival called Purim. And in this book we don’t find the

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name of God even once. The Bible characters of Abigail and Nabal were picturized in the story of the Beauty and the Beast the main source of which is a French story by the same name. 'The Tragic life of Jephthah as Son and Father' is nothing but the miserable life of his only daughter.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the following writers for their contribution to the Christian society. I have taken liberty to collect some material from various books authored by them:

Kavin Howard, David Ettinger, Ellsworth J Kalas, Eugene Price, Marvin Rosenthal, Zions Fire, Sara Jerkins, Dr Tim M Sigler.

Their writings consoled me at the death of my beloved son when I was in great distress. I wish to spread the word of God far and wide through my books.

I humbly pray to God to bless my readers and make use of this book for their salvation.

VIJAYAWADA  
20th Nov., 2010

Yours in Christ  
**Sundara Rao Tsappidi**  
Author



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## HISTORY OF THE TABERNACLE

God called Moses to the top of the mount Senai, and gave him some instructions for the Israelites to follow. Along with them, He gave "ten words" in Hebrew called the ten commandments by writing with His own finger on the blue stones called Sapphire. Then He gave the plan for the Tabernacle (a mobile tent) called the mobile temple of God. After receiving from God, Moses came down to the foot of the mount Senai. But to his surprise he found the Israelites fully engaged themselves in dancing with the golden calf prepared by themselves.

This spectacular scene made Moses terribly angry and threw away the tablets of the Ten Commandments to the ground which became pieces. Then he took the golden calf, put it in the fire and made it into powder. Then he mixed the powder with the water and asked the Israelites to drink it. Moses went to the mountain top for the second time as God called him and brought back the Ten Commandments. This time Moses stayed with God for forty days and forty nights without bread and water.

After he came down, he entrusted the work of the preparing the Tabernacle to the concerned workmen and the work started at the foot of the mount Senai in the wilderness. The main purpose of this Tabernacle was to worship God in it. The other details about the Tabernacle can be found in the 13th chapter of the book of Exodus. The priesthood and sacrifices were the other requirements for the functioning of the Tabernacle. It seemed God Himself gave the plan of the Tabernacle. The workers were able to complete the making of the Tabernacle in about eight months.

The Israelites reached the mount Senai in about three months from Egypt. During the work they invited free will offering for the construction of the Tabernacle. By the time, it became almost one year and it was said they celebrated their first anniversary also. It is already said the Tabernacle was a moving house



### *History of the Tabernacle*

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of worship. It was smaller in size. It was built in interlocking system with the purpose of relocation.

Whenever a thick cloud was seen in the sky, it indicated the presence of God. Then the priests would shift the Tabernacle from one place to another in the wilderness. In some contet God told king David "I have not in any house since I brought up the Israel out of Egypt. Even to this day, but have I walked in a tent and in a Tabernacle" (2 Sam 7:6).

This Tabernacle became a temporary dwelling place of God. He said He would select a permanent place for His dwelling after the Israelites settled in their promised land Canaan. According to God's plan the permanent temple would be built in the unmovable building but not like the Tabernacle etc., God stressed two more things at the time of the dedication of the Tabernacle. He said, "for now have I chosen and sanctified this house that my name be there forever" (2 Chron. 7:16). In future an eternal sanctuary will be made by the hands of God and established. Then the Lord shall reign and Israel in mount Zion from hence forth even forever.

Good models and network became necessary for building better Tabernacle. But unfortunately the workmen could not find amazing beauty in the making because of two reasons. First, they could not portray all the facts about the authentic functioning of the Tabernacle which was made by the artisans for which they spent millions of dollars and costly material. Secondly, the scripture did not reveal any information about the models of the Tabernacle.

Moreover, the Bible did not give full details of the Tabernacle, but only technical details, design etc., At the same time, it was not written as a blue print or as a complete technical understanding for the artisans. But Moses received the plan from God and explained that to the workmen.

The original Tabernacle was not in existence today. But some of the details were established for information. For instance the Hebrew scripture does not reveal anything about the side panel of the Tabernacle. The temple institutes a Jewish religious organisation located in the Jewish quarters of the old city of Jerusalem. This organisation was dedicated to rebuilding of the holy temple and continue the service in it. This was followed by Rabbi "Israel Ariel" an Israelite paratrooper in 1957 who also helped for the liberation of the temple mount in 1967.

The items produced by the temple institutes were not reproductions of the modelos. They were prepared for the actual service in the future "Third Temple". The temple institutes had already prepared the required sacrificial vessels for the temple. The rubbis believed that the Art of the Covenant is still hidden in a secret place under the temple mount. The reconstructed items and many pieces of artwork were finally on display in the Temple Institute Modest Musium in Jerusalem.

### **God instructed Moses to build the Tabernacle**

God instructed Moses and gave the plan of the Tabernacle. There are four important items in the Tabernacle to be put -

1. The ark of the covenant
2. The menorah
3. The incense altar
4. The table of shew bread

The tent would be surrounded by a rectangular couryard which contained brass leever and an altar for the sacrifices. God gave some information for the building of the Tabernacle. It was built for the purpose of worshipping the Lord. The original material was acquired through free will offerings only of "any man that giveth it will enjoy with his heart ye shall take my offerings" (exodus 58:25). Then the nation gave free offerings more than is required for its building. Many costly items like gold, silver, brass (blue, purple, scarlet) linen, goats, hair, rams skins, red legions skins, shirkeem wood, oil for the lights etc.,

The making cost of the Tabernacle was no doubt very high in history. The three precious metals used were gold, silver and brass and the quantity of each item was recorded in the scripture. The Tabernacle contained 2,800 lbs. of gold, 9,600 lbs. of silver and 6,900 lbs. if brass (Exodus 55:24-31). Then the copper zinc alloy of brass with the high power melting point of nearly 2000 fh. was used for the sacrificial altar.

God clearly told Moses "and let my people make me a sancuary that I may dwell among them." Therefore, the Hebrew word "prisham" which means (a dwelling place) became one of the names for the Tabernacle.

## **1. The Ark of the Covenant**

The Lord commanded "and they shall make an Ark of the Covenant with Shittim wood" These Shittim trees were common plants in the area of mount Senai. The importance of this Ark was that God proposed this as the first item to be put in the Tabernacle. This wooden "chest" the Ark of the covenant was the most valuable and most sacred object in the Temple of Israel. They considered that as the greatest treasure to the nation. It travelled with Israel and crossed the river Jordan. Then it was with the Philistines for some time.

During the travel, of the Ark was always wrapped with the cloth. It was considered the holiest object in the Temple. As the Ark was a holy item, the people were kept away from that view, because if they look inside of it, they would die. Only the high priest was permitted to come before the Ark on "Yom Kippur" on the single day of the year the high priest would enter the Holy of the holies to burn the incense and sprinkle the blood before the Ark, for an atonement of "sin" of the people.

The English word Ark is from 'Arca' which means "chest". The Hebrew word for this is "aron" which means cabinet, container, box, chest etc., The length of the Ark was 3 feet 9 inches, width is 2 feet 3 inches and height 2 feet 3 inches. God inscribed with His own finger the two tablets that contained the Ten Commandments were legally binding original documents of the Mosaic covenant. They were the testimony between God and the people of Israel at mount Senai.

The Ark symbolized God's throne. So king David called it "the footstool of our Lord". The Ark belonged to God. So it was called the Ark of God. The testimony was safe guarded and its tablets put inside Israel's holy ark. Two Golden Cherubims were attached inside top of the Ark near the mercy seat. The Cherubims were heavenly bodies only but not angels. They will have two eyes like human beings but shape of the feet is like that of a calf and they have four faces.

Satan was also one of the Cherubs. He had fallen down to the earth as a punishment from God. He was actually more intelligent and more beautiful than any other in heaven. So God entrusted him the affairs of the throne in the mountain in the garden of Eden.



Many incidents took place to the Ark during the time of the Judges that are worthy to mention at least one of them. After the Philistines returned the Ark to Israel, some men in curiosity looked inside the Ark in Bethlehem. As a result more than fifty thousand men died in judgement. After some time king David brought that Ark to Jerusalem. It is said the Ark contained the following items\_

1. Two types of the tablets of the Ten Commandments
2. The Golden bowl (pot) of Manna
3. The staff of Aaron.

They were kept like that to show them to the future generations as God wanted that. It was again stolen from the temple of king Solomon and at present its whereabouts were not known to anybody.

## **2. History of the Menorah**

The Lord commanded "and thou shall make a candlestick of pure gold" This menorah was one of the items of the Tabernacle furniture. It had oil lamps instead of candles. So it was called oil lamp stand or Menorah technically. It was designed systematically with seven branches and three branches projecting each side of its central staff. The branches of Menorah were designed like flower and branches of an almond tree in Israel.

The oil bowls of the Menorah were tear drop shaped like almond kernels and they were pinched at their pointed ends to hold the wicks. The branches of the Menorah were fastened from a single piece of gold metal and had oil lamps sitting at the top of each branch. The Menorah was considered most important item in the Tabernacle. It stood along the southern wall of the Holy place. The menorah and its various tools were made of the talent of pure gold and it was maintained by the priests of the temple. And to the Menorah pure and perfect olive oil was used.

## **3. The Altar**

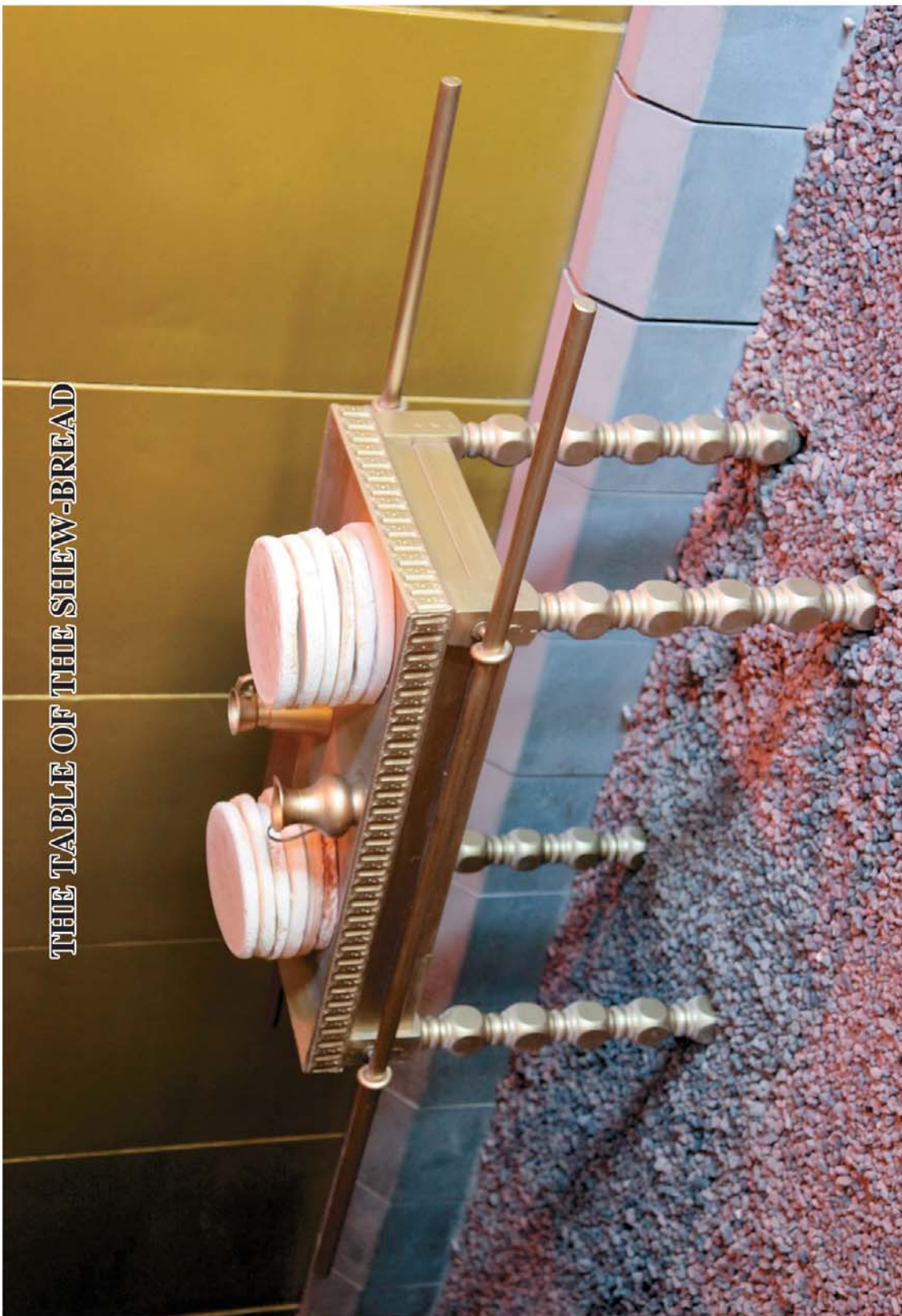
The temple of God was identified as the person and the work of Messiah of Israel. The Bible accurately presented the Tabernacle as the picture of the Messiah. The understanding of the temple being an understanding of Messiah. The animal sacrifices mentioned in the Bible showed the Messiah's true sacrifice,

## THE MENORAH





THE TABLE OF THE SHEW-BREAD



Hebrew prophet Jeremiah explained that the Lord offered the Messiah as the one final sacrifice for "sin".

The sacrificial altar was identified as the heavenly altar. The heavenly altar was memorized as the Messiah as the lamb of God to be offered as the true sacrifice. the Messiah was also identified by the high priest as the true high priest. So the scripture emphasized that neither by the blood of the goats nor calves but by His own blood He entered into the Holy place (heaven) and obtained the eternal redemption for the sake of humanity.

As it is said already the golden altar at the Tabernacle represented the altar in heaven. Once king David prayed, "Let my prayer be set before Thee as incense" (Psalms 141:2). The incense altar is what the prayers of believers continuously ascent before God's throne by the work of our high priest, whoever liselt to make intercession"

At present the fale of the Menorah was not known to the people, because the Babylonian king plundered Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C., He took every important thing from the city and the temple and also some thousands of people as captives. After some years the Persians defeated the Babylonians and king "Cyrus" returned everything that was taken by the Babylonian king including Menorah to Jerusalem.

Again when the Romans came to power in Judah, they took away Menorah particularly to Rome because it was a solid gold item. Then after a long time, when the Israel came to power the religions minister put a petition to the Vatican authorities in 1996 for the investigation of the Menorah.

In recent times the Temple authorities planned for a modern Menorah. It was composed of 99 pounds (45 kgs) of gold. Its height was about 6 feet. in September 2009 an exciting archeological discovery was announced regarding the Menorah in the ancient village of "Megdal" the native village of Mary Magdaline on the western side of the sea of Galilee. It was unearthed during the first century B.C. The artist was most likely an eye witness of the actual Temple Menorah.

#### **4. The Table of The Shew-bread**

The table of Shew-bread was made of acacia or shittal wood (acacia is the English word for it). These shettal trees are common plants around mount Senai and Neg wilderness area. This wood was perfectly suitable as the raw material to

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the table of shew-bread. It had similar design elements to the Ark. The Shew-bread contained vessels (dishes, spoons, covers and bowls) which were made of pure gold.

The Lord specified that a measure of frankincense was to be poured on the top of each of the two sections of the Shew-bread on the table. In this context a historian Flavius Josephus said that frankincense was placed in two golden cups. The table of Shew-bread was continuously displayed. It was arranged into the stacks of six loaves on the table. As per the Rabbunic sources each bread stake was exhibited on the golden rack support and that was attached to the table.

The table of Shew-bread was kept along the north walls of the Tabernacle interior. It was on the righthand side which became more convenient to the priests when they entered and it stood just opposite to the Menorah. The priests used to refresh the table on every Sabbath day, with twelve fresh mechyahs and new frankincenses. The old incense was burnt on the sacrificial altar itself.

### **Information about the Tent**

The Lord asked Israel to prepare the Tabernacle (called tent). It was rectangular in appearance and built with the wooden frame tapstrels and animal skins. The Tabernacle had four covering layers. The first covering layer was of ten smaller tapstry panels made of three colours (blue, purple and scarlet) wool and fine goat hair. This most spectacular layer was embroidered with Cherubim made from the gold wire, and this layer was visible at the top from inside the Temple.

The second layer was consisted of eleven smaller panels of black goat hair cloth which appeared like black burlap. The individual panels were of 30 cubits long and 4 cubits width. The third covering layer was of reddied rams skins. The fourth covering layer was made of talash animal skins. The tent was supported by thick wooden panels. Those were known as beams or side walls. The wooden panels and cross were all overlaid with pure gold. The overall foot prints of the Tabernacle was 30 cubits long and 10 cubits width.

### **Tabernacle Construction**

The details of the Tabernacle can be found in the 40th chapter of Exodus, the early chapter of Leviticus and the book of Numbers. They preserve



## *History of the Tabernacle*

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permanent record of it in the Bible for ever. It was built at the foot of the mount Senai wilderness about 3,500 years ago. That is, the early spring of 1446 B.C., New years day in Hebrew religious calendar. That particular morning God chose for the consecration of the Tabernacle. After two weeks of this incident they had completed one year of their leaving Egypt. So, they celebrated their first anniversary at the foot of the mount Senai.

The divine meeting was really an extraordinary thing in the history of human beings and in the life of Israel. God revealed the Holy law and entered into a covenant with Israel that is, "He would be their God and they would be His people."

Moses surveyed his work in the Tabernacle before the early morning. He saw to his left the yellow flame of seven beamed Menorah. On his right, he saw the golden table of the Shew-bread with its matyans and frankincense, displayed before the Lord. The golden incense altar stood straight before the veil of the Holy of holies.

When Moses came to the altar, he saw two large golden cherubims embroidered on the veil appeared to be hovering. Then Moses poured fine olive oil on the coals. A steam of white smoke came immediately and a few tiny sparkles in orange colour shot upward from the incense.

Moses fell prostrate before the altar and prayed to God for a few minutes when he was about to go to the courtyard all of a sudden a cloud of the Lord appeared on the tent. The cloud raised hundreds of feet high into the sky and fanned out like a canopy at the top. And finally the cloud rested on the tent. It filled the area so intensely that Moses could not reenter the Tabernacle freely.

Israel at that time could understand that God was in their midst. Then God spoke with Moses from the Holy of holies regarding the sacrifices and ordinances of the priests. God finished His speech and went up. After that Moses took rams horn and made a sound to call all the Israel to gather at that place before him. He took a flask of anointing oil and went into the tent to consecrate the furniture. The olive oil scented with myrrh, cinnamon, other aromatic and different components as commanded by the Lord.

The inauguration of Israel's Tabernacle and the priesthood remained forever in the minds of Israel, and the nation. Behold, how good and pleasant for the brethren to dwell peacefully and happily. The early temple of the Lord in its

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survival and the priesthood would continue to function virtually unchanged for the next fifteen hundred years.

## **Spiritual Importance of the Tabernacle**

the importance of the solid earthly temple both in the tent and the constructed by king Solomon solitary Israel worship centre of God. The time spent with the Lord became rich in spiritual significance. It communicated the critical divine truth for the people of Israel. The earthly temple of the Lord pictured the heavenly reality. It was only a shadow of true temple in heaven. The Tabernacle its altar, its furniture and its vessels were pictured after the heavenly temple which Moses literally saw, when he was with God on the mount Senai. The ark of the covenant was identified as heavenly shrine of the Lord. The Holy of holies reflected God's heavenly throne room.

The earthly temple of the Lord was identified as the spiritual truth. As a testimony it communicated to men that they are sinners. Therefore, they are under divine judgement. Through the priesthood God provided priestly meditation for the separation between Himself and humankind caled by 'sin'.

Therefore, the Messiah as a high priest entered the Holy of holies and by remaining there forever. He would sprinkle His own blood. There was no other blood shed at the time of the crucifiction. He did not carry any blood but of His own through sacrifice.

The veil of the Tabernacle represented separation between a sinful man and Holy God. The earthly veil torn down in the middle in Jerusalem temple at the time of Christ's crucifiction and His sacrifice. The Messiah sacrificed His life on the cross for the sake of humanity. Now according to the New Covenant God does not remember the "Sin" of the people any more. The single Tabernacle with its single door indicates that there is only one God and through that one door we can come to God.

The Messiah represented the High priest who is clearly seen in His fiery sevenfold fullness of the heavenly throne. The Holy Spirit illuminates the minds of men with the light of Spiritual truth. The Holy Spirit sent the Messiah anointed and expmpowered the Messianic ministry and it testifies Messiah.

The twelve matyachs represented the twelve tribes of Israel. And Messiah as part of His priestly work, will purify His godly remnants of Israel and bring them

### *History of the Tabernacle*

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spotless before God and also their nation into the bond of the new covenant and restore the twelve tribes back to their tribal land inheritances.

The wilderness Tabernacle was like a miniature portable type, of the temple of the Lord and served as the spiritual centre of the nation for about five hundred years. Consequently the first and the second temples came into existence in large scale in Jerusalem. And these temples were greater and far bigger than the Tabernacle.

The three - the Tabernacle the first temple and the second temple were patterned after the heavenly temple. The three were God's earthly houses, where He dwelt among men. At present the earthly temples are not in existence but our bodies are the temples of God in this age. When we trust God as our saviour His Spirit will dwell in us and in that sense we say our bodies are the temples of God.

The Lord promised that He would come again and dwell among men. God also said "I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forever more. My Tabernacle also shall be with them. ye, I will be their God and they will be my people."

Apostle John saw the exciting fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy and his vision of the Messianic future when heavenly new Jerusalem descends to the mount Zion. Again John heard a loud voice from heaven "behold, the Tabernacle of God was with men and He would live with them... And God shall wipe out all their tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death, sorrow, crying and pain."

God will dwell among men and he commanded John to write for those words as true and faithful. God will dwell among His men through the Messiah. The Messiah king will set at the right hand side of the throne and He will build the temple of our Lord and rule from his throne. the temple will exist for five hundred years or may be for one thousand years. But my sanctuary will remain for ever in their midst. "He will be our God and we will be His people." A woman with issue of blood

There was a village near Capernaum which was about seven miles. Some women in that village gathered together and started a sewing center in a room of a big house and sewing clothes and at the same time chit chatting in their leisure time. A beautiful young lady used to come to them once in a week with a cloth and got it stitched and give to the helpless poor and afflicted people in the society.

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She would walk seven miles every week to those sewing women and got the work done. Her name was Veronica.

Her people spent a lot of money on her but of no use. Finally she came to know about the healer of all diseases, Jesus Christ. She went to Him and got her disease healed.

Now all the members of the sewing group were talking about that lady who had been coming to them for that work but now not coming as she was not feeling any betterment from that disease, the issue of blood. Now as she stopped going to them, it caused some financial loss to those women. She suffered from that disease for twelve years. Her family members spent what all they could on her but in vain. Her family members and friends became disheartened about her condition. There was no doctor whom they did not see.

They came to conclusion that she would die soon. How much money they spent on her, there was no account. They used all kinds of medicines that were available in the market but of no use. So, they at last came to a decision that she might survive only with magic or else she would die. The sewing women were always talking about this Veronica only. They recollected the whole story of her, how she helped the poor people regularly going to those tailors once in a week. But now-a-days she was not at all coming. Perhaps they did not know she was suffering from an incurable disease for a long time.

After some time the sewing women came to know about the cause of her not coming to them for the work. They felt sorry for her disease and sent many of her friends and relatives also who died of that issue of blood helplessly. They expressed their heartfelt sympathy for her by remaining silent for a while.

Then one of the sewing woman told the others that her husband returned from Capernaum on the previous day with the happy news that there was a healer going round the country side and he was a Galilean. He happened to touch the daughter of a synagogue ruler by name Jairus. It was his twelve years old daughter who already died by the time the healer Jesus Christ went. He simply touched her and she got up from her death.

This is one of the miracles Christ did. The tailor woman told the entire story about the healer but she could not tell them the name of the healer as her husband also did not know. According to the information, the ruler had gone to the healer and begged Him to go to his house for his daughter was on the verge of death.

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Then the sewing woman's husband saw the healer was going to the house of the ruler.

All the sewing women stopped their work and listened to what she was telling about the healer. She went on saying that the healer was detained on the way. And one thing is certain, a large number of people were gathering wherever He went. They finally hoped that the healer would go to their village also one day or other. The sewing women continued to hear more about the healer and the ruler and about his daughter. After the girl was raised from her death, she became normal, walking and playing in the garden.

They were surprised at the miracle of Jesus. They understood the healer must be a prophet of God. Another important thing was that the healer asked the ruler not to reveal that incident and expose it to anybody. The fundamental reason for that was the Sadducees and the Pharisees raising baseless allegations against Jesus and causing unnecessary problems to Him. The women talked about the marvelous act of the healer again and again, and they wished to know his name. They also wished the healer might come one day or other to their village and heal their diseases. It was their dream only.

The sewing women in a group talking nothing but this incident only. How the dead person was made alive. While they were fully engaged themselves in that hot discussion, all of a sudden all the women fell silent, stopped doing anything and looked through the window towards the dirty winding road that led to Capernaum. They saw a woman almost running towards them as if she was in a hurry of something. After she reached the village she went to those sewing women. They crowded together and looking at her as if she were coming closer. And in a moment one of them recognized that she was no other than Veronica who went to them some years ago once in a week with some cloth to make dresses to the poor and helpless children.

The young woman Veronica came actively on the steps of the house and everybody felt happy to see her after a long time. She appeared to be quite hale and healthy and also quite happy. She came to them almost running to tell the happy news of her healing from the dangerous disease of "issue of blood" from which she had suffered for twelve years. She was healed and continues her social work of going to the sewing women and renewed her old job. By coming to them Veronica could give them work and then money.



All the women looked at her strangely because she was healed from such disease. They also found much change in her after she was healed. She looked better than before. If any one of them could remember her last appearance, she would certainly find that change as she looked white and her eyes sunken and dark circled.

But by looking at them Veronica enquired whether they recognized her. She said she was Veronica, their old friend but not a ghost to stare at.

She told them, she was healed from her disease of the issue of blood by a Master. He further cautioned her that she was healed by her own faith, her faith towards Him (God). All the while they were in their surprise and in their imaginary world. Now they broke their silence came near to her and began to hug her and kissed her. They felt comfortable and asked her as how all her healing took place. Actually they took it for granted, that she would have died because of that disease.

Now all the women fell extremely happy over her recovery and humbly requested her to tell how it happened. Veronica began to tell the story again to them. She said she heard about Jesus of Nagarite for some years. The women were surprised to hear the name of Jesus for the first time. Then Veronica continued. He was a Galilean. She had heard some time ago all over Capernaum about Jesus, how He had been opening the eyes of the blind, causing the deaf to hear and healing all kinds of diseases all around Capernaum.

She continued, she touched Him as He was walking. Her simple touch of the hem of His garments healed her dangerous disease. Prior to this, she used all kinds of medicines prescribed by the doctors. She suffered with the disease for twelve long years. That issue of blood never stopped. By understanding her pathetic story and suffering and mental agony, she might have undergone during that period, we cannot but feel sorry for her pitiable condition.

She lost all hope of her recovery. Her family members and relatives came to a conclusion that she would die soon. She was just thirty two years old at that time. Veronica continued her testimony with the women regarding her healing. Just at that time she came to know about Jesus that He was coming to the town of Capernaum. She got a new hope and she would not die any more.

Then Veronica went to the place of Jesus and trying all means to meet Him. There was a large crowd around Him. She could not see the face of Jesus. She

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wanted to touch His garments at last. But one thing was wrong with her. She was an unclean woman “Leviticallly.” So she should not go and touch Him in that condition. Any way she waited for some time. She felt like an untouchable leper for some time. At last she firmly decided to touch him if she could get the chance to talk with Him, for her it was most welcome. Before she took this decision of meeting Jesus she told her family members about the healing of Jesus but her relatives laughed at her. without caring them she went secretly to meet Jesus. She wished to try her luck to meet Jesus. He was walking and she went near him. She seized the opportunity and touched the hem of His garments. When there was a large crowd and all kinds of sick people surrounded Him.

The sewing women patiently heard the entire story till the end. They heard the story in complete silence and wonder. They were all astonished over the miracles of Jesus, particularly done to Veronica. Actually when the tips of the fingers of Veronica touched the hem of Jesus, then there was a flash of light on her face. She somehow believed with faith that her disease of the issue of blood had been healed. She really felt healthy blood through her body. She hopefully, understood she had been healed.

As the women listened to Veronica, one of them asked her whether Jesus spoke with her or whether she felt the presence of Him. Veronica replied that when she touched Him, “And Jesus immediately knowing in himself, some power had gone out of him turned and said “who touched my clothes?” When Christ questioned the disciples who touched Him, they said they did not know who had touched Him.

Then the woman Veronica saw all that and terribly afraid of Jesus and went to him, trembling and fell before Him and confessed all the truth. Christ was happy at her openness. He looked at her with the most loving eyes and said “daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace and be healed of your disease.”

The story of the woman of the ‘issue of blood’ is mentioned in the three gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is said her disease was healed only with her faith towards God and finally she told her story to the people like the sewing women. What had been done by the woman that came in fear and trembling? Then she fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. In this contact we as readers or as writers think seriously whether there is anything or anybody who could explore the depth of this simple story or what God appeared to be saying

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through this story with that remarkable belief and incident of healing, we must know about God's infinite knowledge of every human being.

As God did miracles in those days on the people of all diseases, we must not doubt that He can do the same miracles even today. But we cannot say what kind of miracles He is doing. So, by writing about a faithful woman, I must also as a writer develop faith in Jesus Christ. In the same way people by reading about faithful men and women they must develop faith in Jesus Christ. That depends upon each individual how one takes things into consideration.

God knew this young woman Veronica. He knew not only her prime need of physical healing of her issue of blood but also her long years of feeling of uncleanness and the humiliation in the public. The woman also knew that with her particular personality, she got the same idea that she was healed first by touching garments. God also knew she would not keep her remarkable story without telling others. Here the Master and the healer are God himself.

God wanted us to be perfectly whole. Jesus knew her as she was. In the same way He knew who we are. God is available to every one of us and knew every one of us inside and outside. This woman's faith made her wholesome. She has no plan but she casually went and touched Him and now she was a changed woman.

## THE GLORY OF GOD

According to prophet Jeremiah the temple of God was the most beautiful thing to Israel. So it is today tremendously impressive to whosoever saw it. The Greeks spoke about the seven wonders of the ancient world. But the gold, silver, cedar wood and fine tapstres that elevated the Lord's temple undoubtedly surpassed the wonders of the ancient world. And this Holy temple was the dwelling house to God Almighty's glory. Prophet Isiah said (10:7) "The Holy temple was the house of God's glory". It was the throne of God's glory where His sovereignty ruled.

The word 'glory' can be found hundreds of times in the Bible. In Hebrew language the word 'glory' (koad) gives the basic meaning of 'weight or heaviness' That is to say heavy (the heavy origin in its body). Glory is anything which is noticeable, which is impressive, and which brings honour to a person. We can find this word glory for the first time in the Bible when the riches of Jacob were described (Gen 31:1). Then we can say God's glory means 'His weight.' The Bible readers and believers generally say 'glory to God' to 'give glory to God' in order to praise Him. "Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name, worship the Lord in the beauty of His holiness" (Psalms 29:2).

The main purpose of worshipping the Lord is to glorify Him. And the modern end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him always. God created man is only to glorify Him. Through out Biblical history the manifestation of God's glory is in the form of fire and smoke. And the glory of the Lord was clearly seen on the mount Senai which was covered with cloud Scripture described the regular appearance of the glory of God was in many ways. The sound of glory fire was like many waters (Ezek. 43:2). The fairy cloud created wonderful impression upon the people who saw it and called it the glory of the Lord.

The Hebrew prophet Ezekiel gave a detailed and wonderful description of glory-fire in God's word. Ezekiel was just thirty years old when God called him.

he was a priestly descendent of "Zadok" the first high priest of king Solomon's temple. Ezekiel was remembered well by many people from his childhood days. At the same time he also remembered the wonderful reforms made by the godly king Josiah and then how the kingdom was tragically turned away from God after the death of Josiah. He remembered too how the Babylonians captured the holy Jerusalem in 605 B.C., and seized hostages from the royal family, then the vessels from the God's temple.

All these unhappy things happened when Ezekiel was eighteen years old. They carried away the new king along with 10,000 government officials and business magnets of the city Jerusalem. And apart from the valuable things from the city, they confiscated treasury from the temple, and the royal palaces. Finally Ezekiel the young priest of Judah was also taken as exiled in the second deportaion.

While Ezekiel was living by the side of Chelare river, he saw the glory of the Lord that a great cloud came from the north and it travelled swiftly along the ground like an aminous windstorm. The cloud was very dark and swirled like the desert dust devilbraged withfire. The swirling feiry cloud flashed with internal burst of lightening. It was surrounded by a brilliant hallow of light which lit up the sky.

The glory of God approached Ezekiel and he saw more of its terrifying details. He saw four winged beings in the basic of the cloud. He recognised those beings as cherubims. Then he lightening and fire flashed between them and bore a red bed of heat coals. Ezekiel saw God in the form of a man and fires and He sat on a slamming saphire which was like a throne. And He appeared like a flaming fire. His glory was roaring like the pouring Meditarranian surf of Askkelon and like the din of a great army in battle.

After watching all those things showed by God, Ezekiel fell to the ground in fear as the lowering of glory of God came as a clouido rest before him. The glory son had many names penned by different authors of the Bible. For example 'the glory' (1 Sam 4:20; Isaiah 4:5), 'the glory of the Lord' (Exodus 16:7; Act 7:58), 'the glory of God of Israel' (Ezekiel 8:4), 'the cloud' (Exodus 34:5), 'the cloud of the Lord' (Numbers 10:34), 'the cloudy pillar' (Exodus 33:9), 'the pillar of the cloud' and the pillar of fire (Exodus 13:22; 14:24). We can quote many more examples of this type refering to God.



We must understand that the glory fire was a visible living person. More than to say an elemental smoke. The Lord was referred to the glory fire as the 'Angel of God', His royal Angel, The Angel of His presence, and the angel of the Lord (Exodus 3:2). Moses clearly saw and understood the amazing appearance of 'glory fire'. And the angel of God which went before the camp of Israel and went behind and the pillar of the cloud that went before their face and stood behind them (Exodus 14:19).

The glory fire, so far we have studied was divine by nature. It was not only an angel of ordinary status, but also an angel of the Lord God Himself in the form of a fiery cloud. It is also in the Hebrew scripture that God appeared as the angel of the Lord and as a human being. At certain occasions He appeared as the angel of the Lord in the form of glory fire that when He appeared to Moses in the burning bush and He appeared in both form to Samson. It is really strange that God is also called an angel. So, both angel and messenger are synonyms and in Hebrew language it is called "malach". Therefore God must have been addressed as messenger also. The angel of God can appear as a the Son of God sometimes in the form of a human being and some times in the form of glory fire and according to Hebrew prophesy the angel of the Lord would take on flesh as the Messiah of Israel (with the head of God)

It is said the glory fire was a separate person of God-head. The Lord spoke of the glory fire was completely a different person. Obey the voice of the angel (a glory fire). Strangely this glory fire messenger was the embodiment of the divine ability either to forgive or to forgiveness of sin. "behold, I will send an angel before them"... beware of Him and obey His voice, provide him not for, we will not pardon your transgression for my name is in him" (Numbers 23:20-21).

The glory fire was a visible sign of God's presence. It was the local manifestation of the sign of omnipresence, God who cannot be contained in a building, yet, somehow He was dwelling in the midst of His chosen people; In the wilderness wanderings, He went before Israel in glory fire. Then God's promise to Moses "My presence (glory fire) shall go with thee.

### **The Meaning of glory fire**

The meaning of the glory fire was clarified by the Biblical Rabbis. They simply called it "Shechinah" the dwelling house of God's presence in their midst (Israel Shekinah is derived from the root verb "shekan" means dwell., abide to rest

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upon. And it is related to the Hebrew word for "Tabernacle" (Meshkan) dwelling place thereby it is also called the dwelling glory (Shekinah). The glory fire has fulfilled God's promise.

The rabbis also recognised the importance of the Shekinah and said it bore the name of our God almighty. Some medieval Jewish scholars had recognised the Biblical description of the Shekinah as a distinct person of the Godhead. They feared polytheism and gave their impression that Shekinah must be merely a created being to be called the representative of God Himself.

There is some link between the Tabernacle and occasions of God's glory fire. The Shekinah appeared a good number of time before the existence of Tabernacle. This shekinah was no doubt the divine light source of the world until God was on the second day of His creation. He happened to create "Sun" on the fourth day. After that God appeared in His shekinah glory as a smoking furnace and a burning lamp at the ratification of His eternal covenant with Abraham and as a burning bush representative to prophet Moses.

So, in the wilderness God showed His glory to Israel and the nations. His shekinah glory brought a cloudy distraction of that darkness to pharaoh's army which made them almost blind to move further and at the same time gave light to Israel on the other side of the camp. Then on the mount Sinai, Moses entered the Shekinah cloud when God revealed the law to him. When Moses climbed the mount Sinai for the second time he humbly requested God to show him His glory. Moses wished to see the unveiled brilliance of God. But God simply warned him that no man can see Him and live. Still in order to satisfy Moses, God showed him the least part of His glory (Exodus 33:22).

When Moses descended the mount Sinai the radiant (brilliance) or brightness of that glory still reflected on his forehead, which surprised all particularly Aaron. The word of God was commented on the great privileges of Moses and he was exalted by saying "And there arise not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses whom the Lord knew face to face." (Exodus 25:22).

God spoke with Moses out of fire, out of heaven and on the mount Sinai. Above all God showed His glory to Moses. The movements of Israel were guided by the glory fire, and defended their nation too. At the same time the glory fire executed the divine judgement and the Shekinah appeared upon the judgement of Israel when they grumbled and murmured for bread at the offering of the strange

fire by the sons of Aaron, at the treason of Aaron and Miriam, at the murmuring about the spices report at Kadesh Barnea.

The Shekinah showed itself in magnitude at the rebellion of Korah at the murmuring of Korah's death and finally at the Israel's complaining for water. The shekinah glory was normally connected with the Tabernacle and the temple. The glory fire covered Israel's camp with a protective cloud of shade during the day time and an illuminating pillar of fire during night time. This shekinah along resided at the Holy of holies and the cherubim of the Ark of covenant. It was present at the Tabernacle at the time of coronation or installation of Aaron and his sons as the priests and custodians of the Tabernacle.

The Shekinah glory was like the sacrificial fire of the temple altar that was kept continuously burning as a perpetual reminder of God eternal presence. The Shekina smoke cloud was present at the temple, at the commissioning of Israel. The shekinah showed itself on critical situations filled the temple with intense smoke. The shekinah glory will be seen continuously in the tabernacle, in Solomon's temple, in the future Messiah's temple and the heavenly temple. But this shekinah never resided in the second temple.

God gave to Aaron and his sons a benediction so that they would bless Israel. In this blessing He attached to His shekinah glory. The shining of the God's face can be seen elsewhere. In the Hebrew language the two words 'presence' and the 'face' are synonyms to the word panim. This panim is a hebrew word. This shekinah glory was God's face upon Israel. We may also see it was visible that is God's presence among His people. In other words God commanded the priests to pray for the Israel in faithfulness and obedience before Him . And with obedience and faith, they might enjoy the presence of God forever as a nation. It was the evident of God, evident of Shekinah in their midst.

Prophet Ezekiel said that the nation rebuilt and God removed this prganee when he received the God's glory with dwelling from the Temple "Soon afterwards the temple was destroyed and the time of the gentiles began" Then Israel were under the domination of gentiles. They were handed over to the gentile kings. God did all these to Israel for their wickedness and wanted repentance for what they had done. After their repentance only God wanted to show His favour to Israel. They had a hope of the return of Davidic kingdom and at the same time return of shekinah into the temple.

It is clearly pointed out that the shekinah and the Messiah are inseparably linked and it was interpreted by Apostle Paul. he explained that the Messaiah was also a diety. he followed Israel in the wilderness in the form of Shekinah glory. It is said the shekinah glory was multiplied at the time of the birth of Messiah. The shepherds who were feeding their sheep outside Bethlehem on the hills of Jerico were terribly afraid when the higlory of the Lord shone round about them (Luke 2:9).

Then the three wisemen also saw the shekinah glory as a star which guided them to the birth place of Jesus with His shekinah glory, just as He led the Israel in the wilderness. The wisemen in knowledge of the details of the scripture through the Jewish commentary. They were coming from the east at that time. The Hebrew prophets predicted the return of the shekinah glory but that glory would attract more gentiles like these three wisemen than Israel, who could bring true gifts of gold,silver and insense. These three wisemen who brought such costly gifts to the newly born Messiah clearly understood that the shekinah glory signified the Messiah's coming and also His second coming.

After sometime this shekinah glory was seen when Christ went up to a high mountain with Peter, James and John. Then Jesus changed His appearance before them and remained thou as the seen (Matt. 7:7 and Luke 9:29). All of them saw Jesus in the brightness of His future Messianic glory. After that a bright cloud (shekinah) appeared and God spoke from it. The glory of God could also be seen simultaneously radiating in the fiery cloud and in the Messianic flesh.

Both Moses and Elijah as the representatives of Law and prophets also witnessed the glimps of Messianic kingdom. The law maker Moses saw the glory of God on the mount Senai whereas Elijah was taken to heaven withoutdeath on the golden chariot of fire and whirlwind probably the shekinah. The Lord promised that two witnesses parable, Moses and Elijah will come to Israel at the end of the age, as true witness of the true Messiah. The appearance of Messianic glory was really very interesting because it reveals the true meaning of Messianic titles of fire and light.

The importance of transfiguration was not last among the four gospel writers. Apostle John wrote "And the word was made flesh and dwelt among usand we witnessed God's presence dwelling amongmen through the person of His son" The Lord after resurrection looked at the temple from the mount of Olive. Then a cloud received Him from heavenout their sight. The cloud wasnot

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an ordinary one. It was from heaven (the shekinah). At that time, the angels promised the disciples that the Lord would return in the same way as He ascended.

He ascended to heaven from the mount Olives and He also will descend to the Olive mount in His second coming. The Son of man in future will come down in the shekinah on clouds of heaven to the mount of Olives then to Jerusalem. The next appearance of the Shekinah glory happened in the apostolic age, when Stephen was stoned to death and became a martyr, the heavens opened and he saw "the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" In another occasion on the Damascus road Paul saw "the light brighter than the sun" shining from heaven while the Lord spoke to him.

There is inseparable connection between shekinah glory and the Messiah which is primarily seen in His future coming. On that day the brilliance of shekinah glory will be unveiled to the whole world. The shekinah presence of the Lord is linked with the last judgement. According to the Bible the future day of the fiery judgment will occur when the Messiah returns to establish His kingdom and it is called the last and terrible day of the land and when the God of the universe stands to judge the wicked and bring man's rebellion to a close.

The day of the Lord is the major subject of Biblical prophecy. The wicked cannot escape the day of God's judgement. His fiery judgement will descend upon the earth and does not stop until He brings His glorious Messianic kingdom. According to the Bible the day of the Lord is always "singular". The day of the Lord is always "future" and it happens at the end of this age. The day of the Lord is always "universal" and it is against the wicked.

The day of the Lord is always fiery and cataclysmic which means it will never be included in the blessings of Messianic kingdom. God's fiery Shekinah presence will be the energizing agent of the day of the Lord. "For behold, the Lord will come with fire and with His chariot like a whirlwind to show His anger with fury and His rebuke with flames of fire. His fiery shekinah presence will revenge the earth's atmosphere and geological elements. God will terrorize the wicked people in the day of His fierce anger. The ungodly will hide themselves in the rocks for fear of the Lord and for the glory of His majesty. The sinners in Zion will fear in God's devouring fire. And man's rebellion will not be successful for the Lord alone shall be exalted in that way.



According to the prophecies the Lord will be announced and immediately preceded by cosmic disturbance. Then the planet will plunge into darkness and a heavenly storm disturb the atmosphere and also the storm will fall to the earth. All these calamities coincide with the awesome display of His sovereign power over creation. The occurrence of worldwide earthquake moves every mountain and island out of their places. Those people who scoff at the Lord's coming will be punished out of time. God will turn out the lights supernaturally and then pour out the wrath.

The coming of the Lord is not a secret one. The indication of His presence will be at the time of the day of the Lord Jesus Christ will be identified as the shekinah glory as the sign of His coming. He will appear as the son of man in heaven... They shall see the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. It is said the coming Jesus will be a sudden appearance at the end of the age and at that time the skies will be blacked" for every eye to see. As history tells us the shekinah glory will signify His coming and presence. His appearance signifies the blowing of the trumpets and the followup of the angels with all the show He will come in the brilliant devouring fire of this shekinah glory.

It is no doubt catastrophic and most terrifying for the wicked people, the coming of the Lord. At the same time it will be great and terrific, day of the Lord. Like the peace of Christ's birth the wicked will be seized in agonizing judgement which no wicked one can escape. They will be caught like a thief and finally perish. So God warns men to repent and escape His wrath. The righteous will be delivered from His wrath and in His glory the righteous will meet Him.

The shekinah glory will return to Jerusalem after the judgement of God. Then the Messiah will usher in His earthly kingdom. God with His sovereign power draws the human history and the Messiah will build the temple of the Lord and He shall bear the glory and then He shall sit and rule upon His throne. The son of man shall come in His glory and the holy angels with Him and then He shall sit upon His throne.

According to New Testament prophecy, "And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it. For the glory of God will give the light, and the Lamb is the light finally." Then at that time the whole earth will be filled with God's glory. David strongly prayed for that future day. 'Let the whole earth be filled with His glory Amen and Amen' The Lord repeated for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And

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the shekinah will become the primary light source of the whole world.

As described by a renowned prophet the shekinah glory will literally enter the atmosphere of the heaven with bright light which appears like the canopy just as the water covers the earth which forms the sea. "God came from Teman" and the Holy Spirit from mount "Paran Selah" His glory covered the heaven and the earth full of His promises. The visions were also connected to the future coming of Messiah.

According to His visions the nations of the middle east will tremble at His coming and the seas will roar. The anointed Messiah will save God's believers and crush the Anti Christ and his subjects. God will march through the earth in utmost anger and crush the nations. Prophet Habakkuk gave wonderful description of what he had seen through his vision. He saw the total destruction of everything by God in future and he was terribly afraid of the situation.

As predicted by the same in the Bible the judgement of God is not far off. At the same time, the bible mentioned two contradictory statements. That is the proud and wicked people will totally reject the warning of the divine judgement because "This soul is lifted up is not upright in him". Therefore this proud person will object not only the fulfillment of the vision but also the person of the vision who spoke about the coming of the Messiah. And while coming He will bring the divine judgement with Him. This is the opinion of the proud and the wicked.

But regarding God's people, they just live by obedience and faith and they simply believe in the coming of Christ, the Messiah. And it is well pointed out that the coming of the Messiah will be in the fair brilliance of His glory and after His judgement, he will establish His eternal kingdom on earth. The promise of the Lord is sure and certain. The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord that spoken off. The glory of the Lord shall fill Jerusalem temple and the entire earth.

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## **PRIESTHOOD OF ISRAEL**

The priesthood of Israel did not have any mystical power over the population. This priesthood was established by the Lord. They were ordained by God Himself. They were the representatives of Israel before the one true God. To have national priesthood was quite common in ancient times and Israel had no exception. But it is said, Israel's priesthood did not have any connection with the deity of any kind. They were not mystically empowered over Israel's populace. They did not also practice occult activities in divination - fortune telling and astrology, and communication with the dead, sorcery).

The above said things were practiced among the pagans but not among God's people. Israel and if they did they were abomination unto the Lord. The priesthood of Israel was started by themselves, but it was done by God. The laws concerning the priesthood were also not implemented by themselves, but they were given comprehensive instruction for the duties of the priests and their requisite qualifications. The Aaronic priests and the Levites who assisted them were responsible for the areas of the temple. The priests kept the sanctuary in perfect order from evening to morning before the Lord.

There are some important priests mentioned in the Scripture. According to the chronological order, Aaron and his sons were the first priests. After them, the next notable priest was Ezra. He was the son of Seraiah the last high priest of King Solomon's temple. Some great prophets like Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Zecharias were also the priests. Coming to the New Testament, Zecharias and his son John the Baptist were priests. Then the church fathers considered apostle John as a priest. Due to this position John could have the access to the priests' quarters, thereby he became well known even to Caiaphas the high priest.

Then for the priesthood genealogy became a primary qualification. According to the law of Moses, Israel's priesthood was for the descendants of Aaron only as he was the son of Levi who was one of the sons of Jacob. God chose Aaron and his sons to maintain and to minister in the name of God. And

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that descending continued forever. It was considered capital offence if anybody other than the descendents of Aaron acted as priests. As declared by God, all priests should be Levites but all Levites need not be priests.

Aaron was a member of the descendents of the tribe of Jacobs son Levi. So it was quite clear that Israeli priesthood was a family dynasty and only Aaron's family was called to be priests. The sons of Aaron was a title synonym with the priesthood mentioned in the Bible. Even though both Aaron and Moses were brothers, only the descendents of Aaron became the priests based on the geneology. Therefore the priesthood of Israel was called the Levitical priesthood and also called a Aaronical priesthood.

It is said the Romans destroyed the Israel archives and the temple in 70 A.D. Some other commentators speculated that Herod the Great of the Idumean descent order for the burning of Jewish archives in 37 b.C. so that he would not be challenged for the Jewish's throne. Whatever may be the outcome or result of the Roman attack on Jews geneological records were kept only at the family level in a Seber Yuchosin (geneology book).

## **1. Regarding Historical Facts**

The geneological records of the ancient pre belongs found these records which indicated that Israel sociey, inheritance or property were based on tribal geneologies. According to the laws of Moses, the land of Israel can be based only but never sold and on the fiftieth year all the leased lands should be handed over to the owners. Then as per the law, the present and the history were referred to provide complete geneological proof of their qualifications for service. If the candidates geneology was not fully authentical in the public register, he would be barred from the temple service. But in the New Testament times its geneologies were validated by the Sanhedrin Coinel.

Roman historian Flavins Josephus testified in his record that a public geneological register existed during the second temple period. He mentioned as a proof of his own priestly ancestry from "Johathan the Hasnonean" high priest and from the family of priesthood. The information of Flavious Josephus, proved that the geneological records were carefully maintained especially for the priesthood. Whoever wanted to take part in the priesthood, must take his wife's geneology from the concerned tribes and secure many witnesses for that.

Those geneological records were carefully stored in Jerusalem for the world Jury. Josephus continued his explanation that the Roman burned the complete record of the concerned on the temple mound, but he did not say anything about the contents that were burnt. As a Sanhedrin was established in the temple they carefully authenticated the priesthood and geneologically the actual records were almost stored outset. In addition to that Josephus explained the plan of recovery for the purpose of preservation of these critical geneological records.

Inspite of the disaster, recovery plan the central repository was never re instituted. They were largely disposed after 70 A.D. the Temple remained disolate. The Sanhedrin fled Jerusalem and eventually disbanded a few centuries later. Now a days the priestly lineage is often preserved by family surname like - Cohen, and Kahen. These two words are from Hebrew language which means priest. Then this priesthood was through heritage was preserved by either Surnames such as - levey, levite, levian, lelburman, etc., The priestly and Levite ancetors are both identified in Jewish marriage contracts. Priests wer not allowed to preach God's word and if at all they wanted to serve God as preachers or teachers first of all they must be physically fit. The most popular medieval rabbi Maimmedes pointed out two types of defects that would permanently disqualify a person to become a priest. So, physical qualification was a must in the struggle for the high priesthood in 40 B.C.

The priest Mathatheas Antigamus became ambitious to occupy the seat of the high priest from his uncle Ayrcanus and at that time Judah was under Roman rule and Ayrcanus had full support from the Romans. In the meantime Antigonus rebelled against Roman rule and allied himself with the parthians (modern day Iran) who wished to capture Syria and Judah from the Romans. In such conditions Antigonus army interfered and liberated Jerusalem from Roman Authorities.

The narrator Josephus tried to maintain the complete information and kept it for the future generations to know. Those records also revealed that a meeting took place between Antigonus and Ayrcanus and the later happened to fall down on his knees by accident before his nephew Antigonus. And immediately Antigonus seized his uncles head cut a piece from each of his ears. This remarkable incident madke Ayreanus permanently crippled and handicapped and finally he was made physically disqualified to be the priest. And as he desired Antigonus occupied the honourable place of high priest office for three years only.



## **2. About Marriage**

In the mean time Herod the great captured Jerusalem and Antigonus was executed by the Roman authorities with regard to the marriages of the priest - The common priests were not allowed to marry so as to maintain some purity. As a matter of fact Israel's priests were prohibited from marriage. At the same time they were allowed to marry a widow of a priest (Ezekiel 44:22). It is said the high priest was required to be married to Gods word or commandments. "And he shall have a wife. And the high priest should not marry a woman who had been previously married but the priest would be permitted to marry a woman of Jewish origin and Jewish descendent.

## **3. The Age Limit of the Priest**

In the beginning of the introduction of the priesthood the age limit was thirty to forty years only. But after the Tabernacle came into existence, it required more men to serve the same and hence it was reduced to twenty five years. Then at the time of king David it was planned to build the temple and the age limit was further lowered to twenty years only and this is clearly mentioned in the book of Chronicles 23,24.

Priests who were more active would become *lamie* which means ritually impure and thereby they became disqualified to continue in the priesthood. The priest needed to be purified by washing their hands and feet at the laver before they entered the temple or before they approached its altar. And also the priests were prevented from touching the dead body and at the same time permitted to mourn for the people who died or for the relatives. They were not allowed to drink wine or alcohol when they were doing service.

## **4. Regarding the Consecration**

The priests were set aside for their consecration which was for seven days. At that time Aarons and his sons were anointed. The Lord commanded "And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them that they may minister unto me in the priests office" (Exodus 30:30). But according to Rabbunic commentary only the high priests were anointed after this initial setting up of the priesthood. In the first temple the high priests were anointed.

As Josephus explained during the first temple period the high priests were

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anointed with holy oil. But it is said the list of the ingredients of that special oil was lost at the time of the second temple and the priests were not anointed when they entered the office. This was done with common people only.

During the seven day ceremony Aaron was to wear priestly garments each day and he was sacrificed for his atonement. After that, he was anointed by pouring oil on his head. The blood and oil would be mixed from the sacrifice and smeared on his ear right hand limb and right leg toe. All this formality indicated that he was consecrated to the Lord.

## **Priesthood Organisation**

In 143 B.C., the high priest Jonathan Maccabeas died. After his death, his brother Simon assembled the heads of the priesthood which was called great Assembly. The members had to give religious directions to choose the next high priest and they finally appointed Simon only as the high priest.

This great assembly in the course of time changed its name as Sanhedrin which was Israel's main religious organisation during the late second temple period. This great assembly or Sanhedrin was comprised of 'seventy one' members headed by the high priest who would preside over the meetings. Again the same Sanhedrin comprised of both religious and political parties. Then the Sadducees were the priests who maintained the activities of the Temple. It is said they were the descendants of Zadok the high priest to the temple of king Solomon.

The Pharisees were Rabbis and scribes. They were committed to the maintenance of synagogues and teach theology which showed a wonderful progress in Rabbinic Judaism. Their name in Hebrew means 'separate ones'. Then the modern Sanhedrin was re-established in 2004 October in Tiberias, the last meeting of the Sanhedrin.

It was actually dissolved about seventeen centuries ago, but only for its name sake it has been continued. Then its membership was based on Scholarship, achievements and the present Sanhedrin has no governmental authority, but the members used to address religious issues only.

## **6. The High Priest**

The priesthood of Israel was organised under a high priest. The Bible also mentioned about the high priest as the priest and chief priest (cohen, Harosh). The

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high priest is above all the financial advisors and officer of the temple. And he was also a responsible person of the spiritual matters of the whole nation. The office of the high priest was managed by the persons whose health was supposed to be in good condition. Being on the perfect health, the eldest son of Aaron was selected to occupy the place of his father.

During the time of the Roman rule the office of the high priest was purchased by the eligible family members and in term of the office was some times one year and some times life time and every priest should be conferred by the Sanhedrin. Altogether from Aaron to Roman distruction in 70 A.D. both the second temple and Jerusalem city about 80 high priests served Israel.

## **7. The Second Priest**

Apart from the high priests, there were even deputyor assistant high priests who was officially called "bishop". He would do the service when the high priest was absent or disqualified due to some complaint or death. But the scripture called him captain of the temple. In addition to that hight priest and second priest for the temple activities, there were fourteen other members joined together and work for the improvement of the Temple. And this whole unit was called 'Temple Council'. Their prime duty was to look after all the temle matters These mmbers were also called 'elders of the priests' or 'councillors'.

## **8. The Twenty Four Courses**

At the time of king David this came into existence. He sub divided the preisthood into twenty four courses while making preparation for the first temple. This was called family decisions or courses or watches. Some times Aaron's family, that is his son Eliazar at the same time some other family courses were formed through the house of Aarons second son Ishamar. Each course served a one week rouring shift from Sabbath to Sabbath.

These courses were duely recognized after major disruptions in the priesthood when king Joash came into power. The most important thing he did was he washed out the idolatry in the temple. he instructed the priests to recognize the Davidic courses. Finally all those priesthood family courses were re entroduced after the Israel returned frm their Babylonian captivity.

## **9. The Chief Priests**

It is said that those twenty four members were called the chief of the priests

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or princes of the 'Sanctuary' and chief of the fathers of the priests. It is really wonderful and strange when these twenty four courses and their chief were referred to the twenty four elders and the angelic attendance in the heavenly temple.

When we come to the New Testament period, these chief priests were antagonistic to the preachings and teachings of Jesus Christ and his followers. The chief priest like Caiphas who finally came to an agreement with Judas for the betrayal. And the matters went to the stage of condemning the innocent man Jesus to death. As a matter of fact for the crucifixion of Jesus for no fault of Him, the chief priest Caiphas was responsible in particular.

The same authorities who tried for the crucifixion of Jesus issued warrants to Saul to bring the believers from the city of Damascus. In spite of all that as Luke recorded that among the regular priests in Jerusalem a good number of priests were loyal and obedient to Jesus and the faith.

## **10. Priesthood Duties**

Israel priesthood in the general was interceding for men before God. As written in the Bible they were chosen by God to come unto Him and meet with Him. It is mentioned in 1 Samuel that the priests along offered the sacrifices and also they inspected the sacrifices. They fired the burnt ashes on the altar. They offered animals on the altar for the sacrifice. They used to burn the daily incense and refresh the show bread on every Sabbath etc.,

Israel priests were given complete power to maintain all the activities of the temple. God gave them sole authority on the temple and charge of the altar. They were also authorised to look after the cleanliness of the temple vessels and to see whether they were kept at their proper places for use. As explained by a Rabbi ninety three sacred vessels were required for daily service. They looked into the neatness of the Menorah also twice a day. They make sure regarding cleanliness of transgression of the law at the temple. Finally the priests were in charge of the treasury of the temple and the national financial centre and guarded the inner gate every night.

## **11. Teaching of God's Law**

The priests were instructed to teach the truth, the God's law to Israel. Then Aaron the first priest was commissioned to teach his chosen people all the statutes, which the Lord hath spoken with them through Moses. The preservation

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and teaching of God's law was specially planned to the priests. Moses happened to write the law and delivered them to the priests, the sons of Levi. As per the rules put forward, the priesthood would read the whole law before the people that gathered in the temple. During the Sukkot at every Sabbatical seventh year. The regular habit of that day is still continued and recognized in the synagogues even at present. The recording of Torah (law of Moses) first started and read in Sabbath then it was repeated to the priests and then for a Levite the assistant of the priest. It was the belief of the ancient rabbis that part of the God's law was explained in the Talmud in 250 A.D. It was prepared by Moses and read by Joshua to the stiff-necked Israel and only the written word of God has the divine authority.

## **1. The Priesthood Blessings**

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord shall make his face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up the countenance upon thee and give thee peace" (Numbers 6:24).

The priests promptly delivered God's blessings upon the people through a prayer known as priestly blessing which is in Hebrew (brikot kohamin). This blessing was given each day at the concluding morning service. The concerned persons would shout at one voice recite the brief wording which was only in 15 words in Hebrew language. Perfectly made by the Lord. "The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace". Priestly descendants were to pronounce the blessing. Let us hope and believe that these blessings may be familiar in our families now.

There were many duties which would be mainly done by the high priest. In this context he must as well enquire of the Lord using the Urim and Thummim. The high priest must be served in the Holy of holies or an *Yan Heppur* or offer sacrifices to the sins of the priesthood or the nation, or officiate the consecration of the priest. Actually the high priest was not restricted to any particular service.

It must be in rotation, like the family four courses. Then he must become eligible to do any priesthood duty at any given time. But according to Josephus the high priest officially would perform his duty on the seventh days of the new moons and on any other important festival. Then on the eve of the death of a high priest, all who were exiled to the cities of refuge for committing manslaughter would be freed from the exile, and they would go to their houses without any further punishment.



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## THE UNHAPPY STORY OF DINAH

Jacob was also called Israel. He had twelve sons and one daughter and her name was Dinah. He was moving from one place to another with his big family and in such condition came to a place called Shechem. There, Jacob brought a piece of land around the city of Shechem and pitched the tents for the family. Dinah was the only teenage daughter remained restless in her tent and weeping non-stop in her bed. There was no other girl of her age around that family to be friendly with her and console her in such position.

Her despair and hopelessness made her to keep her head under the pillow and remorse in agony. As written in the Bible, she was the only girl in the family of Jacob of her age and she had twelve brothers. The other women like her mother Leah and nurse Deborah were older women to be with her and understand her feelings.

Dinah's mother Leah particularly could not understand the problems and thoughts of that young girl. Added to that the pleading questions of her mother made things worse and even she refused to raise her head and look at her. At the age of fifteen, Dinah lost her chastity through the young prince of Shechem under unavoidable circumstances and with that incident she began to think her life came to an end. Her pain and anguish were magnified in her and she was drowned in grief.

Leah came out of her tent and called her nurse Deborah, and asked her to go to Dinah immediately to console her as she was not talking with anybody, not even looking at anybody. Leah hoped that Dinah might talk at least with Deborah because of her long stay in their house and her intimacy with the girl. So, with that impression Deborah also got confidence.

According to Leah, Deborah would certainly find out the reason of her daughter's restlessness and remorseness. Deborah wanted to do something as a last favour to that family because she was on the verge of her death due to her age.

She was ninety years old and she was suffering from fever at that time. As Leah instructed, Deborah went to Dinah but even to her she did not speak for some time. She patiently waited at the tent of Dinah and thought that she must solve the problem at any cost.

The old woman Deborah was dizzy and almost fainted but still waited patiently for her talk. Time and again Deborah warned Dinah regarding the dangers and problems the young girls would face when they were left out of the protection of the family members. As a lonely girl of her age in the entire family of Jacob, she spent her lonely life in her tent in sobbing and depression. Dinah was really a beautiful girl. She was a matured girl physically more than her age, but now she became a rebellious woman (girl). And Deborah as a family nurse tried her best in bringing up Dinah but failed in this affair only.

It was undoubtedly a difficult matter for an old woman like Deborah to accept failures at that moment. She did not actually teach Dinah regarding dangers and risks the young girls would face from young men in the society. She also failed in educating Dinah about the safety of her character. So Deborah confessed her negligence in this matter and said, “I must stop dwelling on my own place, I must wait here with her and pray for her”. She waited and waited on her dozing a little because of her age and fever.

All of a sudden Dinah sat upon her bed and screamed desperately. Deborah was surprised at this, went near her to console her, and if possible to hear what she would say. But Dinah screamed again and again and opened her mouth. She talked peacefully by saying, “why this should happen to me?”. Deborah became more sympathetic towards her from that time onwards and decided to stay with her but never to leave her alone. Then Dinah continued her talk and said “why such unhappy thing took place in my life only?”

After hearing the whole story Deborah answered in her feeble voice that Dinah went to the ‘Shechem’ city to see only wicked and abominable things. As she went alone, she was trapped by the young prince of Shechem who excessively assaulted her with the promise he would marry her. Deborah also said such thing would not have happened if she had not gone lonely into that wicked city. Dinah did not want scolding from anybody. She hoped that the man who spoiled her chastity made a promise he would marry her and she believed his words and she

also loved him because he was the prince of Shechem.

Whatever might be the hope of Dinah, everything in the house went against her, though her father Jacob and some of her brothers were brooding over the matter, Simeon and Levi both went and brutally murdered the entire members of the royal family and all men in the city. And it is said they took away their properties also. But Dinah in her teens (teenage) was unable to understand this entire unhappy thing.

There were no young men other than her family members either to love or to marry because all the city young men were gentile and uncircumcised; Jacob's was the only family which had direct link with God. The prince of Shechem was also a heathen family but Dinah did not know all the difference. In her thoughts and dreams she already became his wife.

She also dreamed how much Shechem loved her, she thought how she should live and behave with him in that royal palace. But all her imagination was shattered by the death of the prince. Jacob's family was God fearing where as the prince was heathen and uncircumcised and her brothers could not compromise with that. The main reason for the killing of the prince was he defiled her as she was the girl of fifteen years only. So the miserable death of the prince made her more miserable.

She was unable to guess what her future would be. Actually both were happy as they loved each other and planned even to marry with the consent of her family. But luck was not in their favour. Eventually the prince was murdered and she was left alone only to brood over the incidents that occurred. Their love must be spontaneous, perhaps love at first sight. But his heinous and sinful act made her brothers to take that hasty action of killing him.

This gruesome murder made her desperate. She did not know what to do; when was unable to guess how her future would be. It was only her two brothers Simeon and Levi who went and killed the prince as he was a heathen, an idol worshipper. In such circumstances, Dinah was angry and told Deborah that she too wished to die as her lover had been killed. The unbearable act of Dinah and the prince made her brothers murderers and her father was afraid of those people for what had happened. Dinah also told the old woman Deborah that her father would be hated in all the land for having such cruel and merciless men as his sons. As Shechem was killed Dinah also wished to die with the presumption they might

join in their death.

Some scholars made different interpretations regarding the tragic, violent and confusing Biblical story. It is from the book of Genesis. Some other scholars were of the opinion as how Jacob experienced God's punishment for his mischievous behavior when he was young. We all know how he deceived his own brother Esau, for birth right and his father who was blind in order to get his blessings on the advice of his selfish mother and finally fled to his mothers brother Laban.

Jacob stayed in the house of his uncle for fourteen years and served him for the sake of his two daughters Leah and Rachel. Another group of scholars doubted the very behavior of Dinah towards Shechem that caused insult to her father. Though she was brought up in perfect conditions, circumstances made her plunge into immoral activities; inspite of her moral and religious upbringing.

She happened to do all that unknowingly because she entered into that wicked city Shechem. She went alone. The story of Dinah's life can be a good moral lesson to the present teenagers of any country. If they move alone like Dinah in a strange place without the knowledge of the parents or friends or other family members, they might face the same type of consequences in their life.

At the same time we may get doubt whether the story of Dinah in the Bible was for a moral story for future generations. As a matter of fact, the story of Dinah and her lover Pagan prince Shechem, then their fateful tragic end, as the consequences of their love became one of the dramatic at the same time realistic story in the entire Bible. We can presume that no other writer or reader can deny this fact. Sometimes this kind of incidents occurs in our life inspite of our alertness. Both Dinah and her lover the prince walked on the wrong track unknowingly.

So to say both were different people culturally and religiously and even socially. Dinah was from a God knowing family, where as Schechem was pagan. They were like east and west that never join together. As they walked wrongly, the consequences of that was they had committed an unpardonable sin. Even after their heinous act they remained loving each other. Then the prince planned to take her to his palace and keep her as one of the family members. Dinah also dreamed of many things in that royal palace. But their dreams remained as dreams. And we are told this entire story to believe. And what actually happened was different. It is said the Shechem prince seized Dinah as she was alone and slept with her

and made her humble towards him.

If we look into the Hebrew translation of the Holy Bible, it is written, “He took her by force”. As the matter interpreted the prince Shechem did not rape her but seduced her. Yet, if God permits this turbulent story would be an example to all young Christian teenaged girls, though it is confusing to them. Basing on this story much might be said or written about the innocent and desperate Dinah who happened to go to the city alone and enjoy herself by looking at beautiful shops with wonderful things inside and also young boys and girls with attractive dresses and so on.

She must have visited that kind of city perhaps for the first time in her life. If we look into this affair from the point view of Jacob this heart breakings incident was nothing but the real punishment to Jacob for the sin of his past life. Jacob in his early life deceived his brother Esau for the birth right and also his old father Isaac to get his blessings on the advice of his mother because she loved him more.

On the other hand we cannot come to a hasty conclusion that God would punish people by remembering their past incidents. And also we can ascertain them that God would not stoop down to that level of punishing His own children. If at all God wants to punish His children, He would do that with love only. And God seemed to have done the same thing in this case. This story is nothing but the human emotions and a desire for vengeance that played a pivotal role in this tragic story that had gone to the level of a melodrama.

Dinah in her immature and uncontrollable emotions did that sinful act as some people also do in such conditions. In the same manner prince Shechem also behaved in his weak moment and defiled her. Then Dinah’s brothers came to know this tragic event and became furious. They immediately went and killed the young prince and others. Had the brothers thought a while, the result of their revengeful act there is every possibility that the whole city would have vengeance against that single family of Jacob. So, the main purpose of the “sin” is that it makes people to react in different ways to do something wrong and then face the consequences.

There is no doubt Jacob was heartbroken in this matter. He really valued his name and fame and his personal integrity. He wanted to keep up all these qualities among his neighbours. But regarding this incident Jacob cried unto his two sons, Simon and Levi who committed the murder and said, “you have brought trouble



### *The unhappy story of Dinah*

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on me, by making me odious to the inhabitants of the land the Canaanites and the perizzites.

But the words of Jacob are different in King James version of the Bible. It is said “you have troubled me, to make stink among the inhabitants of the land”. There is no doubt Jacob experienced mental agony because of his daughter and sons. He was fully ashamed of the situation. We can imagine that God must have given Jacob a different situation in his life. When Jacob was young, we see according to the Bible, he ran away from his house to his uncle Laban’s, afraid of his brother Esau. On the way he dreamed, and in that, God appeared to him and took a promise. But he broke his promise. It appeared that Jacob slightly slipped away from his faith in the meantime.

As we find in the Bible, while Jacob was coming to his home land with his two wives and children it so happened Rachael his second wife carried some idols in her baggage for which her father ran after them. When they met they had hot discussion between Laban and Jacob and finally Laban went back with the idols.

Our faith and belief are that God would certainly come to our rescue in times of need. God reminded Jacob about the forgotten vow and asked him to go to Bethel and build the promised altar to the Lord God. God wanted to take back the wandering Jacob into His fold and also take away the tragic scene of his daughter Dinah. He really treated Jacob as a father treats his son.

God is always our redeemer when we are in trouble or in tragic circumstances. Jacob obeyed God, built an altar at Bethel and continued his relationship with God. Jacob remembered God when he was in trouble and just at that time their nurse Deborah died. Jacob buried that old woman under an oak tree near the altar at Bethel with love and affection. We can presume and believe that the comment of some writers that the very conduct of the Dinah was influenced by the indifferent attitude of Jacob towards God.

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## **SAMSON AND DELILAH**

According to the Bible there are four persons who were born in extraordinary circumstances, with some purpose of God. Two of them were from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament. As per the chronological order the first one was Isaac, born to Abraham and Sarah at their old age. And He chose the children of Abraham as His own people who are called Israel. The second blessed one was Samson. He was also born to aged parents for the purpose of suppressing the Philistians who were troubling Israel. God got His work done through Samson.

Then the third person was John the Baptist from the New Testament. His parents were Zachariah and Elizabeth, who were too old to beget children. God had some purpose to be fulfilled through John the Baptist. He was born to testify about the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. John baptised people and used to say, "I baptise you with water, but who comes after me, will baptise you with fire and Holy spirit". John the Baptist was used as an instrument to tell about the coming Messiah to the people.

The fourth one is also from the New Testament. He was Jesus Christ. He was born to virgin Mary, a young teenage girl who was only betrothed but not yet married. The birth of Jesus was only through the Holy Spirit from God".

Here, I am going to deal with the story of Samson and Delilah. According to the Biblical information, Samson was the most powerful man in the entire history of Judah. God has some purpose to be done by Samson. God wanted to eliminate the Philistines who had become a perpetual menace to Israel. So for that purpose God selected the old parents, who had already crossed the age of begetting children.

God sent an angel with a message to the parents of Samson. He wanted to suppress the Philistines, through the abnormal strength of Samson. So, physically he appeared to be more than a giant. He reigned Israel as a judge for twenty years,

### *Samson and Delilah*

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was honored and respected for his wisdom and extraordinary superhuman strength. He was so strong and a dare devil, he happened to kill a lion as if it was a rabbit like thing. In another occasion, when his own people the Israelites, bound him and handed over him to the enemies the Philistines, he freed himself from the ropes as if they were twigs. Then he attacked them with no other weapon than a jawbone of a donkey and killed hundreds of them. The Philistines treated the Israelites as their dead enemies and so Samson was born to suppress them and he created terror among them as a single man till his death.

At the time of his birth an angel instructed his aged parents, how he should be brought up. As the angel said, Samson should remain as a nazirite. He should not drink heavy wine. He should not cut his hair, nor shave his head and finally dedicated to the noble service of God, to check the troublesome Philistines. And finally the parents obeyed and raised him by following instructions of the angel. And from his birth the strength of God remained with him (in his body).

Therefore, to capture such a man who was the embodiment of such abnormal strength became a national emergency to Philistines. The strong military and the iron fetters could not do anything to the Samson because his power and strength was from God. Once he was forced to exhibit his strength before them. Then Samson uprooted two iron door pillars and crumpled a city gate. So, it became cruel necessity for the Philistines to investigate and find out where his strength did lie.

There is no doubt, Samson was a successful judge to Israel and he was filled with supernatural strength. But he was a weak person in something. He was a womanizer. He already visited two women probably prostitutes and already became popular among such women. In such circumstances, he was attracted more to the beautiful Philistine harlot by name Delilah. Actually Samson visited some women and he found Delilah more beautiful so he finally settled with her.

The Philistine leaders, princes etc., finally planned to capture Samson through the help of the harlot Delilah. So as to catch him and trap him through her, each prince offered about eleven hundred silver pieces to her to find out the real strength of Samson so, that he would be caught and be taken into their custody and finally kill him. But Samson was destined to be trapped by that deceitful harlot to face tragic events.

Samson became a slave to the external beauty of Delilah and in his weak

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moment he would say, “Delilah, I had known many women, but I have never loved anyone but you”. He also pulled her close to him and said “Delilah, I love you”.

His behavior towards her showed that he was very much infatuated by her voluptuousness. When she was free from Samson she would simply laugh at his broad bearded face. Poor fellow, he could not understand the cunning attitude of that woman who was acting like that for money.

So, when she laughed at him, he asked her why she was behaving like that. She replied for that cunningly whether he loved her better than any other woman. Then Samson replied that he was open to her as the heart of a shepherd boy. In her curiosity, she enquired where his strength and magnificent power remained and she wished to know if anything could bend him. So that he would become an ordinary man.

She again insisted whether he really loved her. But Samson laughed at her deceitful nature and doubt then said if he was bound with seven forest wood fiber cords still green and strong not yet dried then he would become normal like any other man. Delilah believed his words and clapped her hands. Immediately a Philistine prince who was hiding in the house of Delilah came out with the fresh wood fiber cords and gave them to Delilah. She then tied Samson with them and called for the Philistines and at the same time shouted to Samson to save himself. But he gave least importance to her treacherous plan. He came out of the fiber cords as if it was a thread and came to Delilah with laughing.

She asked him again where his enormous strength was. She stressed more this time. He played a trick with her this time by saying that if he was tied with a heavy bend of new, unused rope as if it was dried vines, while Samson was laughing, she too pretended to be laughing and played a lovers game. But on one hand the Philistine princes were hiding in Delilah’s house ready to catch him at any moment and on the other, she waited to finish her job by trapping him, and find out his secret of strength and then handover him to the Philistines and finally got her promised money from the princes.

Delilah wanted money only but not love as poor Samson thought. He did not know such men do whoredom only for money and nothing else. He frequented her house because he was mad after her. His mind was filled with her only. He was influenced by her slim and slender body, her enchanting perfumes, how she used



## SAMSON AND DELILAH







to embrace him, all these things stamped in his mind and he was unable to forget her.

Delilah too pretended to have loved him, but really she was brooding over her master plan for the sake of money. When she enquired again where his strength lie he said, she need not give any signal to Philistine lords because Samson knew they were hiding in her house itself. But this time she thought he would tell the truth. So she pretended not to be in hurry to find the secret of his strength as both went closer, she kissed him, and cradled his leg for a while and finally lulled him to sleep.

While he was in deep sleep for she wound the seven locks of his thick brown hair into the cloth of her loom. Then she made a shrill cry that caused him to wake up from his deep sleep. He jumped on his feet turned loose the pin from the loom along with the cloth. When Samson did all, Delilah thought she was fooled again. She got angry and fell into his arms. And he thought she was everything to him. His mind became blurred with the external beauty of Delilah but he could not understand the crooked plan of her. So with that impression he remained in her magic.

He forgot God. He forgot the main purpose of his coming into this world through his old parents. He forgot that he was a mighty judge of Judah (the Israel). He became a womanizer.

Now he did not want to play anymore with her and so revealed the secret of his strength. Actually, his strength would have answered at least a thousand men at a time. But he confessed that his strength was from God. He was a Nazarit from birth. He took vowth never to cut his hair nor shave his face. If he cut his hair and shave his head his strength would go from him immediately and he will become an ordinary man.

Delilah did not give any signal to call any body at this time. She was very cautious. So that Samson would not get any doubt. Her woman's intinct prompted her that he would not lie anymore and she discovered truth in his face. The Philistine lords had been watching all the time hiding themselves behind curtains in her house. She went close to Samson, and began to caress him by embracing his massive head and said she was in love with him. It was undoubtedly a wonderful hypocrisy. For her cheating words he expressed his deep love for her. Both went into happy mood for a while and then she lulled him to sleep with her

tender words and soft kisses on his long hair by keeping him on her lap.

She saw him in deep sleep. She at once gave signal and in no time the lord and the razor flashed on his head. After the last lock was cut Delilah thought the strength had gone from his shoulders. The condition of Samson became pathetic. He became a common man. Much might be said on both sides regarding the down fall of Samson. But much more is said about Delilah in the Bible, who was considered by the scholars and readers as one of the most heartless and wicked women that we come across in the Bible.

The Biblical Delilah was a primitive woman, but still remains in our memory for her extra ordinary performance of her character. She played her part as a lady villain we might call, to the best of ability. This is the story that happened more than three thousand years back. So we must congratulate her for her wonderful action.

Some scholars of the nineteenth century commented about Delilah's evil heart and other qualities in wonderful phrases – "her immorality and her love of filthy lucre" etc. They were more than right in their comment. Delilah was anything and everything says the book of Proverbs "that a woman is not supposed to be ." People who read the story of Samson and Delilah in the Bible would certainly understand the true and unique character projected. Those writers were of the opinion that there may be some house wives with some ulterior motives like Delilah may try to do some harm to their husbands. This kind of women who are outwardly "moral and not use sex" as a primary act. Whatever may be the opinion of different people "deceit is deceit" and "treachery is treachery". This is also "sin" as the "sin" of Delilah. At the same time, we have to remember the cultures the social conditions and spiritual standards of those days of Samson which were completely different from ours.

It was casually mentioned in the Bible, that "Samson went to Gaza and there he saw an harlot and he went into her" (Judges 16:1). The main purpose of mentioning the character of Delilah is that, we are concerned to her deceitfulness rather than her immorality and the moral we learn from the story is that we must be honest to ourselves. We may feel deceitfulness among women in different ways. Some women systematically practice deceit by criticizing the husbands before the children in their absence and defend themselves.

As Delilah used her tactful razors to trap Samson the womanizer, our

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### *Samson and Delilah*

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present women use their tactful razors, to rap their husbands, our razors are called 'womanly wils', 'womenly wires', 'womenly deceit'.

But in different instances a woman has hunted till she found men weak points and then sometimes they try to blackmail their husbands. In the same manner Delilah did something to Samson in those days to trap him. And modern Delilahs is reverting to type - Mother Eve's type – The first woman wished to be "in contol". So she grabbed the forbidden fruit, knew her husband's weakness for the fruit, tempted him to eat and there our trouble started.

After Samson was caught, he was taken to Gaza and the Philistines pulled out his eyes. He was made blind. Then he was forced to remain in the prison house. In the meantime his hair grew as the previous one and again he became a mighty man. But the Philistine lords were planning to sacrifice Samson to their dragon god and celebrate the happiest occasion. Now Samson was without eyes.

With the help of a boy, Samson came and stood between two heavy pillars of the huge building wherein all the Philistine leaders were enjoying themselves. Then he prayed to God by saying, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee strengthen me I pray that only this once. O God, that at once I may be avenged of the Philistines for my eyes" (Judges 16:28).

Then he held the two pillars of the strong building and pushed them. With that the whole building fell down and all the people in the house were killed. He also died along with them. This is the tragic end of Samson. There is also a play "Samson and Delilah".



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## TRAGIC LIFE OF JEPHTHAH AS SON AND FATHER

Jephthah was the son of Gilead born to a prostitute. He was a mighty and most powerful warrior. Gilead's wife also bore him sons. The sons of Gilead born to his wife one day told Jephthah, that he had no right to claim any property that belonged to their father, because he was an illegal son born to a prostitute. So, Jephthah thought that his step-brothers might kill at any time if he continued to stay in their house. He left that house unhappily and came to a new place called Tob. In the meantime some outlaw people became his friends and Jephthah spent his time by going to riding with them.

Some years passed. At that time the children of Ammonites became a headache to Israel. They wanted to declare war against Israel. In such situation some elders of the town Gilead decided to approach Jephthah to help them in such critical time and fight with Ammonites by leading the Israel army as a commander. Then Jephthah made a vow to the Lord. He asked the elders to hand over the Ammonites to him so that he would deal with them. He also talked about the burnt offerings to God and the elders accepted all his demands as they needed him at that time.

Jephthah went to the battlefield and defeated Ammonites massively. The result of the battle was about twenty towns came under his control and the Ammonites became submissive to Israel since that time. After the war Jephthah returned home at Mizpah and at place his only daughter was waiting to welcome him anxiously for his great victory. She wished to receive him with tambourine music and dancing. She was the only daughter and no sons to Jephthah. And when he saw her first, immediately he tore his clothes. He spoke to her saying she brought disgrace to him and added he would not take his oath back from the Lord. Actually, there are some more fascinating characters that their worth was not recognized in the Bible. We miss such men and women.



### *Tragic life of Jephthah as Son and Father*

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Our hero Jephthah might be one of such characters who remained unrecognized and ignominous. He remained unknown to anybody for more than thirty years in a strange place. It is only due to the ill-treatment of the half brothers at Gilead in his father's house. He undoubtedly did great service to Israel the God chosen people. When they were threatened by Ammonites their neighboring nation, he did that service as Samson saved Israel from the hands of Philistines and as Gideon saved Israel from the hands of Midianites.

But Jephthah was not given as much importance in the Bible as Samson and Gideon. His story was said only in about 12 verses (Judges 11:1 – 6 and 30:35). The story of Jephthah appeared to be a classic tragedy. After his birth he led his life as a tragic son and ended his life as a tragic father.

As the readers of the Old Testament Biblical story, we must realize that Jephthah symbolized a tragic character that was controlled by the tragic incidents only in his life as if he was a chosen victim. For such persons from birth to adult, life and finally to death, their life would be a series of disappointments and confusions and at last mental see-saw. As we understand, the reproductive system of the world in birth as men produces men and tragedy produces tragedy. So persons who experience perpetual storms and pains in life they conclude that life is nothing but a tragedy.

But in this story, the writer of the judges introduced Jephthah as a Jephthakite to the readers. Then he was a mighty warrior. His father was Gilead and his mother was a prostitute (Judges 11:1). The greatness of the Biblical writers was that they were very economical in using the words. Accordingly we can understand his life story, though it is in a few words. Regarding his childhood life we can imagine something in these words, "Gilead's wife also bore him sons". These words showed that Gilead was financially sound.

So, Gilead brought Jephthah to his house and raised him though he was born to a prostitute. We must also give credit to Gilead's wife for taking the responsibility of the boy. She brought him up well. But the presence of Jephthah was a regular reminder of the infidelity of her husband Gilead. But still he must have requested her to take care of the boy Jephthah who was like a half brother to the sons of Gilead. They understood him and almost treated him as a stranger in their house. When he grew, they came to know about his birth by accident. And he must have thought of his mother who was a prostitute by profession. He must have cursed his father for this entire unhappy thing.

He could not know that one day he would become a great man and more popular among Israel. Any way the time had come. his half brothers finally asked him mercilessly to leave the house and they said “you shall not inherit anything in our father’s house” and added “you are the son of another woman”. It is quite natural to be unkind, when the question of property comes. These words made Jephthah afraid of his half brothers and fled from the house from the hostile atmosphere. Then he went to the land of Tob.

He would become a leader and that was in his blood also. This heroic spirit prompted him to gather some outlaw people. They became friends and spent their time by riding. The standard version called them “worthless fellows”. They finally became seekers of fortunes. Then all of a sudden, there was a wonderful change in the life of Jephthah. The Israel had to face war with their enemy Ammonites the neighbouring nation. In such situation, they needed a worthy leader or commander to lead the army into the battlefield. The spirit of the Lord came upon him.

They wanted a military type of leader who could command and shout at the victory. So the elders of the Gilead town gathered together and planned to approach Jephthah because they knew his talents. It was decided upon and a delegation was sent to meet him for his approval and leadership. The members met him and made a request to lead the Israel army into the battle field. But he was smart enough to remind them, how they all once tried to cast him out for the back ground of the birth and other reasons that caused him flee from that place.

All the above said incidents were lingering in his mind. On the other hand the Israel’s were in a helpless position. They badly needed his help because they knew he was a successful man wherever he went. Finally he accepted but put some conditions. The delegation accepted all his conditions as there was no other alternative for them. Now Jephthah became the commander in chief of the Israel armies to lead against Ammonites. He was no doubt a brilliant and able leader. His unpleasant past life must have prompted him to establish himself with good strength and ability to do any kind of work.

As a leader with remarkable statesmanship he tried his best as a mediator to avert war. He tried through conferences to come to an understanding. Yet all his attempts became futile. And finally reconciliation became impossible. The Israel army is also well organized for the battle. Then Jephthah made an vow to the Lord saying “if you will give me the children of Ammonites into my hand” he pledged,

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“then whatever would come out of my house first to meet me when I return victorious from the Ammonites shall be the Lords to be offered by me as a burnt offering” (Judges 11:30-31).

It is no doubt a strange, violent and inhuman vow he had taken with God. Some theologians were of the opinion that according to the expectations of Jephthah, some animal might come or some servant from the house. But the language and inference of that statement showed that no other than some human being would come out of the house first and he wanted to sacrifice that as burnt offering to God. However, the decision he had taken was incomprehensible to the present day and culture.

Now-a-days we find some people who use to bargain with God by saying that they go to church regularly by their faith, if God can give them what they needed like a good job, prosperity in business, promotions, medical seats etc. Some others may say they give huge money to the church if they become great politically or in the church politics. Even those people who engage themselves in such activities in divine speculation could never expect vowing human sacrifices.

It is said in the Hebrew scripture that it never approved human sacrifices, but this must be in regular practice in some group of Israelites or some neighbouring people of Israelites. But those inhuman sacrifices were strictly prohibited among Jews. Keeping aside the peculiar life of his people at that time, Jephthah was a successful man in all his attempts and he never accepted failure in his life.

He believed in winning. He might have well said, “winning is the only thing” and that's true in politics, sports and wars. As he anticipated Jephthah won the battle. It was a magnificent victory to Jephthah and to Israel. Since the Ammonites faced utter defeat they became submissive to Israel. As he said before going to the war he returned home. As he approached his house the first person that came out of the house was no other than his daughter. It is really a pathetic scene to look at.

She was the only child, only daughter and no sons. She was fully excited to see him. She came to him as if she was welcoming her father. She came playing the tamburins. She was dancing and rejoicing in her father's wonderful victory over the pagan Ammonites. She was everything for him in his life. This favourite girl was on the verge of her womanhood. She was more beautiful than any other

girl in her time. She loved her father so much that she even worshipped him because his victory became her greatest pride.

The girl in her excitement ran to her father and her approach to him was like the fall of heavens. He saw his daughter. Immediately he tore his clothes and wept. He looked at her desperately. He rebuked his daughter by saying that she brought disgrace to him. He said he had opened his mouth before God, and he could not take back his oath.

Let us as readers think for a while who was really responsible for bringing him to the lowest position of insult. Really it was not his daughter but himself. He himself had gone to that level by taking unnatural oath with God.

In this context, someone would have advised Jephthah, that God would certainly honor it if he withdrew his oath with God. But he was a man of severe commitment. This is a strange story in the Bible even the strangest, one can say. We all know Jephthah not as a man who sacrificed his own daughter by honouring his vow to God. Let us forget about his sacrifice for a while and think about him. What kind of man he was. The story of Jephthah was a remarkable and pathetic one.

For example, about a business man He will be always busy in his transactions, meeting different business people, travel to places on flights, then he has to think about his children's education. Though all these things make him busy he will get the comfort by looking at the faces of his children. But when we think of poor Jephthah when he would return with greatest triumph at any time, there was no one to receive him and share his success. The only daughter he had he sacrificed to God.

This is a pathetic story we find in the Bible as an immortal character with human sacrifice. We have another story which was almost the same. That is the story of Abraham, who got only son at the age of 99 years. He was the gift of God to Abraham. But God wanted to test his faith. So, He asked Abraham to sacrifice his son and Abraham without questioning took the boy Isaac to Mount Morea and tried to sacrifice him. And God understood Abraham's faith and stopped it. Since then Abraham was called father of faithful.

Abraham could save his own son with his faith but Jephthah could not save his daughter from the sacrifice. Anyway, what was done would not be undone.

### *Tragic life of Jephthah as Son and Father*

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After this remarkable achievement in favor of Israel, Jephthah remained as their protector for six years. But his entire story was said in about twelve verses only in the Bible. He made some more wars during that period and got success in all including “Shibboleth” battle. But the thing he loved most was gone.

When he walked with pride for his heroic achievements, men and women cheered at him and common people felt jealous of him for his name and fame. He was a big man. People used to comment and they told this even to their children. He was even perhaps the greatest general after Joshua. Whoever saw him commented that he was a self made man and he was a lucky fellow. This tragic story of Jephthah prompts us to put some questions –

- 1) Did he make his life miserable because he was born to a prostitute?
- 2) Why did he make his life more tragic by sacrificing his own daughter as burnt offering to God?

We may say the profession of his mother and the ill treatment of the half brothers must have made him like that. One tragedy after another followed in his life: tragic son and tragic father.

We may doubtfully say tragedy begets tragedy, life begets life, wealth begets wealth, people beget people and so on because it is the process of genetics. In the same manner, tragedy of course produces in one’s life more tragedy. The physical condition of such people lead them to mental see-saw and when some more problems are added we are undone and we must accept our defeat. If anybody is experiencing tragic life, then worse things follow and his life becomes more tragic logically.

We may also think as somebody would have suggested Jephthah positively in those days before he had taken such dangerous oath with God. And as a result the tragic son would have become blessed father. We as readers may show our sympathy to Jephthah who lived a tragic life. To speak the truth, the inhuman sacrifice was avoidable; if he had withdrawn his oath with God and repent for it He would have prayed to God even. But he did not do all that and implemented his oath exactly. Due to his honoring the oath to God, the story became very fascinating to every reader of the Bible.

We as Christians some times with our weaknesses forget God as Israel always did and become disappointed. We must always remember the Bible

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quotation “ask and it shall be given”. Let us keep these words in mind and depend upon God for everything. It is the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ to build where life is in shambles and to redeem where all seems lost.

One can believe that philosophical genetics aside the tragic son and tragic father syndrome is not an individual one. The public life does not breed tragedy from tragedy. Our gracious God and omnipotent can bring good from the bad. So let us walk with God in His light with faith and hope till the end.

This is a moral story. Though Jephthah was born under tragic circumstances he could have had peaceful life with the blessings of God and die with the love of God. The conclusion is that with the grace of Almighty, the son of tragedy could have become the father of blessing from the Holy God, if he believed in His goodness. Since then the daughters of Israel used to lament for the daughter of Jephthah for four days in a year.

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## THE BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

There was a rich man in Maon whose name was Nabal. He kept all his riches in Carmel. He had three thousand sheep and one thousand goats. The name of his wife was Abigail. The woman was not only of good understanding but also beautiful to look at, but her husband was a rude and mean fellow with an evil desire and he was the descendant of Caleb.

David was accidentally moving in the wilderness because he was afraid of Saul the first king of Israel. The king was watching every movement of David and wanted to kill him. The reason was that each one was afraid of the other. David was moving from one place to another and at last came to Engedi wilderness. Saul went even to that place to attack David. But in that place David got a chance to kill Saul. But David did not do so, but mentioned an old popular saying “wickedness proceedeth him the wicked”.

While moving in the wilderness, David came across the shepherds of Nabal and the men of David helped those shepherds from the danger of enemies. The men guarded them from the danger of bandits. So as to receive something as a payment for that service, David sent ten young men to the house of Nabal on his behalf. He did advise them how they should approach him. So they went and said "peace be to God, peace be to your family and peace to all what you have". Then the messengers said they met his shepherds in Carmel, but they did not do any harm to them, instead they helped them.

They came with a request for some fee for the service they rendered to his people and added they were sent by David, son of Jesse. But Nabal was very reckless and rude in his reply to the messengers. They felt almost insulted by his talk and returned to their master David. He reacted to the behavior of Nabal and decided to attack him. He asked his young men to be ready with their swords. He selected four hundred young men and left two hundred men in charge of the baggage.

David and his men stayed at a place and again some messengers went to the house of Nabal and by accident one of them met Abigail and told her the whole story. They also told her they came from David, to inform that they should come and salute their master in the wilderness. Their words worked well in their minds and Abigail in particular. She immediately got ready to meet David with two hundred loaves of bread, two skin bags full of wine, five neatly dressed sheep, five measures of parched green, one hundred clusters of raisin and two hundred cakes. She loaded all of them on donkeys. She asked the servants to go first and she followed them.

They reached the place of David. When Abigail saw him she got down the donkey. She bowed down to the ground and fell on her face. Then she requested him to pardon his servant Nabal for his rude behavior towards his men. After that she offered him what she brought from her home. David accepted the presents and said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you to me on this day". This God of Israel must be blessed for sending her to David.

David told Abigail that she prevented him from taking revenge against her husband (a beastly man). He received all she brought willingly and asked her to go in peace and her petition to pardon her husband was also granted. Abigail reached home happily. She wished to tell her husband all the information about David. But he was in full drunken state and also enjoying the feast he arranged which was like the kings feast. She tried in the next morning, but his heart became dry within and he was like a stone. And within ten days after this incident God struck Nabal and he died.

David heard about the death of Nabal, and he wished to take Abigail as his wife. So he sent a messenger again with that news. She was happy at this news and bowed down. She immediately got ready to go with the messenger. She took her five servants and went to David. He commented about the death of her husband Nabal. He said "Blessed be the Lord God who had judged the case of Nabal's insult to me and break his servant from evil doing". Abigail finally became his wife.

Generally some people in the society wish for the happy ending of any story and some others prefer tragic end. That depends upon the individual taste. The situation and greater satisfaction form any story and suitable conclusion makes anybody happy.

### *The Beauty and the Beast*

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There is a beautiful story in “French Fairy Tale” which is pictured later. Its name is “Beauty and the Beast”. According to that story, a beautiful young woman has to stay in a palace with a beast in order to save her father. The situation is really wonderful because that beautiful woman has to spend her life time with a beast. But she herself giving to the frightening assignment with such kindness and devotion. And in the meantime the beast is transformed into a prince. The fairy tale ends in what conclusion we accept to make us happy and remember the story forever. People of different ages will enjoy that fairy tale because of its happy ending.

When we look into the Bible, we come across such a man who is worse than a beast and his name is Nabal, and the beautiful woman Abigail during the time of king Saul and prophet Samuel. It is said in the Bible that Abigail is not only a beautiful woman but also a very clever one. Such a woman is destined to live with Nabal who is just like a beast in the behavior as said in the story of “Beauty and the Beast”. In the Bible he is described as selfish and mean. If anybody studies the character, behavior and mannerisms of Nabal, he certainly conclude by calling him a beast. So, the two characters in the popular French fairy tale “Beauty and the Beast” are quite suited to the family of Abigail and Nabal.

Any person who lives with beauty will be certainly influenced with in some way or the other. Instead of calling him Nabal one can call him the beast because it is best suitable. During the time of Abigail and Nabal there was a young man by name David, a shepherd boy. He became a national hero at that young age by killing a Philistine giant by name Goliath in the combat when the Philistine rebelled against Israel. His height 6'6" and David killed such a big man with the help of some pebbles and a sling and surprised everybody.

Now David, the future king of Israel became a nightmare to king Saul. He became restless. He felt jealous of David and even afraid of him. He thought David might kill him and become the king of Israel. All these things made him decide to take revenge against David and kill him and he was looking for the chance. These conditions made David to flee into the wilderness. As a hero, he gathered some discredited and disinhabited young men, to fight if necessary with anybody at any time. They were mercenaries that whoever would pay money to them, they go and fight. David gathered such type of people about 600 men and kept them always with him. They were different from the society. The nature of their job was to protect the land owners of the area and then demand their wages

for that work. The nature of service and the remuneration they demand were uncommon in those days.

The same type of service David and his men did to the shepherds of Nabal and went to his house for the fee. David did that service sincerely and demanded the charges. His servants also said, "they were wall to us both by night and by day". When they went to Nabal for their wages, he did not care their request and ill-treated them and talked with them scornfully. His reply to David's men clubbed with rude arrogance of a men who would think too much of himself. We can see his arrogance when he said, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today leaving their masters. Shall I take my bread and meat that I have butchered and give it to men who came from I do not know where." The ten members who went to Nabal returned to David. They told everything to David. He became furious. He asked his men to be ready with their swords to attack Nabal. And Davids men were more dangerous to that kind of job. In the meantime, some body heard the story and explained to Abigail how Nabal insulted the men of David. The servants seemed to have more confidence in her in solving the problems as she was gifted with understanding of people like David. In this context somebody commented that Abigail was beautiful and sensitive women whereas Nabal was a cruel and mean.

So, we can conveniently compare them to the French fairy tale characters of 'Beauty and the Beast'. It is undoubtedly more suitable to both of them. Abigail promptly collected some items for a feast to David and went to him. She used all her intelligence to convince him regarding her husband and she succeeded in that. She then predicted that David would become one day the king of Israel.

Actually David took oath to kill all the members of Nabal's family including the servants. When he was in such temper Abigail came with humility. She knelt at his feet and appealed for mercy. She addressed him "my Lord" do not take the ill nature man Nabal as his name is he is.

It is really surprising to know the meaning of the name of Nabal. It means "fool". We cannot say correctly whether that name was put by his parents or by his neighbours. But it is said in olden days, people took even some years to select the name for their kids. If that is true, in the case of Nabal the parents were dooming him because people were destined to live according to their name. it is quite but natural in the society that whenever we find an extraordinary person in something or other, we recollect the name and comment upon it positively or negatively.

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## *The Beauty and the Beast*

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Abigail clearly explained to David that by living with the beast like Nabal, she learnt how to deal with men, matters and other diplomatic conditions and at present the issue of David. She requested him not to take revenge against his enemies. But leave that to God. She even predicted that David one day would become the ruler of Israel. And when he become the king, she said, he should not shed blood and stoop down to that level under any circumstances and added he would remember her that day how tactfully and cleverly Abigail spoke. Then David would certainly remember her and conclude God may have guided her to speak like that. And in ten days after her meeting David, she came again as his wife.

It is said, Abigail was not only a charming and beautiful woman, but also a shrewd woman. But Nabal was an unwilling gift to Abigail for his name and character. She could survive with her shrewdness with that kind of beast peacefully. She understood the power and strength of David. Some people like Abigail will have the gift of God to look into the problems and possibilities of others. She certified David was a good man by nature, but when he was in high temper, he would be ashamed of himself for his appearance in that temper. Her intelligent approach and tactful dealing with a man like David was praise worthy. David was convinced by the charm and eloquence of Abigail. He simply thanked God and because of her wise decision and intervention he stayed back from blood guilt and from angry himself. He gave assurance to Abigail that he would not do any harm either to her husband or to her servants. She returned home happily.

She wanted to tell her beast like husband what all happened when she met that powerful man, David. But he was fully in drunken state and enjoying the feast he arranged. The next day when she went to him to say his heart divided within him, he became a stone. And after ten days of this incident God struck him and Nabal died. By looking at his physical condition a modern pathologist might say Nabal had an “Apoplectic Seizure”.

David heard the news of the death of Nabal. Then David wooed her and planned to take her as his wife and he did it. Marrying a woman immediately after the death of her husband is not common in the society. But it is common in the Middle East in those days, because woman always depends upon man for her survival.

The story of Nabal and Abigail was just like the French fairy tale” in its own way completely with despicable villain, a beautiful woman and an exciting

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hero. The story ends like the stories where in a villain wither he would be killed or rarely survive. Then the hero and the heroine just join together happily. So that will be happy ending.

But the moves taken in the present days, we can find most of them have happy ending. The tragic endings are very rare. Then we cannot imagine correctly how a beautiful woman will feel when she is put to live in bestial conditions. And what will be the mental set up of a beautiful woman who says "I kissed a frog believing he will become a prince and spent the rest of life with a frog". One can be beautiful and happy when everything goes in her favor or his favor. If things go wrong to a beautiful woman and a young man we cannot do anything but pity such person. That kind of women and men are destined to live under such beastly or unfavorable circumstances.

For example, the people who always carry a handicapped person all their life time like a companion, is like the story of Nabal "the fool", to Abigail the Beautiful. It can be also like the story of a sensible woman with wonderful talents but live in peculiar conditions where in her life is more miserable. And if a person wants nothing in this world but he loves and to be loved, yet who lives his life or her life in beastly conditions then that story can be a touching one and everybody will show sympathy with such persons. So we may find many beautiful women like Abigail who are destined to live with a rude and beastly man like Nabal.

In this context, let us try to understand the prayer of a theologian, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change things I can and wisdom to know the difference." As a matter of fact no one can change the way of life. Those who are physically handicapped also cannot be changed even by the "modern medical science".

In spite of all that, there are certain things that can be changed in the society. In such case we must take that kind of things with courage and try to change how far we can and live according to those things we cannot change. Most of the people have to deal with those circumstances and situations as they find them.

We must try to find as much beauty as possible and directly deal with it by keeping aside the beast. Finally the wise and beautiful Abigail puts it that the lives of people are bound in a bundle of the living under the care of the Lord (our) God (1 Sam. 25:29).

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## QUEEN ESTHER AND THE FESTIVAL OF PURIM

This is the story of unscrupulous and evilridden enemy of helpless Jews during the reign of Persian king Xerxes or Ahasuerus. The Jews were on the brink of total distruction by the barbarious plan of a higher official under the king by name Haman. Then there was the most beautiful queen Esther who remained as a link between Haman and the Jews. But this is a real story with threatening circumstances. The source for the story is the Bible.

This is a story clubbed with terror and dismay which can never be forgotten in one's life. The story is considered to be more valued in the Bible because the young beautiful Jewish lady who later became the queen of the Persian empire and could save thousands of Jews from extermination by the master plan of Haman and the final wonderful work was done by God through the queen. She convinced her husband king Ahasuerus and saved the people of Israel.

The Israel were dragged miraculously to Babylon in three stages as captives for more than a hundred years but some remained there for seventy years. Later their reputation spread into west Persian empire, and from India to Cush, an area that ranged from moder west Pakistan to northren Ethiopia. The exiles that remained in Persian empire were somewhat comfortable under the king. Ahasuerus ruled the empire between 485 and 465 B.C.

However, the comfortable and joyful life of Jews was shattered by terror overnight by the kings Prime Minister Haman who proclaimed death punishment on the entire Jewish population in the Persian empire. But still the Jews became courageons and had been fighting for their survival and became victorious against satanic attempt prompted Jews to celebrate the way of freedom as a festival of "Purim" and today this had been celebrated as one of the festivals of Jews.

There was threatening, hopelessness on one hand among the people and the pagan king with too much liesure time at his disposal on the other. In such

circumstances the large empire was divided into 121 provinces. The king reigned his empire peacefully for three years. Then he desired to invite all the princes and other important persons in his kingdom to show them his riches. In the party he wanted to invite his beautiful wife Vashti to show her to all the princes in order to get their appreciation. The show continued for 180 days and after that he extended it for another week and arranged a feast.

So, the king in a festive mood, from his outrageous consumption of wine proclaimed an order that queen Vashti should present herself before the assembly so that all would see her beauty and compliment her. The king sent messages again and again but queen Vashti refused to come. The king then thought about this issue seriously and came to a decision. He wanted to depose the queen Vashti and look for another woman, to be the queen of Persian empire, so that her action and behaviour should not be an example to other women in the kingdom.

It was actually a domestic affair as it is concerned to the king's family. But it was made a political issue because he was the king of the large empire. Finally the queen was abandoned and he wished to look for a woman, submissive one unlike the queen Vashti. So he gave a proclamation inviting beautiful women from all over his kingdom. It was well planned by the king with the consultation of some other officials.

At this memorable occasion we are introduced to Mordecai a Jewish man, an honest gatekeeper at the king's palace. He was the descendant of Benjamin who was taken captive from Jerusalem. He had a cousin by name Hadassah or Esther whom he had brought up as his daughter, because she lost her parents. She grew physically and looked more beautiful and even in the Bible, it is said "she is fair and beautiful". Now Mordecai wanted to bring Esther also as one of the contestants for the queenship.

Mordecai told her not to expose her identity as a Jewish woman because all the other women that come for that purpose must be only heathens. After she entered the royal campus, she was given, beauty treatment for one year, then all women were taken to the royal palace for selection. It was God's providence that He will do always good to His people. Accordingly, Esther was chosen as the queen of Persian empire. With the remarkable change of stiff-necked Vashti has to leave the royal palace and Esther was to stay there as a Jewish woman.

The anonymity that the Jews had experienced all those days in exile and after that, until that time had been shattered the moment the Jewish woman Esther became the queen of the Persian empire with her crown.

## *Queen Esther and the Festival of Purim*

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Mordecai the gateman of the royal palace once saved the life of the king. While he was in his duty at the gate he overheard a conspiracy by dissident officers and even to kill the king. Mordecai informed about this plot to the queen and she told the same to the king. At that time the king did not give any gift to Mordecai for saving his life.

It seemed the hand of Haman was also there in that plot. So, this incident made Mordecai not to care and bow to Haman in respect. But he thought Mordecai was insulting him by not respecting by saluting him. So somehow, Haman had in his mind to destroy him and finally the entire Jewish race in that kingdom. And he wanted to do that at the earliest and that was the 12th month in the Jewish calendar, Adar. But Haman informed the king that there was a race in his kingdom who did not care and respect the laws of the king. But the king without making further enquiry or looking into the details of the report, gave Haman permission to whatever he wanted. The king did not know that there was an important race among his people that Haman wanted to extinguish and his wife Esther was from that race only.

Haman could buy the honour of the king, but he could not understand he sold away his own soul in turn. The king gave his ring in appreciation to Haman by which he boasted up his image, especially in taking revenge against her people and herself. Haman already got the permission from the king to eliminate the Jews the God's people. He wanted to make use of the decree, this time and as a matter of fact, he did not realize he would pay a heavy price for taking revenge against God's people.

The terror created by Haman was lingering in the minds of Jews. They were afraid of the situation and there was murmuring among themselves. There was fasting, mourning and Mordecai was one of the mourners. Queen Esther came to know about the suffering of her people and decided to help them by approaching the king personally at a proper time. But she could not meet him for 30 days. There was a rule that nobody can meet the king without prior permission and if anybody did so, the punishment would be death. She sympathized her people and wanted to help them at any cost.

Mordecai realized that only through queen Esther Jews problems could be solved. So he met her and explained everything. Now she wished to approach the king at the earliest without caring for the consequences and even her life. She sent a message to her fellow Jews to be on fast for three days before she approach the king. Prior to that, she wished to know the mood of the king. At one stage she thought the king would have invited her to his chamber happily.

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So she planned in some other way. She wanted to invite both Haman and the king her husband to dinner and then explain to the king the reason of her invitation. She at last met the king which surprised him. The king was happy to see her and thought she must have come with some wish. Her presence made him so excited that he was ready even to give half of his kingdom so happily if she wished for it. But she did not want to do it. Queen Esther at last became bold enough and told the king "If I have favour in the sight of the king", she seemed to have granted her favour already by his looks. God seemed to have guided her to save her people who were in danger. God saved them when they were in great danger of elimination. She also said "I and my people are sold as bondmen and women by the people of his country."

But Haman was unhappy because Mordecai was disrespecting him by not saluting him. He went home and discussed the issue with his friends. After hearing the story, the friends advised him to prepare a gallows at the height of 50 cubits to hang Mordecai and then speak to the king. As per their advice Mordecai would be hanged the next day. Haman was happy with the suggestion of his friends but poor fellow, he could not understand that the queen had already made the necessary arrangements for the safety of her people.

Haman also planned unknowingly to kill Mordecai one the same night by hanging. At that time the king had also some problem in his mind and he was much disturbed. He experienced a case of 'insomnia' and a case of sleeplessness. Many would have this kind of experience when their minds are filled with many thoughts. The king was seriously thinking about the honesty of the gateman Mordecai and his reporting of the foiled assassination attempt on the king. But the king did not give any gift to him at that time for saving his life. Just at that time Haman came to speak with the king about the hanging of Mordecai.

But the king summoned Haman and asked him what should be done unto the man whom the king delighted to honour. And Haman foolishly thought the king was referring to him only, and replied he must be given maximum reward and honour. The reward included dressing of the man with royal costumes and riding on the king's horse and a herald before him.

On hearing this the king ordered him to make necessary arrangements to honour Mordecai and Haman must go before him proclaiming his heroic activities. So the exiled Jews had been totally saved from their helplessness to hopefulness. Just a day before Haman was at the highest position and Mordecai

QUEEN ESTHER





ESTHER REVEALS HAMAN'S TREACHERY



### *Queen Esther and the Festival of Purim*

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was an ordinary gateman and a doomed one. Now the tables turned and the king exalted him and the days of Haman was counted.

Haman went home at last in disturbed condition but immediately he was called back to attend a dinner party by the queen herself in honour of the king and Haman. The king was still in a generous mood to grant the queen even half of the kingdom if she desired. The queen sieged the opportunity and put forth her dramatic petition by saying, "If I find favour, in thy sight O king, and if it pleases the king let my life be given me at my position and my people at my request" These words from the mouth of the queen surprised the king.

The king could not understand what she was talking about. And he guessed somebody must be threatening her life or troubling her and her people. The king became furious what it must have been where he was, what business he had to make his wife unhappy and restless. Those were a flood of questions by the king within himself.

In such circumstances anybody would have guessed what must be going on in the tortured mind of Haman. This incident made the king to understand two things. One is that the queen was a Jewish lady. The second point was that Haman wanted to destroy all the Jews in his empire. Whatever might be the plan of Haman, he was afraid of the king and the queen. Just at that time the king left the chamber abruptly and went into the palace garden. Haman seized the chance and went to the queen and begged for her mercy while she was leaning to the couch. Then the king reentered the room all of a sudden and looked at the queen. It appeared to him that Haman was molesting the queen. So he immediately ordered for the hanging of Haman on the same gallows he prepared for Mordecai. Haman was finally executed and the triumph of Jews started.

Though the king was absolute monarch he had no power to withdraw or to cancel the decree that he gave already for the destruction and elimination of the Jews in his kingdom. So the king asked Mordecai to prepare another decree by which the Jews could be saved and stamped it with his own ring. Then the king encouraged the Jews to gather themselves and stand united to face any untoward condition from the enemies who were trying to exploit and destroy them in that kingdom.

There was a dramatic change among the Jews. The people who were supposed to be conquered, became the conquerors of their enemies. It was really a rare and most unexpected moment in the history of Judaism and everything



went in their favour. They attacked all pagans that tried to suppress them. In the royal palace along the Jews killed 500 enemies and all over the Persian empire, they killed 75,000 men whom they thought to be their enemies all these days. It was a strange and appreciating that many pagans who were afraid of Jews for their power converted themselves into Judaism forever because of Mordecai and queen Esther. The king finally asked the queen if she had any more petitions. She requested him to kill the 10 sons of Haman.

The king gave full support to the Jews to defend themselves from any danger. Now the Jews possessed a great power which was not their own but it was supernatural or divine power that made them unrivalled and none could stand before them.

The decree regarding the elimination of Jews was cancelled. There was complete transition among the exiles to celebrate their success and Mordecai called for Adar 14th & 15th February for fasting and exchange of gifts. The Jews to the king were any other captives. They were the strange people with strange habits and strange speeches. Their peaceful living depended upon other people's behaviour. They also provided unexpected blessing to the king and the stability of the kingdom.

Since then Mordecai became their new hero who worked upon as a man of authority and achievements. And all acts of the king and Mordecai, their power and might, the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai and how the king elevated him to the highest position -all these things were written in the book of chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia. Mordecai was originally an ordinary employee, a gateman of the royal palace, loitering around the king's palace was promoted to the rank of second in command and a trustworthy advisor to the king. He never used his power or position for his personal use, but for the benefit of the people only.

A holiday was born to the Jews as they achieved a total victory over their enemies. And that holiday they celebrated as "Purim". It was in honour of their triumph. This important holiday was born to them about 2,500 years ago. It is still officially celebrated in the US and Europe and South America. The traditional date for this Purim festival is Adar 14th (February) but for the people living in Jerusalem it was 15th because Shushan needed one day extra to destroy its enemies. Recently that festival was commemorated on 20th February by most of the Jews all over the world and on 27th February by the Jews in Jerusalem.



The Purim is most important and most precious to Jews. It is a family function, even a community affair with parties, enacting of plays and exchange of gifts, food packets etc., On the morning of Purim the 'Migdah' or 'Scroll' of Esther would be read, in the synagogues, children sometimes even elders would go to the synagogues in costumes and some times in the dress of one of characters in Purim like Esther, Mordecai, Haman, and even the king Ahasuerus. Later in the city food packets would be distributed or sent to the relatives, and also donations were collected for some purpose.

The Jews really appreciated the importance of this Purim. They observe fasting in honour of the queen Esther. And some Jews in memory of queen who assured them about Sushan observe fast and pray for three days as she did.

If we carefully study the book of Esther, it is the only book in the Bible where we don't find the name of God even once and also about His laws, the sacrifices and offerings. But only fasting is mentioned. As for the information the write seems to have described the lifestyle of the Jews during the Persian rulers. they lived a secular life away from God according to Gods plan and will. Esther and Mordecai also did not have spiritual experiences. that does not mean God was not with them. He was with them, there at the back of the events connected to Esther. The Lord was there always behind the scenes and that is called 'hesterpanim' which means 'the hidden face of God.'

According to historical evidences the book of Esther is written about 465 B.C. when majority of the Jews were already in exile for about 120 years. With that incident they must have forgotten God. But God did not forget them, when the threat of elimination came God save them because of His promise earlier.

"But fear not those O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed. O Israel for behold I will save thee from all thine iniquities, an thy seed from the land of their captivity" (Jer 46:27).

There is something to learn from the Book of Esther. Though man is said to be in charge of his own destiny, it is God who really controls the fate of man and nations. It is the God who engineered the

1. The disposing of Vashti and making of Esther as queen of Persian empire.
2. Rise of Mordecai and utter downfall of Haman and his death.
3. the total destruction of Israel's enemies and the survival of the Jewish people and the birth of the festival of Purim.

So, God is there at every stage of his chosen people Israel. Likewise, He is there at every stage of the people who worship and rever Him as their saviour

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## AMOS' MISSION TO BETHEL

Amos means “Burden bearer”. He was a rustic shepherd boy from a village by name Tekou which is about eleven miles to Bethel. He knew nothing about God, nothing about the Bible, or anything in this world except feeding his sheep. Such an innocent man God chose him to mend the wicked life of Israel in the noted place in the Bible called Bethel. God hated them for their sinful life. Israel forgot God completely. They forgot how mercifully God brought them from Egypt. But now they forgot all and began to worship heathen gods and goddesses which made God angry.

God did not want to accept their burnt offerings or meat offerings. He did not want to hear what they would say at all. Under such circumstances God remembered Amos the shepherd man. He wanted to depute Amos to Bethel. As He chose Melchizedek, Moses and David for some noble work, Amos was chosen to educate and mend Israel in the town of Bethel. So a great burden was thrust upon him which was beyond his capacity.

Israel was divided into two during the reign of king Solomon due to his heathen wives in 922 B.C. and for his sins. The first one was called the Southern Kingdom with the tribes Judah and Benjamin and their capital was Jerusalem. The second part was Northern Kingdom with ten tribes and their capital was Samaria. And Bethel was one of the towns in the Northern kingdom and Jerobam was the king. He became a typical heathen, worshipped and built heathen temple, put golden calves inside the temple and encouraged all Israel to worship those golden calves in his entire country.

Amos believed in God. But still he was surprised why God preferred an uneducated shepherd boy to that kind of noble work to teach and to preach the rotten Israel who were already strangers to this God and he was a poor shepherd. Then God encouraged him by saying, “My love is unfailing and everlasting. I will be with you wherever you go”. Amos understood what God said, and also

### *Amos' Mission to Bethel*

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understood that the sons of Judah should not be hidden from God. But he was afraid of going to Bethel and tell them that God was going to destroy them.

But God said, “you will be my prophet in Israel. My spirit will come upon you and you will speak the word of the Lord”. Amos replied that he was not a city dweller. He was only a shepherd with flocks and fields. Hither to Amos hated to go to Jerusalem because it became a corrupted city. Now God asked him to go to Bethel which was more corrupted than Jerusalem. God again spoke to Amos, “I am your shepherd, Amos while you obey me”. God convinced him to go to Bethel town and “feed His sheep”. Amos finally obeyed the word of God and decided to go to that place and take care of the sheep of God.

Amos slept at the gate of his sheepfold and woke up before dawn. He recollected the words of God, “feed my sheep”. Then he planned to go to Bethel at the earliest. He entrusted the flock to his nephews and started his journey to Bethel which was about eleven miles to his place Tekoa. He was anxious to feed the sheep of God. He knew Judah was a corrupted place with idol worshippers. He remembered the idol temples built by king Solomon to please his heathen wives.

So, there was “sin” everywhere in Judah and Israel. The sin was in Amos also as he rebelled against the priests of the temple and now he was repenting for that. He criticized the priests like, “Hebel” in connection with the exchange of animals for the sacrifice. at one stage he thought of even killing Hebbel, priest for his immoral activities. Amos thought he committed sin in some form or the other.

Then God told him and said the people of Judah committed sin again and again. They followed the foot prints of their forefathers. So God wanted to take revenge against them. But Amos was a chicken hearted man. He petied and wept when God said he wanted to kill His own people Israel. As per the word of God Amos came to Bethel and camped on the hills. Then he found a cave to live in. It had its own importance in the Bible. Jacob after stealing the birth right from his brother Esaac, fled from the house on the advice of his mother while he was going to his maternal uncles house. He stopped on the way at a particular place in the night and put a stone as a pillow to sleep, then in his deep sleep he saw angels coming down and going up to heaven on a ladder. While he was returning after some years with his wives and children he went through that place. At that time God made a covenant with Jacob. And that place was later named as Bethel.

But after Jeroboam became the king to ten tribes he seduced them to pagan worship. He made the people to feel as they need not go eleven miles walk to Jerusalem to worship God when there were gods in Bethel also. Along with the people of Bethel, the people of Gilgal and Bersheba also worshipped the golden calves of king Jeroboam in his temple.

The next day Amos entered the city and went in search of the heathen temple where the king housed the golden calves. He surveyed about the priesthood, the customers etc. God wanted these Israel to go to Jerusalem only three times in a year to worship. But these ungrateful Israel forgot their forefathers, how they were brought from Egypt.

It seemed Jeroboam had good control of the people. So, he gave them two golden calves and kept them in two places. One is at Bethel and the other is at Dan. And the Israel was flocked to worship the golden calves.

Amos studied the way of the life of the people in Bethel. He prayed to God and asked Him when he should speak with them. He got no answer. He moved in Bethel city and found strange things. For example, he saw one judge took the robe from a poor man and gave it to a merchant for a jug of wine. He saw many more of such things there.

As we saw already Amos means “burden bearer” his heart was truly burdened with the task of changing the minds of Israel. He was made burdened with the missions in his mind. Two priests of the heathen temple put him many questions and he answered. He waited for some more days for the word from God. His tongue felt like a weight in his mouth. The priests with the answers they took him to be a prophet and treated him well in the beginning. A man came and offered him shelter also but he denied. So the cave became his only shelter.

Foxes have holes to rest in but the prophet of God had no place to rest his head. When he woke up early in the morning he found some gifts at the entrance of the cave. He took them to the town and distributed to the poor. He was getting such gifts from some more days like that because they took him to be a prophet. One day he entered the city as usual. An official met him and asked when he would be prophesying again. He said God must give him words to speak. When God spirit was with him he was happy but when it went out of him he felt lonely in his soul. He wished God should dwell in him and transform his mind and heart. He wished for the continuation of his intimacy with God.

Then Amos recollected Elijah who was taken to heaven on golden chariot without seeing death. He remembered how he separated the river Jordan. He remembered how Moses separated the Red sea and Elijah raising the dead boy came to his mind. He recollected such great persons from the Bible. He then closed his eyes and prayed to God for his people who were in helpless position. Finally he doubted whether the people came to the Lord if he speaks to them.

One day he was on the road and heard the voice of God saying “The people of Tyre sinned again and again and I will not let them go unpunished”. God was unhappy with Edomite villages and ill treating them. Now the people of Bethel lined to the walls and listened to the prophetic words of Amos.

The Edomites chased Israel with their swords without mercy. God asked Amos to prophecy about the surrounding nations. Every day gifts were coming and he was giving them to the poor. He at last became bold and started preaching on the steps of the heathen temple. He said those who oppressed the poor would insult their maker God, but helping the poor would honour Him. He preached that God makes nations great but sin is a disgrace to people. The audience that gathered there pleased with his preaching and clapped their hands with smiling faces.

They asked Amos if there was any nation which was more religious than Israel. They looked at their nation only but they looked not into their hearts. Then Amos came to his family members only for a brief stay. In the house his brother Ahiam attacked Amos for his preachings in Bethel. Actually he did not know he was preaching about God and the Bible. Amos could not convince his family members that God was with him and he was a prophet as God called him. Then he went to Bethel again to feed his sheep.

Nobody can do anything secretly because God sees everything. Amos observed such a fear flicked in the eyes of Ahiam and felt happy he started feeling God and coming closer to Him. After enjoying with his family members Amos returned to Bethel for his assigned work.

Whatever might be the opinion of his family members about him, he was sure that his mind and heart were filled with Gods power. He wished to take out his bitterness against the priests like Heled. He carried messages to Israel and Judah, but a few in Judah heard. The moment Amos entered the gate the spirit of God came upon him. Then he saw corruption and foulness. He saw sin everywhere.



The few men who dedicated their lives to the Lord as Nazarites were persecuted and order to show their faithfulness to the king Jeroboam. But God loved those lost people of Israel the way Amos loved the cared for his sheep.

With new resolve Amos strode up the street towards the temple of Bethel. The people were waiting to see him. While he was climbing the steps he saw a large gathering in that area to listen to the Lord's word through the answer of Amos. Then he gave his message. He said, 'The people of Israel sinned against God again and again and I will not let them go unpunished.' With these words a rumble began. The people talked among themselves - confused - disappointed and angry.

Amos gave a long speech to the gathering while doing so, some faces slushed, eyes narrowed, and mouths curled. And people cried from all sides, some in fear, others in rage. He said God spoke through him to the people of Israel and Judah. 'From among all the families on the earth, I have been intimate with you alone. That is why I must punish you for all your sins.' On hearing this, men shouted. Women wailed and children cried in confusion. In that situation the temple guards surrounded Amos and manhandled him. He wiped out his blood from his mouth and other parts of his body. He was wounded heavily. In the meantime the chief priest came and interfered.

He spoke with Amos softly. He appeared to have complemented that the prophecies of Amos during the last eighteen months thrilled their hearts. He and the other priests thought he was trying to change the minds of the people with his preaching with the impression they also hit and punished him.

Then the chief priest asked him why he came to that place which was already a holy city with the king's chapel. For their questions Amos told them that God had sent him to speak to His people Israel. The chief priest asked Amos to go back to his country and the people would not listen to him anymore. Finally they gave him twenty lashes and sent him away with more beatings and injuries.

Just at that time a young man came and offered himself to help. He was a young levite who met him earlier regarding Judah's destruction. He with his father took Amos to their house and treated him well. After he recovered they talked about the countries that were going to be destroyed according to Amos' prophecy for their sins. Amos said Judah would be the last nation to fall.

After six days of their fellowship Amos wished to go to Jerusalem. He spent a few days there and came back to Bethel. He continued his preaching without caring any one or injury. But gifts were stopped. Israel paid deaf ear for his preachings. He prayed to God and told Him how he was ignored by everyone. He watched at the gate for six months in the morning till evening. Day after day he preached the word of God. He suffered mocking and disdain. He cried out the truth to Israel. but they continued their own way of life to embrace death for their foolishness.

The people at last called him a “self proclaimed prophet”. Some called him a mad man. Another warned him to go back to his sheep. He was insulted, humiliated in many ways. Still he continued his preaching. He tried every means to convince them but in vain. At last, with weeping he said the Lord God of Israel armies on the very day to punish the Israel for its sins and would destroy the pagan altars of Bethel, the horns of the altar would be cut off and fall to the ground.

Immediately after these words were spoken by Amos, the ground beneath him trembled, God said he would destroy all the luxurious palaces of the rich. Then came the tremor which was longer than the first one then people thought some calamity had come. The ground rolled and the earth quake. There was utter confusion and people ran here and there. Some of the Israel's died also. At last Amos asked Israel to repent though it was too late.

The earth quake stopped for the time being, but the dust was falling along from the quarapped buildings. With fear and confusion the people climbed the debris on the streets and enquired about their dear ones. Many were trapped, crushed and died while Amos was the trapped one in front of the temple. A priest came and asked him why he had done all that. He replied he was not God to do that. The horns of the altar were broken and the gold calf fell. Then Amos warned the priest that if they keep another calf the priests would be the first goats to be brought to the slaughter place. Then there was another shake that rattled the temple doors.

Just at that time he heard another shocking news about the destruction of Jerusalem. He went there and enquired about his brothers. He found them safe and secure. He looked at the Jerusalem temple and told his brother that it was done by God for the sin of Uzziah, the king of Judah. What the king did was he usurped the privileges of the temple priests who were ordained by God. He

entered the temple with a censor in his hand and burnt the incense. The king wanted to do certain things in the temple as the heathen king Jeroboam was doing in his temple.

The moment king Uzziah let the incense he was cursed with leprosy. The judgment of God was upon him. The priests saw the position of the king and immediately kept him out of the temple. Due to the sin of the king there were cracks in the temple and other places. Many people died and many more became homeless. This entire unhappy thing happened because of one man that is the king. So God took revenge against Israel and Judah at a time Ahiam asked his brother to stay in Jerusalem for a few days and preach to those ungodly people. But Amos said God asked him to preach in Bethel only. At that time prophet Isaiah was already there in Jerusalem.

Ahiam repented for ill treating his brother Amos many times especially when he said he got visions and God spoke with him. Now he was completely a changed man. He understood the greatness of his brother and respected him. He accepted his brother as prophet. 'A prophet is seldom recognized by his own family' he said.

Amos wished to go back to the Bethel at the earliest as per the word of God. He came to the gate he saw a dozen well armed warriors looking for him. Some people gathered there and put Amos some questions and got suitable answers. Amos asked them to repent before another earthquake would come. Years passed the terror of the earthquake remained in their mind. Still they returned to the old way of life. He remained there and continued his preaching to the limited gathering.

Every day he preached to a small gathering the word of God, the Law of Moses and about the judgment. He told them "to cheat the poor is to spit in the face of God" and "if we sin, the Lord will scatter us among the nations". But if we return to Him and obey His commandments even if we are in exile to ends of earth, the Lord will bring us back to our place. He has chosen us for His name to be honored.

One day he was preaching to a small gathering at that time and then came some women. They listened to him for a while then began to mock at him. Amos got angry and cursed them. He said "you are the women who oppress the poor and crush the needy". At that time the word of the Lord came in a hot rash from

the lips of Amos saying 'the time will come when you will be led away with hooks to your noses' while cursing them. One of them called him mad man.

The gathering number reduced day by day as they had no faith in the words of God and even God Himself. All the trials became a colossal waste. Some of them boldly told Amos that all the wealth and properties had not come to them from his God, but from king of Jerusalem and also added he gave them freedom and prosperity. The yoke of king Solomon was to be removed by the king from their necks. But the yoke of sin was still upon their necks that brings them to death.

Then a young man with fulfilled eyes came and said, "A curse on your prophecies and a curse on you." Another person who heard the preaching's of Amos clapped and cheered. Then Amos struggled between appreciation and mocking. He at last spoke to God. "Lord you sent an arrow into my heart. All day long people sang their mocking songs. Amos faced discouragement regarding how they were rejecting God.

Israel followed rules of their own desire and so they wanted to live without God. They adopted their own rules according to their convenience. But they did not know one thing that they should not live for themselves. They must live for others and help. When Amos thought all his attempts became futile, he desperately cried and tore his robe at last. He called Israel and told them he was singing funeral song to them. His voice became sad and lamentable, terrible at the same time his song reheard at the gates of Bethel.

Amos left the city and walked towards his cave. He was filled with agony. He prayed to God to make the stone heart of Israel to soft clay. He wandered in the hills and looked at Bethel. He understood Israel and said they did not know the right and wrong. Their houses were filled with all robbed things. The women were godless and hypocrites who laughed at Amos while he was preaching. He thought for some time and concluded. Some educated person might be needed to preach this kind of ungodly people.

Still Amos wanted to hang on to Bethel. He prayed to God when he would be allowed to go to his place Tekoa. Repentance was a foul word to the polluted Israel. When they were told about repentance, they replied, repent what? They used to say among themselves "Let us eat, drink and be merry" to them, 'Jehovah' is one of the gods among "other pantheon". They did not know truth

from lies. The heart of Amos became heavy with grief and anger. He felt torn between loving and hating.

Amos heard the voice of God. He said “it is not you that have rejected Amos, they have rejected me”. God encouraged him to be firm to tell them the truth. Then he saw the wonder of God in his vision that millions and millions of locusts carried the land and the land looked like the “black sea” of moving insects. Amos cried out by raising his head and God’s forgiveness by pleading that Israel was a small country.

Amos' mind was filled with another vision. He saw five raged from more nations' depth of the sea raising a cauldron of bubbles and steam encroaching and devouring the entire land. Amos thought that was going to destroy Israel with fire he prayed to God not to do that because Israel was a small one. The fire disappeared and the land became as it was before. Then God asked Amos to tell the Israel that He would not ignore their sins. His plan was to destroy the pagan shrines and the temples of Jeroboam to an end. Actually Israel was in constant touch with the gods and goddesses of Canaan, Ammon, Moab and more.

Amos with half mind tried again to teach Israel but there was none to hear him. He shouted at them to repent, if not to meet the consequences. He prophesied against Jeroboam that his dynasty would come to an end. Those words disturbed the temple guards and priests. They all pounced upon Amos and beat him severely. They cursed him and beat him black and blue.

The chief priest warned Amos to go back to Judah and not to prophesise any more nor to preach his people. Then he replied to the chief priest that his wife would become a prostitute in the city, his sons and daughters would die and his land would be divided and he would live in a polluted land. Finally Israel would be captives in in a distant land.

For all what Amos spoke, the temple people whipped him, led to a court and paraded him in the streets of Bethel. People shouted at him with insults and curses and told him to go out of their sight. Amos warned the shouting people that they would become captives in exile, form their home land. The chief asked them to close the gate. They finally hit him again on his forehead with rocks which caused bleeding. He left the place.

Amos remained in Bethel for ten years and achieved nothing and prayed to



God why he had abandoned him. Then he dreamed and saw an angel came to him and gave bread and water. God whispered to him like, “father to a troubled child” the dream gave him immense relief and he was happy.

The next day Amos wished to go back to his place Tekoa to write all about his visions and other experiences in detail. After he finished the first scroll, God called him and spoke with him again. He thought about the destruction and rebuilding of cities and bring back the glory of Israel. He finished his writing. He made three copies. He sent one copy to king Jeroboam. One to king Uzzia and one copy he kept for himself.

Before going back to Bethel he wished to see his flock. But because of the years gap they did not recognize him or his voice. Just at that time his brother came and told him about the death of Jeroboam. He remembered Israel and Judah and prayed for them and for the people who persecuted him.

Just at that time came Hosea who was known to him. He told Amos that God blessed him and his family and his father who was a priest. Hosea was actually wished to marry a God fearing Hebrew woman. But God asked him to marry a prostitute. He could not understand why God asked him to marry a prostitute. Finally Amos and Hosea became good friends and decided a work together for God.

Now Amos had bad days ahead. The son of the chief priest came to Amos. He discussed with him something and stabbed Amos in his stomach. It was a mortal wound and he cried painfully. He struggled between life and death. In such critical moment God appeared to him. Amos was excited at the presence of God. He tried to get up but in vain he cried bitterly and shed tears. He promised Amos that what all He said through visions would be fulfilled. All ruins would be rebuilt and the past glory reestablished. The hope of salvation fills in Amos, but he had no strength even to smile. And the Lord kissed his forehead and said “rest Amos rest” and added “My faithful servant”.

Amos' obedience to God's call and his life was extra ordinary. It fore shadowed another prophet - the ultimate prophet - Jesus of Nazareth. Amos sacrificed his life with the blessings of Jesus Christ.

**10**

## **A WOMAN WITH ISSUE OF BLOOD**

There was a village near Capernaum which was about seven miles. Some women in that village gathered together and started a sewing center in a room of a big house and sewing clothes and at the same time chit chatting in their leisure time. A beautiful young lady used to come to them once in a week with a cloth and got it stitched and give to the helpless poor and afflicted people in the society. She would walk seven miles every week to those sewing women and got the work done. Her name was Veronica.

Her people spent a lot of money on her but of no use. Finally she came to know about the healer of all diseases, Jesus Christ. She went to Him and got her disease healed.

Now all the members of the sewing group were talking about that lady who had been coming to them for that work but now not coming as she was not feeling any betterment from that disease, the issue of blood. Now as she stopped going to them, it caused some financial loss to those women. She suffered from that disease for twelve years. Her family members spent what all they could on her but in vain. Her family members and friends became disheartened about her condition. There was no doctor whom they did not see.

They came to conclusion that she would die soon. How much money they spent on her, there was no account. They used all kinds of medicines that were available in the market but of no use. So, they at last came to a decision that she might survive only with magic or else she would die. The sewing women were always talking about this Veronica only. They recollected the whole story of her, how she helped the poor people regularly going to those tailors once in a week. But now-a-days she was not at all coming. Perhaps they did not know she was suffering from an incurable disease for a long time.

After some time the sewing women came to know about the cause of her not coming to them for the work. They felt sorry for her disease and sent many of her

### *A Woman with issue of blood*

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friends and relatives also who died of that issue of blood helplessly. They expressed their heartfelt sympathy for her by remaining silent for a while.

Then one of the sewing woman told the others that her husband returned from Capernaum on the previous day with the happy news that there was a healer going round the country side and he was a Galilean. He happened to touch the daughter of a synagogue ruler by name Jairus. It was his twelve years old daughter who already died by the time the healer Jesus Christ went. He simply touched her and she got up from her death.

This is one of the miracles Christ did. The tailor woman told the entire story about the healer but she could not tell them the name of the healer as her husband also did not know. According to the information, the ruler had gone to the healer and begged Him to go to his house for his daughter was on the verge of death. Then the sewing woman's husband saw the healer was going to the house of the ruler.

All the sewing women stopped their work and listened to what she was telling about the healer. She went on saying that the healer was detained on the way. And one thing is certain, a large number of people were gathering wherever He went. They finally hoped that the healer would go to their village also one day or other. The sewing women continued to hear more about the healer and the ruler and about his daughter. After the girl was raised from her death, she became normal, walking and playing in the garden.

They were surprised at the miracle of Jesus. They understood the healer must be a prophet of God. Another important thing was that the healer asked the ruler not to reveal that incident and expose it to anybody. The fundamental reason for that was the Sadducees and the Pharisees raising baseless allegations against Jesus and causing unnecessary problems to Him. The women talked about the marvelous act of the healer again and again, and they wished to know his name. They also wished the healer might come one day or other to their village and heal their diseases. It was their dream only.

The sewing women in a group talking nothing but this incident only. How the dead person was made alive. While they were fully engaged themselves in that hot discussion, all of a sudden all the women fell silent, stopped doing anything and looked through the window towards the dirty winding road that led to Capernaum. They saw a woman almost running towards them as if she was in a hurry of something. After she reached the village she went to those sewing

women. They crowded together and looking at her as if she were coming closer. And in a moment one of them recognized that she was no other than Veronica who went to them some years ago once in a week with some cloth to make dresses to the poor and helpless children.

The young woman Veronica came actively on the steps of the house and everybody felt happy to see her after a long time. She appeared to be quite hale and healthy and also quite happy. She came to them almost running to tell the happy news of her healing from the dangerous disease of “issue of blood” from which she had suffered for twelve years. She was healed and continues her social work of going to the sewing women and renewed her old job. By coming to them Veronica could give them work and then money.

All the women looked at her strangely because she was healed from such disease. They also found much change in her after she was healed. She looked better than before. If any one of them could remember her last appearance, she would certainly find that change as she looked white and her eyes sunken and dark circled.

But by looking at them Veronica enquired whether they recognized her. She said she was Veronica, their old friend but not a ghost to stare at.

She told them, she was healed from her disease of the issue of blood by a Master. He further cautioned her that she was healed by her own faith, her faith towards Him (God). All the while they were in their surprise and in their imaginary world. Now they broke their silence came near to her and began to hug her and kissed her. They felt comfortable and asked her as how all her healing took place. Actually they took it for granted, that she would have died because of that disease.

Now all the women fell extremely happy over her recovery and humbly requested her to tell how it happened. Veronica began to tell the story again to them. She said she heard about Jesus of Nagarite for some years. The women were surprised to hear the name of Jesus for the first time. Then Veronica continued. He was a Galilean. She had heard some time ago all over Capernaum about Jesus, how He had been opening the eyes of the blind, causing the deaf to hear and healing all kinds of diseases all around Capernaum.

She continued, she touched Him as He was walking. Her simple touch of

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### *A Woman with issue of blood*

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the hem of His garments healed her dangerous disease. Prior to this, she used all kinds of medicines prescribed by the doctors. She suffered with the disease for twelve long years. That issue of blood never stopped. By understanding her pathetic story and suffering and mental agony, she might have undergone during that period, we cannot but feel sorry for her pitiable condition.

She lost all hope of her recovery. Her family members and relatives came to a conclusion that she would die soon. She was just thirty two years old at that time. Veronica continued her testimony with the women regarding her healing. Just at that time she came to know about Jesus that He was coming to the town of Capernaum. She got a new hope and she would not die any more.

Then Veronica went to the place of Jesus and trying all means to meet Him. There was a large crowd around Him. She could not see the face of Jesus. She wanted to touch His garments at last. But one thing was wrong with her. She was an unclean woman "Leviticallly." So she should not go and touch Him in that condition. Any way she waited for some time. She felt like an untouchable leper for some time. At last she firmly decided to touch him if she could get the chance to talk with Him, for her it was most welcome. Before she took this decision of meeting Jesus she told her family members about the healing of Jesus but her relatives laughed at her. without caring them she went secretly to meet Jesus. She wished to try her luck to meet Jesus. He was walking and she went near him. She seized the opportunity and touched the hem of His garments. When there was a large crowd and all kinds of sick people surrounded Him.

The sewing women patiently heard the entire story till the end. They heard the story in complete silence and wonder. They were all astonished over the miracles of Jesus, particularly done to Veronica. Actually when the tips of the fingers of Veronica touched the hem of Jesus, then there was a flash of light on her face. She somehow believed with faith that her disease of the issue of blood had been healed. She really felt healthy blood through her body. She hopefully, understood she had been healed.

As the women listened to Veronica, one of them asked her whether Jesus spoke with her or whether she felt the presence of Him. Veronica replied that when she touched Him, "And Jesus immediately knowing in himself, some power had gone out of him turned and said "who touched my clothes?" When Christ questioned the disciples who touched Him, they said they did not know who had touched Him.

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Then the woman Veronica saw all that and terribly afraid of Jesus and went to him, trembling and fell before Him and confessed all the truth. Christ was happy at her openness. He looked at her with the most loving eyes and said "daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace and be healed of your disease."

The story of the woman of the 'issue of blood' is mentioned in the three gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is said her disease was healed only with her faith towards God and finally she told her story to the people like the sewing women. What had been done by the woman that came in fear and trembling? Then she fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. In this contact we as readers or as writers think seriously whether there is anything or anybody who could explore the depth of this simple story or what God appeared to be saying through this story with that remarkable belief and incident of healing, we must know about God's infinite knowledge of every human being.

As God did miracles in those days on the people of all diseases, we must not doubt that He can do the same miracles even today. But we cannot say what kind of miracles He is doing. So, by writing about a faithful woman, I must also as a writer develop faith in Jesus Christ. In the same way people by reading about faithful men and women they must develop faith in Jesus Christ. That depends upon each individual how one takes things into consideration.

God knew this young woman Veronica. He knew not only her prime need of physical healing of her issue of blood but also her long years of feeling of uncleanness and the humiliation in the public. The woman also knew that with her particular personality, she got the same idea that she was healed first by touching garments. God also knew she would not keep her remarkable story without telling others. Here the Master and the healer are God himself.

God wanted us to be perfectly whole. Jesus knew her as she was. In the same way He knew who we are. God is available to every one of us and knew every one of us inside and outside. This woman's faith made her wholesome. She has no plan but she casually went and touched Him and now she was a changed woman.

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## THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

There are three Samaritans in the Bible who secured a place with their noble work and good character. They are a good Samaritan, a Samaritan leper and a Samaritan woman. The first one was a good Samaritan. He stood as an example to the dictum "Love thy neighbor as thyself." By helping a stranger who was seriously wounded and robbed on the highway between Jerusalem and Jericho. He gave him the first aid and kept him in an inn. The distance between Jerusalem and Jericho is about 22 miles.

The second one was a leper boy. One day ten lepers found Jesus near Jericho and shouted at him to have mercy upon them. Then Jesus told them to meet the priest. But while they were going to the priest they were healed on the way itself. Nine out of ten felt happy among them and went on their way. The tenth boy being a Samaritan, came back to Jesus, thanked Him and fell on his face in gratitude. Christ loved his gratefulness and blessed him.

The third one is a Samaritan woman about whom I am writing here now. One day she went to the well of Jacob to draw water. Before she reached the well, she found Jesus sitting on the well to her surprise. She understood Him as Messiah repented from her sinful life. In addition to that she was able to bring a large number of people from that Samaritan village to Jesus which Jesus felt like harvest. This is the story of the Samaritan woman in a nutshell. With this noble and notable work she was recognized by Jesus and secured a place in the Bible.

This Samaritan woman was living in a small village Sychar near Samaria city. In that village, her house was a small cottage built with mud and so on. One morning she opened her house door and looked into the street to find out the movement of the people. She wanted to go to the well of Jacob to fetch water. The well was dug about two thousand years ago. She did not want to come across people on the way because they would comment about her sinful character.

She also did not like women in groups because they would talk about her immoral past life. So when there was no movement of anybody she would come to the well for water. And the well was about half a mile distance from her house.

She led the life of a harlot in the past. Therefore, people speak unpleasant words against her and she wanted to avoid all such things whenever she went to fetch water.

The woman moved quickly in that narrow street with her water pot (jar). She walked with her wornout slippers which produced some unpleasant sound, and also wornout clothes all of which indicated her poor and unhappy life. She was once beautiful and must be very attractive but all that was gone from her.

While going, she went on speaking to herself in that hot sun and then it was changed into humming of some pastoral music. She continued that humming till she reached the well. And also while walking towards the well, she watched the country side of the valley, the Shechem and then blow Samaria city and finally the hated Holy mountain of Jews. She looked at the Holy mountain of Morea.

The woman seemed to have recollected all these things in her walk and finally she was about to reach the well. But to her surprise she saw a man sitting on the well, who was no other than a Jew, Jesus Christ. She stopped a while and at last came to the well. The well appeared to be very old because of its age. The woman decided not to speak with the man until He speaks with her.

She looked at Him, and confirmed He was a Jew. There was no good relationship between the Jews and Samaritans at that time. The Jews looked down upon them and they didn't even dare walk line with Samaritans. She happily filled the pot with cool water and was about to go from the stranger (Jesus) before He spoke to her. Actually Jesus with His disciples was going from Jerusalem to Galilee. And this Samaria is almost in between the two towns. Due to long walk and hot sun, He became tired and thirsty. Jesus remained near the well and the disciples went to the town to bring bread for Jesus. So, Jesus was sitting alone there and He must be looking for some woman to come and give water. Accidentally this Samaritan woman came. As He was thirsty He asked that woman "Give me water to drink" Jesus asked her with all courtesy.

It was quite clear with His appearance that He was a Jew. Having not understood His courteous approach she simply stared at Him it seemed. But He looked at her so kindly and weary that He needed water at once. And Jesus in His very appearance, did not show even an iota of displeasure or insulting of the Samaritan woman. She then politely asked Him how a Jew could have water from a Samaritan woman. Jesus went on looking at her for some time and then replies "If you know the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, give me to drink,

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### *The Samaritan woman*

you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water. The woman did not understand what exactly Christ said and unable to talk with Him. Again Jesus went on looking at her so that she would give Him water.

She wanted to go away ignoring Jesus but she could not, she smiled at Him and said, “you have nothing to draw water, and the well was too deep where would He get the drinking water”.

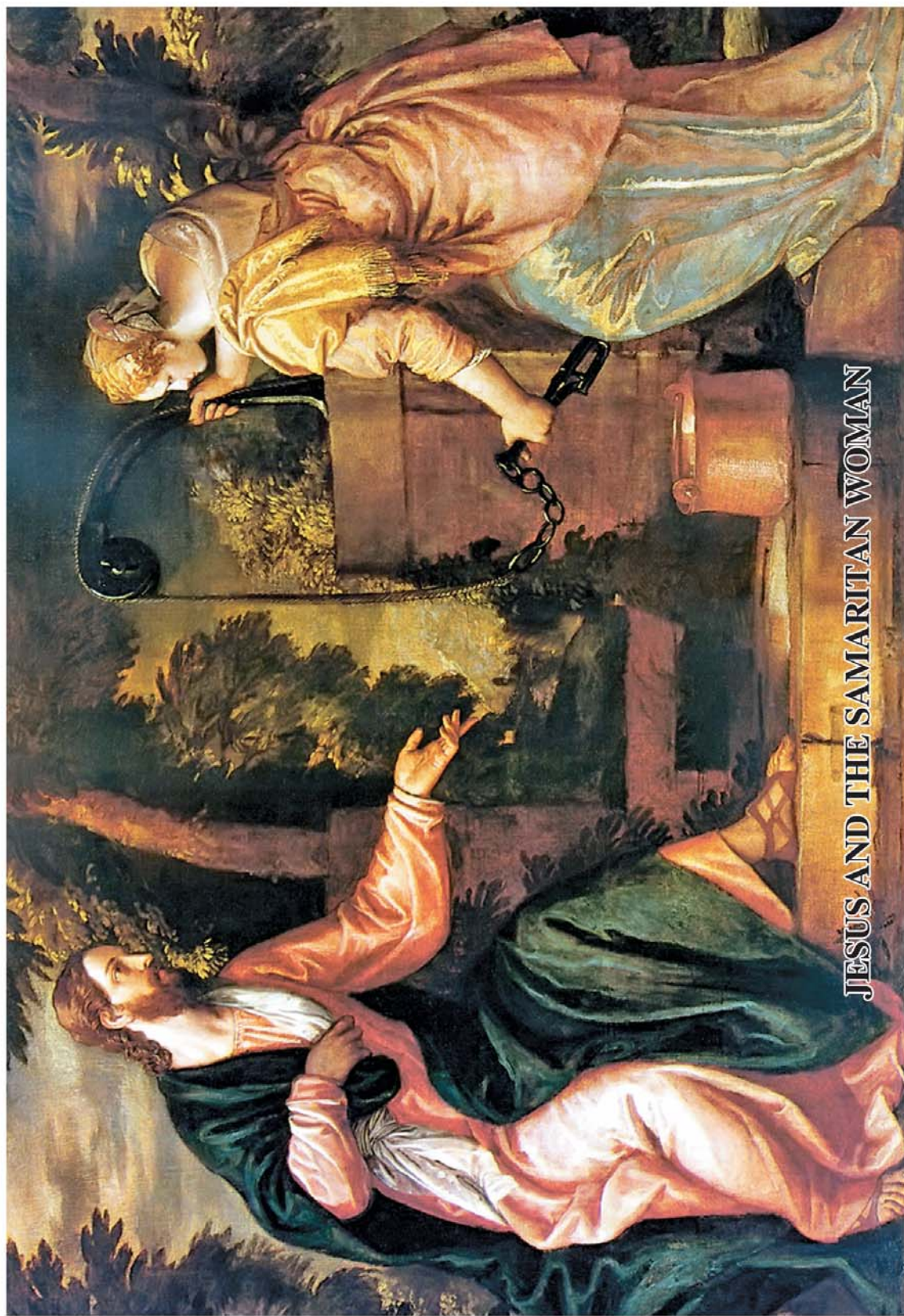
The woman became bold enough to speak with Jesus. She questioned Him again, “Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us this well, and drank from the well, then his sons and his cattle?” He stopped smiling any more and spoke to her in a tender voice, “Everyone who drinks of this water pointing to the well will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst”.

These words somehow changed the attitude of the woman. She changed the pose of her standing and became a bit attentive to the words of the stranger (Jesus). “The water that I shall give him shall become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life”. Then the Samaritan woman thought He was talking of some extra ordinary things. So that she need not come every day to that well, walking half a mile.

Jesus became a bit serious and told her to come with her husband for the water. She was shocked at His remark and said she had no husband. For that Jesus said she had five husbands. Jesus would have laughed at her words but checked Himself. Then she thought for a while how He could know her life. Then she humbled herself before Jesus and thought very high of Him. She questioned herself who was this stranger? Who was this hated Jew? Who could be so kind and at the same time so cruel? He was not cruel at all but He was a great prophet. She confirmed only prophet of God would know what her past life was.

Now she understood Him in a different way fully believed that He was a prophet and did not say anything further but of her fathers, how they worshipped on that nearby mountain and how people said they must go to Jerusalem to worship God. She looked at the mount Morea and talked within herself that she was able to convince Him and pleased within herself. She changed her topic before the stranger. Jesus stood up, looked at Jerusalem and then at mount Morea. Finally He looked at her softly and called her in a tender voice. She was somehow trembled at His voice and heard what He said. People need not worship the Father neither on the mountain nor in Jerusalem.





JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN



### *The Samaritan woman*

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The Samaritan woman wished to speak out something in order to please Him and make Him happy. She could not explain why but she wished to see Him in gladness regarding her. Her inner conscious must have praised him to do so as He is God. Her feeling of extreme happiness at the presence of Jesus, she never felt such rapture before in her life. She represented the entire humanity before Christ. Her feelings were our feelings. Her repentance was our repentance. Finally, she was going to speak on our behalf with Jesus.

But still her words trembled while she was speaking with Jesus. She addressed Him in a polite manner, and said, "Sir, I know that the Messiah is coming. He who is called Christ. And when He comes He will show us all things" Jesus must have felt very happy at the intelligent saying of that woman a harlot of a small village, could speak about the coming Messiah".

Then Christ answered her by saying, "I who speak to you am He". At these words she became almost spellbound! The blood at her face was almost dried. And in such conditions she said, "you - you- are – the Christ? "I who speak to you am He", He repeated again. "Christ" is a Hebrew word meaning 'the Saviour', Jesus the Greek word means the 'the anointed'.

The words of Jesus appeared very strange to her. She went too far in her imagination and understanding. Perhaps she could not get words to speak with Him. Her mind seemed to have stopped working because she met a prophet, no, not a prophet but God Himself. Just at that peak time came His disciples who went to the city to bring bread to Jesus. They saw Jesus was talking with a woman. They saw it was a serious conversation between them. They were surprised at that but nobody was dare enough either to speak with Jesus or with the woman. But they asked Him to eat the bread. But Christ answered, He at enough and He was no more hungry. For this reply they wondered who must have brought Him bread. But here, Christ means spiritual food.

Jesus answered the disciples in an understandable manner, "my meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work". According to His tatement, God sent Him to change as many gentiles as possible towards Him. And now the Samaritan woman brought many people from the city of Samaria by confessing her sin and a good number of people heard Him and believed Him. An ordinary rustic harlot would mobilize may be even thousands towards Christ and it made Him happy.

Now this woman was different. God saved her from her sins. Her mind was completely filled with Jesus. She understood something in His words. She confessed and felt extremely happy and could talk with Messiah, of whom she was dreaming and every believer was dreaming that He would come and tell them many things about how they should live as a true Christian, about salvation etc., She was thinking that the whole world appeared to have changed before her as she herself had changed completely. She was in her imaginary world. She forgot her water pot.

She ran from the well, leaving Jesus and His disciples at the well. She went into the Samaria city and told the people whoever came to her and looked at her face. She appealed to them, "come and see a man who told me all that ever I did" Her open confession convinced them and many people in groups to come to see Jesus and heard what He said. On the strength of her witness to Jesus, made the city run to Jesus.

Jesus was very happy for bringing many people to God from Samaria city which is not possible for that Samaritan woman. In such condition, the disciples came and requested Christ to eat. He replied, that He ate enough and no more hungry. The people of that Samaria town were very much impressed by the preaching of Jesus and requested Him to stay with them for some days more, and He stayed for two days with them and preached there and went to Galilee.

Then after four years of this incident Philip the evangelist, one of the disciples happened to visit Samaria on God's work. And the evangelist Philip was surprised at the growth of believers in that city and it was only the result of the whole hearted effort of the Samaritan woman.

Many pages have been written about the Samaritan woman, her transformation, her repentance from the immoral life. And for two thousand years, she has been talked about in the churches about her meeting of Jesus and able to talk with Him personally with her repentance, she walked to the spiritual life with her wonderful change in her life. She could switch on the light in Samaria and caused many people in that city to walk in the light of God. But in this connection we have to think seriously about Jesus. Normally Jesus must have actually waited at the well with the presumption that somebody would come and recognize Him and give Him water to quench His thirst.

But by accident He found a woman, an ordinary woman, an immoral woman who became faithful in His presence. And finally this harlot woman remained as

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### *The Samaritan woman*

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a person, a trustworthy for the fulfillment of His work of bringing as many people as possible from Samaria towards God.

From this wonderful story we have to understand by looking and studying the story of a Samaritan woman from a Bible. This story was told by three apostles out of four, Mathew, Mark and Luke. As per the story God would do wonderful things even through ordinary and ignominious people like the Samaritan woman. She was no doubt an unimportant and infamous woman, and a simple, uneducated harlot of a small village near Samaria town. Such an ignominious woman was elevated to a complete personality by Jesus Christ. He knew what kind of life she led. He knew, what respect she had among her villagers particularly. But still when she said that she saw the Messiah and asked them to come and see, and secondly, said the 'He told me whatever I did'. These two points touched the hearts of the Samaritans and they ran to Jesus in large groups and listened to Him.

Then, Jesus also if He did not say about the living water, even the Samaritan woman would not have stayed there near well for such long time. But Jesus mention of living water prompted her to stay and made a request for the water. She boldly talked with Jesus, that led her to repentance and became faithful to Jesus Christ, could it be God is saying "Don't expect truly a troubled heart to ask for forgiveness in faith at the outset. Don't expect a quick response from someone by life. Wait, be patient, give me time to treat that hard shell only I know how."

For those who feel they are too far gone for God to care about them, and to mind them. We only have care to remember the woman at the well, outside Sychar. An immoral woman, much aged, unkept with dirty hair and a dirty heart. Yet, the Son of God took great and tender care with her. He ignored (as He did always) all the bigoted prejudice of His day, not only did He talk all the time she needed. He pursued her like no one even who had been under the earthly life; can end sink too low for the Son of God to seek after. Above all, we find in His ministry, that Jesus would never before openly declare Himself, to be the Christ. He made the most dispised woman as important to the people of her village. They really honoured her words because she openly spoke the truth about herself. 'He spoke about me I ever did'. Her open confession led her to repentance, and made her as one of the great woman characters in the Holy Bible.

Jesus never respected persons, but He always respected the hearts" of the persons. Amen.

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## WHO IS A BLESSED MAN?

Somebody pointed out long time ago, that there was no end for making books. If it was really true centuries back, what can be said of today? When millions of texts are coming up into the market, in the present day we find massive and sophisticated machines invented and billions of various kinds of books are printed.

In such circumstances the first book first printed in the movable type was the Bible. This was done in 1455 A.D. in Nang Germany of Gettenburg press. The inventor of the press chose to print the Bible as the first book and printed 180 books in Latin language. And out of them it seems there are still 20 original books to be found in some libraries in the world. The Bible is not only the first book which was ever printed, it also remained as the first selling book of all times.

For example the book of psalms with the collection of 150 sacred songs became the most believed one among the readers of the Bible. For centuries these psalms provided for the people who have hearts, who have been searching for the answers to their doubts to their life, light for the day and beautiful songs for the night. Those who read the psalms have different opinions about the authorship. They put 100 psalms out of 150 for the identification of the author and the remaining 50 considered to be anonymous. But the most possible and identifiable author of those psalms was king David. He was actually credited with 75 psalms. Again some commentators pointed out that the 1<sup>st</sup> psalm was written by either king David or his son king Solomon. It is finally suggested by the scholars, that king Solomon edited his father's psalms and he himself wrote the 1<sup>st</sup> psalm as introduction to the book of psalms. But the opinions of different scholars were treated as mere speculations. And there is no doubt the writer of the psalms while writing got the "Divine inspiration" and blessings.

Today if we consider the Bible is the first book ever printed and if it is the best selling book also, then psalm 1 while it introduced the other 149 psalms, that follow must stand out as one of the most important documents historically. As the



### *Who is a Blessed man?*

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word of God, psalm 1st should be appreciated with wonder and references while reading that psalm we must take off our shoes as Moses did when he was standing at the Holy place.

Even the name of the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter is very interesting. It is called “Happiness of Godly and misery of the wicked”. This chapter has only six verses and the first verse is worth to quote in this context. It is "blessed is the man that walketh not in the council of the ungodly nor standeth in the way of the sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful".

Psalm 1<sup>st</sup> spoke about the two men, Blessed man and wicked or cursed man. It spoke of two things. Gods way and mens way and it spoke about two destinies the everlasting life and the eternal death. The psalm starts with the words “Blessed is the Man”. The word blessed is often translated as “happy or will off”. Actually its meaning is deeper than that one. It appears there are two real things as basis for God’s blessings. The first one is the recipient of God’s blessings will possess life. The second one is the goodness of God rests upon our life. The blessing of God may be in physical realm or it may be in spiritual realm.

“A man may be blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heaven" (Eph 1:31) or he may be blessed with things like good health and wonderful family or with abundant wealth on the earth. So as to understand properly the main idea of blessing is that it helps the people to realize. It is exactly opposite to God’s blessing or God’s cursing. As blessing is the bestowal to life and goodness, cursing is the bestowal of death and badness, because God Himself explains and experiments these things upon us. Even before entering the promised land, God gave Israel a list of blessings for obedience and of cursing to disobedience.

On the sixth day of the creation God said "Let us make man in our image after our likeness – so God created man in His own image – in the image of God created He him – male and female created He them (Gen. 1:26-27). After the creation of man and woman God would have said for the infinite things to come to life. The words God spoke were recorded in the Bible “And God blessed them”. He blessed life and goodness upon Adam and Eve. He commanded be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth” (Gen. 1:28).

The third chapter of Genesis reveals how Satan with his cunning words, tempted Adam and Eve. The wicked Satan successfully solicited the first parents of the humanity to disobey God. He made them somehow to eat the fruit of the forbidden fruit and hence they became sinners. The result of that disobedience

was really a tragic and unforgettable incident. With that result both could experience death (spiritual death). Immediately after this experience the beginning of aging process that could lead to physical death and the goodness of God was no longer upon them. This tragic event is called according to the Bible God's curse. Because it brought death and badness to humankind.

As God blessed Adam and Eve, He blessed "Noah" also, after the floods, God, after destroying everything on the face of the earth, for the continuation of humanity He wished for a lot of Adams and Eves prosper around the planet. Noah's faith and righteousness and his family from the danger of flood, so God blessed Noah by saying "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with people", Noah was a perfect man in the sight of God and he walked with Him.

Then the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter tells us about the covenant God made with Abraham. He told the great nation and "I will bless thee and make thy name great and there shall be a blessing and I will bless them that bless thee and curse them that curse thee."

God made four promises to Abraham, which was related to divine blessings. Again God promised him. He blessed him abundantly and made his name great. He made him a wealthy man also. And this day the name of Abraham was exalted by Jews and looked at him as the father of their people. The Muslims looked at him as one of the prophets of "Allah" and the Christians looked at him as the father of the faithful.

God promised him, He would bless those who bless Abraham and his descendants and curse those who curse Abraham and his descendants. Here is an unchangeable principle confirmed by history. At the time of salvation a person moves from being under the curse of God to being under the blessing of God as a result of new birth. This blessing that the redeemed church acquires comes out of the unconditional covenant God made with the patriarch Abraham and the promise that is in his seed all the nations of the world shall be blessed.

A Blessed man shall not do the following:

We find in the 1st chapter of Psalms that begins with three negatives. They are interlinked and progressive - the first one is he must not walk with the council of ungodly is found and reached unto every area of life. You can see the ungodly council on TVs, radios, news papers, and through lectures in the class rooms and again this ungodly council was built on four pillars.

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### *Who is a Blessed man?*

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- 1) There is no God. This wicked view is based ultimately on pride. It is nothing but the total denial of truth. That is, in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. If we believe that there is some supreme power which controls everything than man is accountable go God.
- 2) Man Evolved. If there is no God who created man in His own image, the only answer to human existence is evolution which causes the denial of God.
- 3) There are no disolutes. when God is not there, man is evolved and man is still evolving and everything is in the process of change because change is the law of life. If we take this for granted, man's life is built on quite sand.
- 4) There is no specific standard for morality. Righteousness is the first of Righteous and righteous is determined by conformity to a particular standard. Then the standard for righteousness we God Himself, when there is no God and man evolving there can be no standard for right and wrong. If there is no standard for right and wrong to which man can appeal to anything is subjective, so every man dies by following and doing what is right in his own eyes. But the blessed man says "Not me, I'm not going in that direction."

He would refuse to walk in the path of the council of ungodly secondly the blessed man does not stand in the way of sinners. The seeds of sinners will follow thoughts. If a man thinks wrongly he will get wrongly. The ungodly thinking and inglorious living are inseparable companions (Rom. 1:18). Thirdly the blessed one does not sit in the seat of the scornful. The man who walks in the council of ungodly and stands in the way of sinners will quickly sit in the seat of scornful. This is irresistible. The ungodly and unrighteous both in the mud of sin, degradation and pride, darkness never likes light. So the people that like and live in darkness will ridicule and scorn the people that walk in the light and finally take delight in mocking their God, His world and the Christian principles.

**The blessed man must do** – the Psalm 1 contains the following words. The blessed man should not do certain things. Then it gives chance for the consideration of the next two that the blessed man must do. He must delight in the law of the Lord. The idea is that the blessed man takes great pleasure in the covenant of God.

The word 'law' is translated from the Hebrew word "Torah" and torah is a synonym to Pentateuch which mean the 'five' ie., "the five books of Moses". These five books contain the details of an agreement that took place between God

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and the sons of Jacob. Moses acted as a mediator between God and Jewish people, especially in the wilderness for forty years. The agreement was also called Mosaic covenant. This covenant inspired every area of a man's life from birth to death. If man obeyed that covenant they would have God's blessings and if man disobeys the covenant they will have God's cursing.

The major components in the covenant between the rules (God in this context) and the subjects (Jews in this context) are conspicuous in the scripture and it is really fascinating to watch. The author of the covenant is God Himself and so God is identified to Israel. He speaks all those words saying "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage". The second point is that there is the historical prologue. These deeds were with the acts of the ruler on behalf of the people and so they needed to enter into the covenant with Him.

The Lord said unto the sons of Jacob "ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians and how I bare you on eagle's wings and brought you unto myself. Therefore, now if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant then you shall be peculiar treasure to me above all. People in all the earth is mine. There are the important principles that govern the relationship between the ruler and the people. The Lord included the ten commandments and the general laws also for the governance of the covenant.

Finally Israelites were given about 13 laws to observe in the Mosaic covenant and those laws were given by God. This is the promise of the blessings and cursing. Actually blessings are promised to the people only if they heed to the contents of the covenant. The covenant, God offered to the descendents of Abraham through Jacob, was optional. They had the liberty either to accept or to reject the covenant. It was a Biblical and conditional covenant.

The Mosaic covenant was known as Abraham's covenant which was made by God with patriarch. It was confirmed in blood. And Moses took that blood and sprinkled on the people. He said "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all those words. The blessed man is delighted in the covenant because he understood how wonderful God was and with whom His nation had intend to a covenantal relationship.

The covenant into which the Israel entered into their God addressed every area of life. It is not simply observed once in a week on their Sabbath day. That covenant contained both religious and ceremonial earth. According to the laws

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there is no separation of church and state. This is the reason why when Joshua was made leader after the death of Moses, God said the following words, “Be strong and of a good courage”. God repeated His words to Joshua saying, “Be strong and of a good courage. Be not afraid neither being those dismayed for the Lord thy God is with thee”. The blessed man will have the reward of faithfulness. The following points are mentioned about a blessed man.

There are three major sources of water in Israel. The first one was the “eeseim”, which means cut into the rock and plastered to catch and hold water. The second one was a well that means could dig but after it became necessary dry. The third one was a moving water of a river which never becomes dry and it was called “living water”.

It is this third source of water that a blessed man will possess and his blessing would bear fruit at proper time and his tree leaves will never dry. The blessed man will be given his results at the right time because it is planted by the river of living water. With all the above mentioned reasons and sources one can understand that a blessed man will progress well in life.

**The condition of ungodly men.** The un godly man is no doubt a cursed man. He does not possess the life of permanent value. He does not know the goodness of God. He is like the chaff when the wind drives away and also he is like a dry plant which does not have the source of water. The ungodly people are both lifeless and fruitless. And finally the ungodly people cannot stand before God on the day of judgment.

The psalm ends with a clear reminder "God should not be mocked at, for whatever a man soweth he will reap."

For he that soweth for his flesh shall of the flesh reap; but he that soweth for the spirit shall reap the spirit. So, God is not mocked at. The blessed are forever experience life and goodness, whereas the cursed people always experience death and badness. And today man is trying to live in the shade of the “ New covenant” or what is commonly called “Grace”.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself introduced this “New covenant” in the upper room, while observing the “Passover” with His disciples. This took place just a few hours before the crucifixion. Then the final analysis is made. According to it there are two kinds of men on the earth, the blessed man and the cursed man. There are only two ways – the way of God, and the way of man. And finally there are only two destinies – life and death”.

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## SEEING IS BELIEVING

“you are my witness” said the Lord and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me”.

As true Christians faith is our text to our promised land and also shield to opposition. God is He who says He is in fact everything. If not, He is a liar, unworthy of our faith at all. But today the scripture says, "no deceit can be found in him". There are many examples regarding who he was (in the scripture) but it is seen a few of them which are mentioned in connection with the promised land.

“I am the Lord who brought you out of her” the land of Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it. I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham the God of Isaac and Jacob. I have indeed seen the mistery of my people ...so I have come down to receive them from the land of Egyptians and to bring them out of bondages into a spacious and good land." God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM! That is what you are to say to Israel. I AM has sent me to you (Exodus 3:14). It is really great surprising that God went before Israelites while they were going in wilderness. He said he was curious no doubt a powerful impression that can be easily missed into pointed explanation. Know that the Lord is God, know above all else that "YHWH" our covenant maker is Elohiym” the Lord of all creation. Jesus Christ had his own approval to the people. He gathered a small band of followers to move in the promised land in Jerusalem, Judah, Samaria and on the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Christ called his disciples who all loved Him. He put them two questions to answer.

The first question is “who do people say the Son of man is” - Christ knew the immense power of Himself. But He wants to know what the people were thinking about him. In the beginning He created - these divine and valuable words can make even the unbelievers as believers. These who want to believe God's word to be and ignorant about them, then nothing is more ignorant in choosing man's intelligence before God's.

A man or woman can believe enough of scripture to accept Christ as the saviour. All attempts are made to take away the mystery and wonder that survived and that God would leave something. We cannot tame the "Lion of Judah". There is a mystery and wonder about God. We must be very careful while recreating the image of God different from the Bible. We know some of the parents prefer Christian institutions for their children because of two reasons. They will have better education and then can know something about God. He is the God of Scripture. He is unchangeable even an iota of what man says. God is man's entire future.

Second question - "Who do you say that I am?" Many great men have given thoughtful answers to these questions with their inventory thinking and positive belief of God. And they proved that Biblically accurate. If we have attended church the pastors, the Bible teachers would have undoubtedly shaped our concept of God. And so these factors made us understand God and believe Him. With this truth our faith becomes unchangeable.

Then our strong faith and belief affects our eternal destinies and that nothing has greater effect on the quality of our life and the fulfillment of our destinies on planet earth.

Christ's third question - What do you say that I am? - To this question Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ the Son of the living God. Then Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by men - but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter. On that rock I will build my church. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you lose on earth will be lost in heaven. Though Christ wanted to build His church on the foundations of the Apostles' testimonies, it seems Peter might not have understood what Christ said.

Peter was designed with transcendence position and responsibility of the Kingdom. In the Greek New Testament the word used for Peter is "petros". It means a stone, a boulder, a rock on which Christ wanted to build His church. In olden days the master or a king used to entrust the most responsible job to the trusted persons as king Pharaoh did to Joseph in the Old Testament. He fully believed in Joseph and entrusted him the highest post next to him in command. In addition to that, God was with Joseph. He guided him and elevated him to the highest position.

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In the same manner Christ entrusted to Peter the responsibility of the key of the kingdom of heaven. As God put tremendous duty on the shoulders of Joseph and Peter, He is willing to empower us also to do like spreading of His word in this world. Just a few verses after Jesus proclaimed Peter's place of authority, it seemed Peter rebuked Jesus with authority and said, he would suffer many things in the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that He must be killed (Matt. 16:21). This is really a wonderful prophecy of Peter about Jesus.

Our beloved God had made many things available for us for our happy living. He foreordained a perfect plan for our lives and stored immeasurable blessing to each of us. He longs for His children to be faithful. God had invited us even to participate in the affairs of heavenly kingdom and authority. God is looking for stewards from us who are willing to bind over their own unbelief in the mighty name of our Lord Jesus Christ and look for a fresh anointing faith. God wants us to be dependants upon His. Then only we can prosper with His blessings.

God can do precisely because He is who He says He is what He can do for us. For example, as the Saviour He saves us, as a master He assigns authority, as bread of life He gives us life. As deliverer He delivers us, as a redeemer He redeems us, As a preacher He preaches to us. And finally He is the embodiment of divine strength. In the gospels Christ called those persons who were without faith to believe in miracles, as an 'unbelieving and perverse generation' (Luke 9:41). the reason He called them miracle cravers as Adulterous because they worshipped God's wonders more than God Himself.

And this adulterous sensationalism also suggests that we can believe as long as He does what we wish him to do for us through prayer as if we were the potter and God the clay. Let us study some of the quotations from the Bible - 1. "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for" (Heb. 11:1), 2 "Through him you believe in God, who saved him from the dead and glorified Him and so your faith and hope are in God" (1Peter 1:21), 3. "Against all hope Abraham in hope believed and also became father of many nations" (Rom. 4:15), 4. "And now those remain, faith, hope and love" (1Cor. 13:2).

It does not matter how many promises God must have made to the people. They were "yes" or they will be done in Christ, who gave His life to redeem humanity from the sin. So God could simply say "yes" to the fulfillment of His promises in the lives of believing mortals. So the present believers may see

miracles but there may be greater miracles like abundant life resumption, ministry and exceeding harvest ahead.

Christ did miracles out of compassion. He raised the son of a widow in Nain from the dead, because Christ's heart went out into her. He pitied her immensely and did that wonder. Jesus happened to perform the miracles because "to power of the Lord was present" or we can also say "creating an environment to do so." Let us not misunderstand that believing God involves believing Him for His wonderful miracles. Some people may be under the impression that we are missing something. But certainly we are not at all missing anything as we are not the first generation to miss the wide spread wonders.

Gideon's generation found slept under terrible enemy oppression of Philistines and hid themselves in strongholds. The Israelites were separated from their promised land, which made them cry unto God to save them from the enemy Philistines. When the angel of the Lord appeared before Gideon and said, "The Lord is with you, and you are a mighty warrior." Gideon replied for this as "If the Lord is with us where all His wonders that our fathers told about?" God in His great mercy gave to Gideon faith through a lot of evidence and encouragement on which he grew and then saved Israelites from the clutches of Philistines.

Now-a-days we are desperately looking for the wonders and miracles of God. We need Him to show His mighty arm, and by the world He is alive and active. We are told the churches are in terrible decline. Did I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" (John 11:40). Believing God must be our motto for His best. Our heavenly position of glory that came to God is through our lives. God has the power and authority to grant us anything on a list of A to Z. And all resources both heaven and earth belongs to God only. God was glorified with the miracle that blessed temporary as well.

There was a great commotion blended with agony in the house of Martha due to the death of her brother Lazarus.. Both the sisters were under the impression that if Jesus were to be there at that time their brother would not have died. Then over her brother's death Jesus "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" And he revealed that glory by raising Lazarus from death.

We must know how God must be glorified. God in His sovereignty could prioritize miracles and wonders in some generations and He maybe prioritizing in

our generation too. At the time of the last supper Jesus Christ introduced a term with revolutionary implications, when He raised the cup, He said, "this cup is a new covenant in my blood" which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). The New Testament books, 2 Corinthians and Hebrews clearly explained the New Testament and compared that with the Old Testament. The old covenant was the letter, the letter of the law" The letter of the new covenant is of the spirit.

The letter of the old covenant was written on the tablets of stones. The letter of the new covenant was written on the tablets of 'human hearts'. In Hebrews 10:16 it is said this is the covenant I will make with them, after that, says the Lord. I will put my laws in the hearts and I will write them in their minds."

The law was written upon the external and visible on the tablets of stone. God manifested His glory in many physical and visible forms such as Manna, a cloudy pillar by day and fire by night. The ministry of the New covenant is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit to His disciples and said, "He lives with you and be with you". God has bountiful desires for us and He also clearly knows how His desires must accomplish the believer in each generation. God can do everything that He promises. He is willing to perform outstanding miracles in our generation as we increase our faith.

God was glorified often through the miracles that blessed temporarily. He treats all of us as His children and heirs to His kingdom. We are the heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. If we really share in His sufferings we may also share in His glory.

Apostle Paul also said in this context he does not consider to present suffering to be remotely comparable with the glory God will reveal "in us". The New Testament has mentioned too much evidence for us to claim that suffering is never within the framework of our sovereign God. As we all know about the truth of God, His unceasing ability to perform miracles, and the truth about His undominable role of suffering according to the new covenant, made all of us to believe Him more and more.

If we are really convinced that God loves us and has certain priorities for us then we are safe to walk by faith. So my dear friends, we are all safe and secure with God. We are safe to believe Him. We are quite safe with God because we are His priority. We want to experience God's blessings, but we don't want to judge people of lesser faith, as God is the judge of all.



In Mark 9th chapter, we find an interesting discourses that took place between Christ and His disciples, when some of them were unable to cast out a demon from a tormented child. They were actually empowered by Jesus to do such miracles, but they failed in that. So, this was reported to Jesus. And Christ before he reprimanded them He questioned as what they argued about, with the teachers of the law.

Then Jesus said, I am convinced that the argument the disciples had with the educated and dignified teachers of the law diminished the power of the Spirit in them so drastically that they were unable to do miracles even though they were empowered to do. He advised the disciples "if you want to be full of soul, don't argue with a legalist. you must love them, serve them if God permits. But don't argue with them nor even judge them.

Seeing is believing Jesus opinion is that a pure hearted and a faith filled petition certainly do miracles. They may be lesser or great, temporal or eternal wonders which never cease. "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" (John 11:40). Count on it every time - God desires truth in the inner most being. May He invade our sub conscious minds with His word.

In this context let us have a glance of the Old Testament. The first question that Moses asked God after he heard the voice from the burning bush was, "Who am I that I shall go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11). As a matter of fact Moses had the ire-raising audacity to respond to His call. So, Moses said, "O Lord please send some one else to do it." Moses had his own reasons to resist God's call and his identity as the servant of God. But in his character we can find one thing in common with other human beings. he also committed sin at the end for which I recieved the punishment not to enter the promised land of Cannan.

After Moses, Joshua was presented as a mighty warrior and also confident of doing anything commanded by God. He repeatedly told Joshua as repetetions are common in the Bible that "to be strong and couragious". But God repeated that these terms as "to be strong and very courageous" etc., It was Moses who gve the name Joshua. His original name was "Hoshea" the son of Nun. Scripture is also quite clear that Moses know the power and stength of Joshua. So, he was chosen by God, after Moses to lead the conquests.

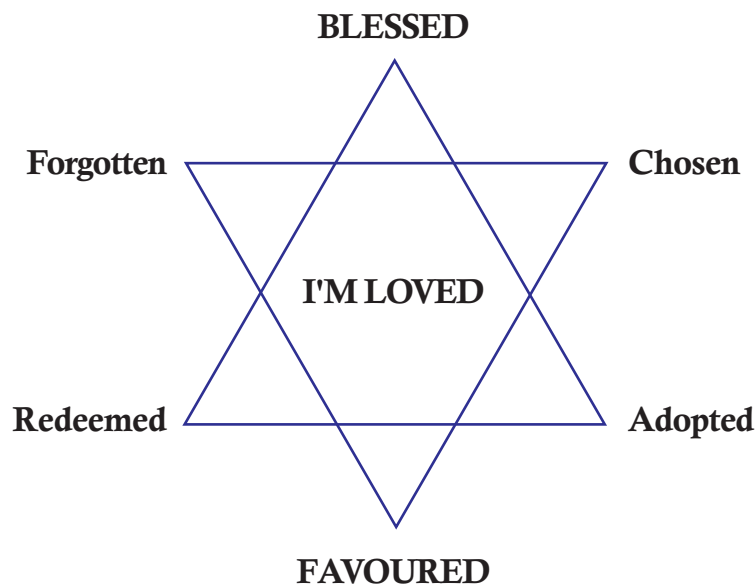
Knowing the fact God commanded Moses to lay his hand on Joshua and

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commission him (Numbers 27:18-20). We don't find any reference when Joshua received that name from Moses. The name Hosea means deliverer whereas Joshua also means deliverer. He was no doubt a deliverer of Israel. He won many battles and put them in the promised land.

God's perfect love is immeasurable. So, in response we must say, I love God, I am blessed, I am favoured, I am redeemed, and I am forgiven. We have recieved Jesus as our personal saviour "Everything of our identity is found in Him" (1John 3:1). How great is the love of the Father that has lavished on us that we still be called the children of God" And that is what we are. Blessed be the God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ for He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight.

In Him we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of our tresspassers. According to the riches of His grace, He lavished on us with all His wisdom and understanding. the believers must look at the star that is mentioned below, because it is said in Philippeans 2:15-16 that we shine like stars in the universe, as we hold out the word of life.



How often we could use the same approach towards God? Let us speak about these words to our own soul as many times as possible. In love we are

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blessed, chosen, adopted, favoured, redeemed and forgotten. God is also a task master.

Accordingly, all the believers have a call from Christ, and we are convinced that God assigns our callings for a host of reasons and many of them have a purpose in us. The believer must have faith in the following points. They have a dramatically strengthened sense of security, an righteousness are credited to their account and freedom is granted from the burden of their own sins.

We have to exercise faith to believe God, who can handle the consequences of our obedience even capable of long-term obedience. We can make our final observation on faith, credited as righteousness as the two Old Testament heroes like Abraham and David. Though both lived in different circumstances, they fulfilled the needs of faith by which one became the father of many nations, and the other became the king of Israelites who were God chosen people.

By believing Christ we can do anything because He will give us strength. Likewise Joshua was a man with good reputation for believing God in all difficulties. So he led the children of God to the promised land by faith and fruitfulness. Though Joshua lived long time ago even before Christ, his examples offered endless reputation and appreciation in New Testament believers. It does not matter how mighty the servant like Moses and Joshua, both did their job wonderfully.

Christ commanded His twelve disciples for a purpose. It was not like the twelve tribes of Israel. Christ called the twelve to join Him in His work he was doing. he empowered them with divine tasks in His name according to Luke 10:1. Jesus further tells us that He appointed seventy two other members and sent them two by two to every place He wished to go in future. They were fully equipped and empowered to do anything in His name and they could do all with the strength of Christ.

He did not stop that programme with seventy two plus twelve disciples as mentioned in the gospel of St. John. Christ extended open invitation and basic requirements to accomplish remarkable works in His name. he said, "I tell you the truth any one who has faith in me can do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father" (John 14:11). Jesus Christ finally gave instructions before leaving the planet earth "go and make the disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, in the name

of the Son and the Holy Ghost and teaching them to obey everything I commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).

So, as Christ planned in His time, with His disciples, to spread the word of God, with good instructions, we must continue His mission at every nook and corner of the world. All we need to know is 'mighty is the shield of faith and the sword of spirit' (the Word of God) (Eph. 3:16-17).

*"Onward Christian soldiers*

*Marching as to war*

*With the cross of Jesus*

*Going on before."*

## JOURNEY OF LIFE

*“All the world is a stage”*

All the men and women are mere actors. They exit from this world after they complete their role as something in their life's journey “O, Lord---if you will please grant success to the journey on which I have come.”

Life is a journey ---- As every journey has a starting point this life's journey has also some starting point. Our journey's starting point is our birth. We can be sure when our birth takes place, but we are not sure when we die as it is in the hands of our Lord. Some people die all of a sudden with some accident or some complaint. Some live longer. So in our life childhood, manhood, middle age and old age after tender going all these stages we die as death is inevitable for every living species on the earth.

For some people life is a constant struggle for their survival. For some others there will be enough and to spare. But still they are dissatisfied and unfulfilled. So in our life's journey we can experience wonderful things. Sometime disappointment, sorrow, heartbreaking incidents and experiences. In such cases we will be far away from peace and happiness. Nobody can predict one's span of life except God. So God wants our life's journey with joy and with some purpose and it will be clubbed with some events as the part of His plan. And above all God wants to join us and lead our way in our life's journey. To some people life becomes hectic and they are preoccupied with their own urgent needs. In such strange conditions they can never go backward, but always forward.

While thinking about our life's journey we must keep in our minds the creator God and then for what purpose He created us. Then only we can fulfill God's exciting plan of this journey. In this life's journey we have to understand three important truths. They are -- 1 the first truth is very simple at the same time very profound. God put us on the journey of life. We are not in this world by chance or by accident. We are here as God created us and put us in this world.



Even before the world was created God knew about us and He planned to give us life. We are proved of His plan from eternity. He is the creator of everything in the universe. He put us on the track of our life's journey. In the Bible this truth is made a difference in people's lives ---and same is the case in our lives also.

God told Jeremiah, the prophet, "Behold, I formed you in the womb, I know you". Finally Jeremiah accepted God's call to be His prophet. King David said "All the days ordained for me, were written for me in your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:16). After David became the king he could put Israel in the highest position that they never dreamt off. So, we must be sure God created us and put us in life's journey. As we come from Him, we must go back to Him only and that is the greatest joy we can experience by giving ourselves to Him back. Then we can learn to walk with Him, every day until we return to Him once for all. The knowledge of this truth we can call the divine appointment for us.

The second truth is God wants us to join us in our journey. He wants to make us understand that we are not alone. Let us think for a while that God created us and would lead us to our destiny. Some people may be in such impression but they are wrong. God never leaves us in such helpless condition. Even if we forget Him and do not allow Him into our hearts, He will be with us always and loves us. If we invite Him whole heartedly. He feels happy and joins us in our life's journey. Then we can never feel we are alone. The psalmist in his prayer asked God "where I can go from your spirit. Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens you are there, if I made my bed in the depths you are there" (psalm 139-7-8). So according to David; God is Omnipresent (seen everywhere) Omnipotent (All powerful) and Omniscient (knows everything). If we have faith in this truth we can live happily because God is with us.

Even if we forget Him He will come to our rescue as and when we need. He will never abandon us once we trust Him 'Moses said " The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you, he will never leave you nor forsake you"(Deuteronomy 31:8) and we can quote another example of Jesus Christ. He promised "surely I am with you always to the very end of the age" (Mathew 20:20). For centuries millions of people realized the truth of the words of God.

Let us think about the third and final truth. We need to understand life's journey in detail. God put us not only in our life journey but also He likes to join

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us and asks to take a new path ---- the path of faith and trust in Him. While we are journeying accidentally we may come across two paths. One is wider, commonly used by many people and the other very narrow which is used by limited numbers.

If we make an enquiry about the path generally people suggest broad way only. But with careful study we can choose the correct narrow path that God wants us to travel. This is the path God laid for us and assures us that the path leads us to true life. Then we can proceed freely and happily as we are in the right track. Jesus once said "Enter ye in at the strait gate. For wide is the gate, and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many those be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Then we may question ourselves why should we follow that narrow path? or path that was chosen by God. He wants us to prefer for our journey worth taking path because of three reasons.

The first reason is that old path or wider path will never deliver what it promises. If we look around we can find many people how far they are really happy. Actually their happiness is superficial. The old path promised peace and security – but ends in anxiety, fear, headache, sorrow and boredom. The old path promises us freedom but makes us slaves with best grow anger and bitterness.

It will be like the story of a self centered rich man of whom Christ said in one of the parables. Christ said people who prefer old path or wider paths are like those that take life easier "eat drink and be merry". They become slaves to temporary happiness. They forget about tomorrow what will happen to them. So God said that kind of "you fool. This very night your life will be required from you" (Luke 12:19-20). This foolish man preferred the wrong path. The wider path that leads him to destruction. The old path promises everything but all its promises are hallow and leave us with nothing.

The second reason to choose God's path for the rest of our journey is that God's path always delivers the fruit He promises. Therefore who walk on God's path are different from the polluted society. When some people in the society are hurt or in need of some help God's people will go to their rescue and respond to them with compassion as they are walking on the life's path with God.

But there are some people who have false impression that God only

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promises always good health and prosperity. They must have forgotten of Jesus warning. “ In this world you will have trouble” (John 10.33) Christians are not exempted from suffering and grief. In spite of all those hardships they experience peace of God and transcend all understanding.

The third reason in choosing God’s path is that it leads us home, the home of peace and rest. We care only some years on this earth and then go to our eternal home. That is the only our final and permanent resting place. The Bible also says this truth that this world is not our permanent place. We are “strangers and pilgrims on this earth”. Our true home is heaven and to that destination. God’s narrow path leads us. To all our believers that is the path of our journey since our birth.

Again we may question ourselves what kind of journey we do? The answer to this question is in our hearts. We cannot change our past, but we may be able to change the future with the help of God because He knows all about our strength and weaknesses. God wants to free us from old path and put us on new path – His path. Jesus said “I have come that they may have life and have it to the full”. We can begin our life’s journey by committing our life to Christ and learn to walk with Him every day. And this is the gist of the present topic life’s journey.

We must realize we are in God’s image and have God given soul. We don’t live like animals. Our soul makes us to live with dignity and sub-respect you made him a little lower than the heavenly bodies. The Bible says “and crowned him with glory and honour”. That is the reason why human life cannot be scorned or abused or wanted by destroyed as them are created in His image.

Because of the sanctity of our souls we have the capacity to know God and be His friends forever. We are created in such a way that we can live peacefully not only on earth but also with regular touch with heaven. This was the great design of th great designer (God).

God created Adam and Eve in His own image completely different from all Creations on the earth. But why did He create them? Is there any motive behind it? The only reason conspicuous to us is out of “love”. It was only ”love” that prompted God to fashion a creation out of His own image and likeness and to please him in a paradise of enchanting loveliness. The love of human brings is imperfect and changeable but God’s love is perfect never changing and becoming weak.

Much can be said about God's love which is beyond human comprehension. We may have to question ourselves why God's love is important for us? It is important for us because God made us with all His love. We all know that love needs some outlet and to be expressed and at the same time it is to be shared. God is love and how wonderful it is. His personality was given to Adam and Eve. What a great gift God created for Adam and Eve out of love and give them the ability to love in return.

God didn't make Adam and Eve because He was lonely or He needed someone to love Him in return. This statement is true in the case of human beings. It is not true in the case of God. God is complete in Himself. He needs nothing. His love compelled Him to create the first humans. His love was expressed in the creation of Human race. His love has to be expressed as a skilled wood worker (carpenter) exhibits his fine work of wood or furniture. In the same way our loving God has a compelling urge to create human life. So, God's love is expressed in the creation of human race.

Again let us question ourselves what made God to create Adam and Eve and us also. If we look into the Bible God created us to have personal relationship with us. In other words God created us to be His friends". This is exactly the "divine plan" from the beginning of creation of Adam and Eve. He first created – and had the origin in the love of God. Generally friendship will take place between two persons of equal age. But it is really strange God wanted to have friendship with His own creation like Adam and Eve later people's love.

God was the sovereign ruler of the universe. He created from the largest galaxies to the smallest glimmer of light. He sees everything that happens including all the details of our lives. So, the Bible says nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight everything is uncovered and laid before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account (Hebrews ). Adam was none of these things. God was timeless Adam was limited. God was independent Adam was dependent. Still God want Adam and Eve to be His friends.

Now we must think seriously how far our souls are unrepresenting practical lives. Jesus once said "our souls are more valuable than all the rest of the world put together. The main reason is our souls will never die". Our bodies will perish. As we come from dust we go to dust again. Our souls are immortal. Jesus said in this context, "what God will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeit his soul, or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt 16:20).

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Abraham was called the friend of God “(James 2:23). "You are created to know God and to be His friend forever”. It is also said we were not made for ourselves we are made for God “The Great Designer has a great design” that we might know Him forever. We are restless in our lives. We have been continuously searching for peace and contentment. We may find everything for our daily requirements. We may have enough and to spare.

But we are empty and restless what must be the reason for that? The Bible says that the main reason for our emptiness is “we are incomplete without God”. If we leave from out of our lives, we will have an empty place in our souls. If we ignore God the hallow place inside the soul will stay with us and in such circumstances our search for everlasting peace and happiness will be fulfilled.

Some centuries ago St. Augustine wrote "you have made us for yourself O God and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you”. It is really wonderful compliment. When God created human beings they never thought what restlessness and emptiness was. They did not even exist at that time. So Adam and Eve were fully satisfied at that time. So Adam and Eve were fully satisfied at that time. When God created them they were at peace within themselves. Their relationship was quite perfect before Satan provoked them to eat the forbidden fruit.

Their relationship with God and nation was perfect as they were beyond belief of anything. God saw everything He created was good (including Adam and Eve). They walked with each other and with God. If we think of our times our trusting of one another is quite different. There is one reason for Adam and Eve to remain perfect. God created everything with a word of mouth. For example He said “let there be light” and there was light. All the creation He did, like that He simply commanded. But when He planned to create Adam and Eve He formed them with His hands. He made them in His own image.

This is very important for us to remember. So God deliberately created Adam and Eve to keep them as His friends forever. Their friendship was perfect at moment of the day. They were not just physical creation or superficial type of animals. They were for superior to everything. They were spiritual beings and with the spiritual knowledge. They were able to know and experience God. In the Bible it is said God made man in His own image. That means He implanted some of Himself in their bodies.



“God created man in His own image, in the image of God; He created him male and female. He created them”. (Genesis 2.27). One thing is true of us like Adam and Eve we have not only body and mind but also soul and spirit as full fledged human beings. God implanted part of Himself in us with these things our souls are set apart from other living creations and we are unique of ourselves.

God wants us to know Him. It is not just to know Him, but to know Him in personal way. Most people believe in God. They believe in His existence and they will have even some definite idea about Him. They normally just know Him but never try to come near Him or try to meet Him through humble prayer.

We can become closer to God through prayer only. He wants to comfort us when we are in helpless condition. He will come to our rescue when we are in dejected and depressed position. He is always ready to help us for our prosperity.

All man friends sometimes deceive us and do not help us in times of need. But God will never fail us. His love is everlasting and unconditional. The Bible says “A man of many companions may come to ruin but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 15:24). And that closer and reliable friend is God Himself.

Jesus said to His followers once “I no longer call you servants – instead, I have called you friends” (John 15:15). This is undoubtedly a staggering truth. The all powerful Holy God of the universe wants to be our friend. He wants us to know Him personally and walk with Him in His light every day. He wants to have communication with us through His word and prayer He is always dependable.

We have been in perfect happiness as God is with us and watching us as a friend in our daily life. We are very comfortable in this way. Then why did God allow evil also into our lives? Many scholars and philosophers must have broken their heads on this point. And why did God allow suffering and tragedy into our lives? These questions remained unanswered. At the same time we cannot question God. But faith prompts us to accept any kind of suffering. It is also said suffering in this world is a requisite qualification for happy life in the next world. So, when sufferings or evil comes into our lives. We must accept and bear it sovereign He is loving merciful and compassionate.

Our next questions are from where this evil has come? Are we living in the

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world of both good and evil? These questions take us back to the beginning of the creation and the Bible. It begins with the story of Adam and Eve. In the beginning the perfect God created perfect world and in the right path put two human beings who were first created. They walked with God will and everything went on properly.

Just at that time Satan an evil doer came into picture. He wanted to take revenge against God through Adam and Eve. So they became instruments for Satan's purpose. By his influence both rejected God's love. Adam and Eve ate the fruit of forbidden tree on the advice of the Satan and finally they were sent out of the garden of Eden.

Then who is this Satan? This is one of the seven Articengels made to look after God's work in heaven. Lucifer the original name rebelled against God. He wanted the seat of God. So God became angry and sent him out of heaven on to the earth as a punishment – on the earth the name Lucifer became Satan. Along with them one third of the angel population also followed Satan. This is the brief story of the Satan. He wanted to take revenge against God and His people and Adam and Eve became first victims of Satan. Jesus once declared I say Satan facing like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18).

Since that time Satan had only one aim to oppose God. Adam and Eve also turned their backs to God and believed in the words of Satan. This is the essence of "Sin". This when we commit sin, we feel that we are wiser than God. Some scholars have pointed out a good number of different words for sin. Such as – "Missing the mark", Turing away, "tarbing short", "wrong doing" lawlessness unbelief" etc. All these words point to the same truth "sin" results in rebellion against God.

If we chose our own way instead of the path of God we are "sinners". So the Bible says "there is no one righteous not even one - for all have sinned and fall short of its glory of God" (Romans 3:12 -23). Some theologians called the primeval tragedy "the fall". Adam and Eve fell from the heights of glory into the pit at disgrace and shame which resulted in dressing both of them from the garden of Eden and kept an Angel in charge of the garden. Since then the Angel cherubim was guarding the way of the tree of knowledge with the help of the flaming sword in his hand.

**The final shocking results of their sin are**

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## **1. Death entered the world**

we were not meant to die but to live forever. But now death became inevitable on the whole earth. It is declared that man is destined to die and for the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Medical science may prolong man's life for some time but eventually death follows.

## **2. We are separated from God**

“After God created Adam and Eve He was very friendly with them. When they sinned they hid themselves out of shame and fear. They felt guilty and afraid of God. Their minds and souls filled with God's anger. The Bible says” your iniquities have separated you from your God” your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

## **3. We became alienated from each other**

Now the friendship between God and Adam and Eve was broken. Adam and Eve blamed each other for the unfortunate event became desperate and answered God. He said the woman you put me gave the fruit to eat. Nobody accepted their trespass but blamed each. Adam was the first sinner and Eve the second. Doing something wrong and not accepting this wrong is called “second sin”. Since that time in human history a chronicle of turmoil and conflict came into existence.

## **4. We became subject of God's judgment**

God is pure and holy. But sin is abominable hence and unparadable to Him. We broke the laws of God by following the wide path of Satan. And for all that show the only one work of the judgment is “guilty. Our sins condemn us and finally God's judgment condemn us. And the Bible says a God is a righteous judge. “But who can endure the day of His coming? Who can endure when he appears?”

## **5. We became slaves to sin**

Hitherto Adam and Eve loved God and their love was perfect. They obeyed God with all their hearts and souls and minds and strength. Now they became enemies to God. They could not love God any more instead they became spiritually crippled and became slaves to evil doings. In this context Christ said “

I will tell you the truth. Everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (John 8:34)

## **6. The whole creation was corrupted**

Everything was beautiful, pleasant, peaceful and deathless. And now all those things are overshadowed by sin, changing immortals to mortals. As a result God said Adam cursed is the ground because of you. It will produce thorns and thistles for you. (Genesis 3:17)

So the scholars advice us not to lose the sight of the seriousness of sin. The corruption of that afflicted of us our bodies, our minds, our emotions, our wills, our souls and even our work. Now we are in utter darkness and chaos.

### **Results of Sin in nut shell**

- 1) Death entered the world.
- 2) We are separated from God.
- 3) We became alienated from each other.
- 4) We became subject of God’s judgment.
- 5) We became slaves to Sin.
- 6) The whole creation was corrupted.

## REDEMPTION PLAN OF GOD

According to Biblical information Jesus was the descendant of Abraham of the tribe of Judah and the son of David born in Bethlehem. He was also called the king of the kings with Messianic qualification. But the story of Jesus will be more obscure as the story of Israel was more obscure. After Christ was born and grown up. He did not go to any place but only to Jerusalem, the Holy city of Christians, Jews and Muslims. He made disciples around Galilee, preached around Jerusalem. Then He was punished and died on the cross. He was buried and rose again on the third day.

It is mentioned in the book of (Mathew 24:26) that He promised His disciples that He would come back soon to Mount Olives as He ascended to heaven in the same way. After He returns, He would establish His Messianic kingdom, and sit upon the throne of His father David. Then after the end of the age and final judgment, He will create the heaven and the earth, which will be called New Jerusalem to come down from heaven. As said in the scripture Christ will rule the earth. But the Jews still believe in that Messiah would come and would bring the people to the land of Israel.

Actually, we are not the plan of God but we are part of it and that we must understand how much we are related to God's redemption plan. But the Christians are trying to explain God's plan and let us examine its unique plan in God's redemptive plan. We can as Christians worship God with greater appreciation of the plan which was in the mind of God even before He created the universe. The creation included Jews, gentiles and the Messiah who would come and bring with Him salvation to all humanity that believes Him.

As said in (Romans 9:11) it is the clearest, most intentional and complete treatment of God's redemption plan which is valuable to the believers in scriptures. In order to understand the prophecies let us try to read verse by verse. In Romans, 9th chapter, it is said about Israel's past. We can understand through



this chapter, Israel's rejection of God and such acts continue in Jewish history also. Then the 11th chapter tells us about Israel's future reception. It encourages the readers to understand that the rejection is purely temporary.

These above said chapters give us an idea that God does not want to be far away from Israel. He has a master plan to bring His salvation from Jerusalem. Judah and Samaria to the utter most part of the Earth and back to Israel. God wants to bring all Israel back from their captivity after they repent – rebuild the ruined structures and allow them to inhabit. Then God sent Israel to different Kings to punish them only because they forgot their own God and became idol worshippers.

In such conditions it became necessary to consider the redemptive plan that was set before Israel and have to find suitable answer to the following questions –

- 1) What does the Bible say about God's plan of humanity?
- 2) What must be the end of our creation?
- 3) Where is history going?
- 4) What is God doing?

So, for these questions, let us try to find the answer in the Bible.

### **Israel's rejection of Messiah is part of the plan.**

It is without doubt part of God's plan, that the Gospel would be shared – the Gospel would be rejected – and at the end the Gospel would be accepted. In the book of Romans 9 – 11 chapters, Apostle Paul gave a logical thought that clearly explained what God has been doing to Jewish people for the present. We can correctly understand how those three chapters literally fit into Paul's agreement. The wonderful message of 1-3 chapters of Roman's is that we all stand condemned before the Holy God. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unreligiousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Roman 1:13-15). And also in (Romans 3:23) we read, "For all have sinned and fall short of glory of God".

Paul in first three chapters argued that all people miss the mark of God's perfection and stand without excuse. In the Romans 1st chapter the pagans are condemned. In the second chapter the moral persons are condemned. And in the third chapter Paul zooms on his ultimate target – Even God fearing people, who

know God's law will fail to know it. Fortunately Paul did not leave us with hopeless news. According chapters 4th and 5th the main issue is "justification". And a number of accounting terms are said in those chapters. And God prepared a solution to our condemnation and wipe out our sin and to added to our righteousness of Messiah in our position column. Then only we are declared righteous – we are justified.

This plan represents a legal change on god's records books. It is the solution to our condemnation before God. He declares us as righteous people in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who provided Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

### **The reaction of Paul's readers**

The reaction of Paul's readers is really most wonderful in the book of Romans. It is almost nine chapters where in Paul's arguments continued and some of them were in the churches of Rome which surprised all. But there is nothing in this material world that can separate us from the love of God as we are His children.

The letter written by Paul to the church in Rome was properly received by some Jewish people who were living in the "Diaspora" (a term used describing the Jews who were living outside of Israel) and some became the followers of Jesus later. We all certainly wonder at the faith of the Jews of "Diaspora" and also about the promises of God. They believed in the promises made by God. They believed in the promises made by God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Those Jewish people lived a peculiar life by hearing about the prophecies only, but they did not have the experienced life of God's blessings and salvation.

These Jews were disappointed in their lives because of the absence of God. They said they were not feeling about God and they were condemned. At that time they were under the reign of Romans and they were not in the control of their heavenly father and living in the Promised Land. Under such circumstances Israel became a vassal kingdom during the dictatorship of the Romans. And the same Romans finally destroyed the city of Jerusalem city and the Temple of God in 70 A.D. Paul happened to answer the questions put by different people. We must believe that he addressed this issue in chapter 9 saying that he assured the readers as God's promises were made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob long time ago and to their desendents. Whatever may be the opinion of different people God's promises would become true because His promises will be kept always for His children.

It is said in the 9th chapter of the book, God's righteous reputation is always stable and Paul tried his best to defend it. People whoever read that book must have found some promise made by God at the end of 8th chapter "nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God". Again if we look into the chapter 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, that present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

This reference may be quite suitable to the occasion. Many people in fact even some theological system has not prepared plan for God to deal with the Jewish people ever again and the election of Israel by God it seems even some theological system, preferred that only. In other words, it is an explanation of God's plan for Israel and the church. Both the common people and theologians have spoken of here and there and there is a distinction between each of them fits into God's redemptive plan. The term "dispensation" means something like "household management" or a period of "stewardship" that is entrusted to human beings at a certain time to live according to the instructions that God gave to follow.

Going back to the beginning of the creation God gave some instruction to both Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, especially regarding the eating of the fruit from that garden. But the instructions God gave to the people outside the garden were completely different. The instructions God gave to Noah were different in the same way to Abraham, to Israel on the Mount Senai and to the church and what God gave through the Apostles also different. Finally the instructions God will give to the people during the reign of Messiah on the earth are also different in His thousand year millennial kingdom as mentioned in (Revelation 20:1-6).

The above mentioned different periods of God's instructions we are accountable to live by them. The instructions God gave were primarily to Israel. And they were suitable in all generations. As they could not follow to the expectation of God, they were sent as captives to different places as punishment. As a matter of fact, those allotted time periods of divine stewardship were that they explain how mankind was to obey God at any given point throughout the redemptive history.

## **Paul as God's Messenger**

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In this topic we are discussing and examining the arguments and defense of Paul in Romans 9th chapter. Here he defended himself as a Messenger of God. I tell the truth in (Messiah) I am not lying. My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself accused from (Messiah) for my brethren my countrymen according to flesh who are Israelites (9:1-4). Paul spoke about his concern for Israel in verse (v.1-3) and later moves to the privileges connected to Israel in 4th and 5th verses.

According to those verses, we find how sincere Paul was in desiring to provide salvation for his people. His own ethnicity, kinsmen according to the flesh. The Jewish people had a special relationship with God because they were His people chosen by Himself. God adopted them as His sons. The term “glory” mentioned in the 4th verse refers to the “shekinah glory” or divine presence that honored before the tribe of Israel during their wandering in the wilderness. At that time it remained with the Tabernacle and finally in the temple – the glory of God.

As per the Biblical information God made many promises to Israel. Then His covenant, His giving of the law – ‘Israel had a divinity’ chosen relationship to the ‘Torah’ itself. The Jewish community used to discuss commonly whether Israel kept or followed Torah throughout history. The rabbis often answered in a funny manner “No but the Torah has kept the Israel throughout”. It is also said that Jewish people were often called the people of the book. No other nation has God’s presence, dwelling place among Israel within the Holy of Holies, or the sacrificial system – the service of God – while other nations had sacrifices and sacrificial system. God did not accept it but gave special promises to Israel – the Jewish people.

### **Are Israelites spiritual?**

To whom God gave these promises? If we look into (Romans 9:5) of whom are the fathers and from whom according to the flesh (Messiah) come who is over all the eternally blessed God – the patriarch’s Abraham Isaac and Jacob received the promises of God. In this context Paul is defending the righteousness of God and then he defended himself. So, he said he was no doubt the messenger of God. At the same time he was more concerned about the salvation for Jewish people. And finally he said he would give his own salvation in exchange for the salvation of his brethren.

Apostle Paul was particularly talking about Israel - - the Jewish people but not only church group or any other people. He was talking about Israel that His adoption, glory, the covenants the giving of the law, the Temple service, the promises, the patriarchs and the Messiah's ancestors. And Paul was speaking in this connection about one group out of eight that is the Jewish people or ethnic Israel, as opposed to a so called spiritual Israel. As a matter of fact spiritual Israel is a term that some people used to describe the promises of the church like the promises given to Israel by God.

It is real that God's promises to those two groups are similar – and we will ultimately one big happy family in the New Jerusalem. Then as a group the Jewish people might have rejected the Gospel. So, they did not belong to any church. at the same time there were some Jewish people who accepted the provision of God's salvation through the Messiah Jesus Christ.

### **Defending God's Justice**

Paul's argument was continued as he resumed his verdict of God's righteousness by defending His justice (Romans 19:29). "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not. Immediately when we talk about Gods solution of sin it is natural to wonder about what happens to others. How could God fail to select some people to be saved? He could have selected them, but He did not. It is not the loving God that we should believe. If we can create the God that we want to believe in, then there would be all kinds of things that are different from God who revealed Himself in the Bible.

Instead of that, we have to ask how God has revealed Himself in the Scripture? What is the Biblical plan of God regarding salvation. Especially in the dealings with Israel. God revealed how it is and if we want to worship God which God wants us to do – God wants us that we must repent, turn from our own evil ways and turn to His ways. God is asking us to go to Him with a plan and He wants to become our God as we want to be. And there is no God who reveals His plan in scripture and calls us to accept it with all humility.

### **What is said about the five demonstrations of the Religious justice of God?**

#### **Pharaoh**

God raised Pharaoh up as demonstration of His power. God hardened his

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heart. In Exodus we find some references that pharaoh heart became hardened and God at last closed His dealings with Pharaoh. God used Pharaoh as an instrument to serve His purpose against Israel. What are God's dealings with Pharaoh? And the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. He became an instrument in the hands of God. It is said in (Romans 9:17). "For the scripture says to Pharaoh, for this very purpose I have raised you up and I may show my power in you and that my name may be declared in all the earth".

## People

Similarly, the people all times will demonstrate God's sovereignty you will say to me then why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will? God willed them and if people are saved and they and this is how God willed them who reveal His will. But indeed "O! Man what are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed to say to him who formed it why have you made me like this? In other words people are a demonstration of God's sovereignty.

Just as an artist, who demonstrates a model or a sculptor who forms an image both are responsible for their own creation. In the same way God is a sovereign over humanity. So, God has a plan to bring His salvation full circle – from Jerusalem, Judah, Samaria and to the utter most parts of the earth and back to Israel.

**Pottery** - Paul was using the art of pottery to demonstrate God's right what He wants in election. Does not the potter have the power over the clay from the lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour (Romans 9:21) Here the potter could make a beautiful vase a trash can – one for honourable use and another for dishonourable use. It is up to the potter to do whatever he likes to do.

According to various and vivid illustrations of God's righteous choices prove that God is just in what He has done with Israel. He is also the same in whatever He does to the humanity. God is always there and just He as the creator of the universe. He can do whatever He wants to do that is right because He is God the omnipotent (all powerful) the omniscient (knows everything) and omnipresent (seen everywhere). While speaking about His right He has the power over day a demonstration of God's right.

**Patience** – Here also Paul continued precious images of a potter and clay by

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introducing vessel of wrath that were made for destruction while keeping in view the illustration of the potter picture. We understand that all humanity has something in common - whether the people are Jews or gentiles. We are all part of the lump (the same) sinful – humanity. We are all doomed rightly under God's wrath as writer in (Romans 1:3). In spite of that entire God's is gracious and merciful. His grace has charm some of us to save. He made some of us as vessels of mercy. It is due to His mercy. We are not separated from God and under His wrath forever.

**Prophecy** – this was Paul's final argument of defending God's righteous justice and the prophecy – a demonstration of God's plan. In this context Paul quotes from (Hosea 2:23). As it is said in Hosea "I will call them my people, who were not my people and her beloved who were not beloved". There is also another famous prophecy from the book of many prophetic judgments against Israelites who were bending and bowing their heads before false and heathen gods. Throughout the prophetic and historical books, Moleah, Baal and Asherah were worshipped at the altars of sacred pillars and under the green trees. This is a common prophetic phase. "Every green tree" is a blending of Israelites faith and pagan Canaanite fertility cult worship. They sacrificed their children in fire to those false gods to bring fertility to the earth. But God had preserved a remnant of faith filled Israelites who followed Him like Elijah.

In other words without God preserving the remnant of \_ there would be no remnant – the Jewish people would have been wiped out of the face of the earth. But God has preserved the Jewish people in general and He has also preserved a saved remnant whether the Jewish people who turned in faith towards the Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ.

## RESURRECTION AND REUNION

Apostle Paul wrote two letters to the members of Thessalonica church in the year 50 A.D. He was in the Corinth and wrote them for the people. Those two letters came to us today as 1 and 2 Thessalonians". They are included in our Bible. They may be called the inspiring canon of Scripture. They contained a vivid description of salvation which would be materialised at the second coming of Christ. If two letters are not included in our Scripture our faith and belief on God, and our rejoicing of second coming of Christ, and the gift of salvation would have diminished.

As we see no other new testament book has said anything about the second coming except something is said in the book of Revelation and mostly in these two books of Thessalonians. Every chapter of these two books clearly described and strongly gave reference about the second coming of Christ. While writing these two letters apostle Paul must have kept young generation in his mind.

"For yourselves know perfecting that the day of the Lord which is anointed with His return so cometh as a thief in the night" (1Thess. 5:8) and also "and to you who are troubled rest with is when the Lord Jesus shall be resided from the heavens with many of His angels (2 Thess.1:7). These two letters are really wonderful and unique in their own way. Further these two letters are the earliest inspired letters of Paul. Second from the book of Acts it appears that Paul might have spent a month in Thessalonica.

Dr Luke wrote about Paul in the following manner. "And Paul in his manner was went unto them and three Sabbath days reasoned with the congregation our of scriptures. Christ had suffered and rose again, and Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ (Acts 17:2-3). Paul reached Thessalonica three or four days earlier and stayed a few days more, after the Sabbath. Some Bible teachers suggested that Paul remembered these a little longer than the estimated period.

Paul taught the people at homes after he was expelled from Synagogues. But

all those things happened in a very short period. But after the return of Christ dominated these two letters and a good number of people attended his teachings. It is really wonderful and conspicuous that apostle Paul, reviewed the prophetic word which made the believers to ascertain the second coming of Christ was believed and accepted. True faith and belief are necessary for the believers of Jesus Christ.

The second coming of Jesus Christ is a blessed hope of all the believers and all churches and Christians too. At the same time none can forget the significance of His first coming, the death, the burial and the resurrection and finally the ascension of the man of God. If there is no second coming all the unforgettable incidents that Christ showed to people and the steps He has taken in His life till the end and the salvation would be incomplete.

The historical background helped Paul to write the two letters to the Thessalonian Church. They had their own significance to their correct understanding when Paul went to Asia Minor which is called at present "Modern Turkey". During his second missionary journey there came an opposition for his preaching. From then, God blessed the churches. They were well established and people saved. And Dr Luke, informed us about the blessings God showered on Asia Minor in the following words and so were the churches established in faith and increased in number daily (Acts 16:5).

The blessings in the churches increased from time to time. All of a sudden in the midst of blessings the doors of ministry were on a verge of closing. This was not done by the opposition like the Jews or gentiles, who did some mischief previously, but it was the plan of the Holy Spirit of God Himself who was providing cleansing of ministry opportunities. Dr Luke, the beloved physician recorded their important events in the Book of Acts. When they went throughout Phrygia and the area of "Galatia". They were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the Word of God in Asia.

When they went to Mysia, they were asked to go to "Bithynia" They passed through Mysia and came down to Troas. They preached at each point in their travel. Their ministry opportunities, suffered and they were unwillingly led to the shores of Hægean sea,. One can understand that Paul and his followers Silas and Timothy were not at all dismayed. That does not mean the heavens were silent. No doubt God was leading them. But the blessing approval is to be ill-conceived

and ill-logical. What made God to close the doors of faithful ministry? Sometimes God leaving His servants from a pleasant blessing, with some great purpose. So we cannot understand the wisdom and greatness of God correctly and also what he has in His mind. Just at that time Paul had a vision in which he saw a man from Macedonia who invited Paul to go to Macedonia and preach the Word of God.

With the command of God Paul chose the North Eastern corner of Aegian sea, that is he left Asia and entered Europe.

The result was Paul moved from one continent to another and then from one Roman province to another. Then from Westward to Eastward the gospel moved. Leon Morris a commentator, gave his comments about Ephesus in this manner. In response to the vision of the man of missionary zeal to preach (in Europe) Paul turned his eyes on Asia Minor and came as the the first known Christian missionary to preach in Europe. This seemed to be to Paul momentous because he moved from one province to another of the Roman empire.

Paul went to Phillipi after he reached Europe. It happened to be most influential city on that part of Macedonia and there was also a Roman colony with a privilege of self rule. But Phillippe had no synagogue except a few Jews along with other citizens. Paul was really succesfull in his missionary work to some extent. Then in the meantime there was some opposition. And this opposition went to the extent of beating both Paul and Silas and both were put in prison. The jailor happened to be a God fearing man. So he believed in the testimony of both of them and released them from prison. Finally both were asked to leave the country.

Then their next destination was Thessalonica, which ws about 100 miles from the Roman city and they has to go on foot and it took for them about four days. That city has more Jewish population and there was also a synagogue blessed with fertile land, to sow more seeds of gospel and get goo harvest. Its so happened both Jews and converted gentiles were more familiar with the Old Testament. Where in many prophecies were said about the coming of Messiah who was destined to suffer and die in order to provide redemption and also would establish Golden age in this world.

Though the conditions were not in his favour, Paul continued the preaching of Jesus Christ as the fullfulment of the Messianic prophecies of Jewish scripture. In Thessalonan synagogue Paul dealt with the problem tactfully regarding the Old



Testament. Messiah who was no other than Jesus Christ, who would fulfill everything on earth, Paul explained this point clearly to the congregation of Thessalonica.

Paul as his manner went unto them and three Sabbath days he reasoned with them out of Scripture opening and he alleging that "Christ must needs suffering and be raised from the dead and that Jesus whom I preached unto you is Christ". Paul could change some Jews and gentiles as true believers which was the result of his perfect preaching. But some other Jews who had no belief in Paul's preaching made false accusations against both Paul and Silas by saying that they were misleading the truth.

The actual message given by Paul to the congregation of Thessalonica was that Christ is coming again. He would rule as a king and at a kingdom of righteousness, justice and peace. But there was no connection between their accusations and the preaching of Paul and finally they were forced to flee overnight to Berea city. In that city they feared that there were more Jews.

At that time a delegation came from Thessalonica against Paul to disturb him in Berea also. So, again from that place, they had to flee to Athens city. It was the capital of Greece. Paul continued his preaching and a single man in Athens leaving Silas and Timothy at Macedonia. He adjusted himself well with the Jews in Synagogues and with the Greeks in the market place and on Mars hill. Some people desired to hear the word of God and some others when they hear about resurrection they mocked at him and went away. In this place Paul was not at all disturbed.

Then from Athens Paul left for Corinth city as single man. But to his bad luck it was a wicked city. It is clearly said Corinth was a synonyme to vileness and debauchery. Paul as a preacher with magnetic power attracted congregation and became a champion of faith. He created history and bowed down his head and greatly discouraged. After he preached in Asia Minor, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Athens, he came to Corinth in fear and trembling.

Apostle Paul could have to his credit some philosophical discourses with the Stoics and Epicurians in Athens on Mars hills. he said in this context, "And my speech and my preachings were not with enticing words of man's wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and the power..." (1Cor 2:4). Within a few days of Paul's preachings, Timothy came from Thessalonica, with an encouraging message

that people were becoming strong believers and following the gospel from the roots. This news made Paul happy. Timothy also brought with him some problems with the young and some struggling church matters.

When Paul was with the Thessalonians for a brief period, he could not explain all matters connected to theology. One point was about Christ's returning. It is because some had already done. It became a problem and Apostle Paul realised that the urgent and suitable answer to the problem was recorded in 1 Thess 4:13 5:11. Paul had taken the gospel to the cities like Ephesus, Galatia, Phillippe, Thessalonica and Corinth. But he never visited Rome the uncontested capital city of the world of the day.

Some people in Rome thought Paul was afraid of entering the city because there were Senators, Generals, Philosophers, Educationists and leaders of many neighbouring regions.

Paul said, those people thought wrongly about him regarding why he was not visiting Rome. The fact was that God led him to other places to preach the gospel even though he planned to go to Rome. Paul was telling about church in Rome wherever majority of the members were gentiles who thought wrongly about Jews because they rejected Jesus Christ. They thought their loved ones had mistakenly missed the blessed hope of associating themselves with the second coming of Jesus. As a matter of fact, they were also sorrowingly noteven as others, which have no hope.

To be in sorrow at the death of a beloved character is not improper. However, sorrow over the unsaved who have no hope beyond the grace is to deny the resurrection and the redeeming power of Jesus Christ. That honour would be revealed at His second coming. Therefore, there should not be any unconsiderable wailing of weeping over the death of a believer. Paul wanted to say, "for if you believed that Jesus died and rose again so for them also which slept (died) in Jesus will God bring with Him".

Then at the time of the Lord's second coming, those who have died in Christ through the ages will be prophetically resurrected and meet the Lord in the clouds. They will not miss out on the blessings at the time of Christ's Millennial reign.

The teachings of Paul about the resurrection of Jesus were not regarded by himself for the people but he wrote so in Thessalonians, "for this we say unto you,

by the word of the Lord that we which are along and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself not descent from heaven with a shout with a noise of the trumpet and with the trump of God. And the dead shall raise first. The expression of Paul here, ie., "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord" is pregnant with significance. As Paul said, "by the word of the Lord, does not mean he got the message during the time, when he was in the Arabian desert after his conversion! (Gal.1:17-18). Again, by the word of the Lord, does not mean he got the message through a vision in the night, like the Macedonian call.

What Paul actually wanted to say here? "By the word of the Lord he got the message from the Lord Himself thought what he was doing ministry during the time of His second coming. Paul had in his mind that the word of the Lord was spoken when Christ participated in ..... discourse when the Lord comes, there will be shout, then the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. These three phrases were familiar to Jews, and gentile converts to Judaism because they had their origin in the Old Testament.

What must be the inference of the word "shout" in this context? As explained it is the traditional shout at the victor in the battle, a shout of confidence, and the day of the Lord when Jesus Christ going to the battle at the end of the age as the prophet foretold.

The voice of the archangel is perhaps a reference to the archangel Michael who had special relationship with Israel. Gabriel is also a high class angel perhaps an archangel. The Jews seemed to have two kinds of trumpets. One of them was Ram's horn "shoper" and the other is long seamless silver trumpet. The reference here must be the second one . the long silver trumpet was used by Moses in the wilderness. At that time Mose said let those be two trumpets of silver of a spice shalt thou make them that thou mayest call them for the calling of the assembly and for the journeying of the camps. And when they shall blow with them all the assembly shall assemble at the door of the Tabernacle, at the congregation.

The main purpose of the trumpet is to blow when the Lord was leading the people into war. it was also blown when the Lord wanted to call His people into His presence. This trumpet has been kept in the Tabernacle by the Israel in their wilderness wanderings. The Lord had his trumpet in view in His trumps on the mount of olives. he taught, "And He shall send His angels with great sound of

### *Resurrection and Reunion*

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trumpets and they shall gather together His elect from the four wings from the end of heaven to the other! (Matt. 24:31). The reference from "one end of the heavens" means "from the ends of the earth".

When Paul spoke about the last trumpet he was referring to the final time when God would go to war in the age, it is referred to again and again both in the New and Old Testaments as the day of the Lord. The reference that God will go to war would be "cosmic" disturbance which occurs at the opening of the "sixth scroll" as said in the book of Revelation. Concerning this even, the beloved apostle John wrote the opinion of Paul that the resurrection of the dead and rapture of the living will happen immediately prior to the commencement of "the day of the Lord" or the last trumpet of the opening of the "seventh seal"

As Paul said, no church can escape from the difficulties associated with the emergence of Anti Christ. But the church may escape the outpouring of God's wrath by return of the last trumpet because Paul said, "God hath not appointed us to wrath. Paul clearly explained to the Thessalonian congregation that the Lord would obscond from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel and with the triumph of God, and Christ would raise first and the living would remain in rapture and so shall we ever be with the Lord." This is the real blessed hope of all Christians and the churches.

The conclusion is that the child of God must not forget that no matter how long the journey, how dark the night, or how tense the obstructions, he or she has a blessed hope - resurrection or rapture to be forever with the Almighty.

**17**

## **BABYLON, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS**

Come hither, I will show unto you the judgement of the great Harlot that sitteth upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." (Rev. 17:1,2).

In the seventeenth chapter from the book of Revelation, apostle John wrote about a harlot. The meaning of the harlot is the lady of the night, a lady who will dress up to attract and trap and earn money. She will have one aim to keep people in her clutches. They will practice their trade for profit only. But regarding the lady of the night apostle John described undoubtedly more dangerous than all ladies of the night.

She has been in that trade for a long time. So, she gained more experience in that trade. She became old then, and unattractive, yet "age cannot wither her" in that trade she is pleased and has no shyness in her way of life. She is a highly paid harlot at the night. Her long and curly hair glimmers in the light and her physical features are neither scanty nor overabundant, but just appropriate.

She maintains different styles in order to attract common customers of her night business. This prostitute will have every opportunity to invite young and old, rich and poor and all kinds of people. All are invited to practice and to enjoy her and her favour. To that kind of people she is not at all dangerous and they are most vulnerable of all. The lady of the night is unlike other harlots because to her night is not only for money. She does not want to acquire more jewellery, no more pension, house. She is not at all interested in such things but her god is more sinister than that.

Many years ago this lady of the night rebelled against God, who created everything on the earth. The main reason for her rebelling is that she wants to have your eternal soul as the prize from the pure, holy and win the ultimate relationship with eternal God who paid the price by death, so as to redeem you from your sin.



Then that lady of the night is quite happy. On penalty for embracing that kind of lady is death and also you are losing the love of your true God.

If we look into the seventeenth chapter of Revelation we can find the outpouring of God's wrath in the form of seven bowls of judgement on the earth. The main purpose of these judgements is to purge and cleanse the of everything that has polluted it since the fall of Adam and Eve. God wished to see the purging of the earth plant in preparation for Christ's thousand years reign over the earth. The Son of God will not rule the kingdom which is numbering its fall. The earth must be universally purified and that is the purpose of trumpet and the judgement. The connection of the seventh bowl judgement is reached, great Babylon came into remembrance before God to give unto her the cup of wine and the fierceness of His wrath. "Great Babylon or Mystery Babylon the great" the mother of Harlots will not escape judgement as God purges the earth of all which has defiled the earth planet.

The judgement will be very quick and severe. It is actually the main subject of Revelation 17th chapter. It is questionable "who is the lady of the night and who is the mother of the harlots?" This lady of the night is not a respectable lady (person). The kings of the planet earth are to fornicate with her for political benefits. One of the seven angels which had seven vials came and talked with John and asked him to go with him. So that he would show to John the judgement of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication." In this connection apostle John was summoned to witness the judgement of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters."

According to the scriptures the two words the 'harlot' and the 'whore' are some time used to describe among women spiritual unfaithfulness, defined worship, idolatry, false devotion that Israel once very faithful to his God has become harlot (Is. 1:20). Prophet Jeremiah speaks of Israel's adulterous and wickedness of their whoredom (Jeremiah 13:27). This woman called harlot draws man away from God to Satan from Christ to Anti Christ.

John is told by the angel that the waters those sowest where the whore sitteth are nothing but peoples, nations and tongues. The prophet Jeremiah wrote prophetically about her or Babylon had been golden cup in the hand of God that made all the earth drunken all nations, drunken of her were that is why the nations became mad - Then the angel took John into the wilderness and thou then

he saw a woman sat upon a scarlet coloured beast with many names of blasphemy with seven heads and ten horns.

When John was filled with the Holy Spirit, he saw a vision which unfold to him to see a woman sitteth upon a scarlet beast of the night. She is riding the beast that does not mean she is sovereign over the beast but they have mutual benefits and co-operative arrangements. The best on whose back the harlot will rise is the same but that John wrote about it earlier. He wrote "And I stood upon the sand of the sea and saw the beast rise up out of the sea having seven heads and ten horns: The writer John mentioned the beast in Revelation. 17th Chapter because of its association with the harlot who is on its back and who is going to be judged.

Prophet Daniel in the Old Testament wrote extensively about the beast. He said that he saw in the night visions and behold, a fourth beast which was more dreadful and also more terrible.

It was extremely strong and had great iron teeth. It devoured and broke into pieces and stamped the residence. This beast was quite different from other beasts around and it had ten horns also. And added, the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom which will be quite different from other kingdoms and shall devour the whole earth. As described by Daniel each beast represents a kingdom and each kingdom has a king to rule over it.

Antiochus Epiphanes who brutally persecuted the Jews 168 and 165 BC and put an image of God "Zeus" with a face in his own likeness in the temple at Jerusalem gave himself the title Epiphanies or the manifestation of God. All that deification was nothing but blasphemous. Apostle Paul clearly explained that the ultimate act of the Anti Christ will be that he sits in the temple of God (in the rebuilt temple of the last days) showing himself that he is god (2 Thess 2:4).

Now coming to our topic the woman riding on the beast both are the union of the government and the religion and each one will be claiming some personal benefits from the other. Most of the protestant scholars identify the beast as the imperial Rome (political) and the harlot riding on beast's back is papal Rome (religious). Some scholars interpreted the seven heads of the beast as Seven Hills of Rome or seven Caesars of Rome.

The reformers of churches and puritans who were severely persecuted by Romans would certainly identify the beast as Rome. It seems in the present days

the rapidly increasing number of the Bible preachers and teachers are trying to deviate from this identification of beast with Rome. The lady of the night was dressed in purple and scarlet colour decorated herself with gold precious stones and pearls holding a golden cup in her hand which was filled with abomination and filthiness of her fornication.

Certain dresses that the women wear indicate her character. Same is the case with the harlot. But the other lady mentioned by John is different. She was clothed with the Sun and the moon under her feet and upon her head the crown of twelve stars (Rev. 12:1). The crown that she was wearing represented the twelve tribes of Israel. Regarding the woman of night the harlot of 17<sup>th</sup> chapter, we are told that she was with gold cup in her hand which contains the intoxicating wine. To the sensual and carnal heart and imagination the wine represents religion in all its pomp and splendor something like earthly glory and something to be desired by men. As a matter of fact the cup of the harlot contained only abomination and uncleanness. This is all about the external religion with no connection with internal reality.

An affair with a counterfeit lover like the harlot will lead the disaster and eternal separation from God. In spite of all that, many people were seduced by her charm and external beauty. In this context the word of the Lord “the just shall live by faith” (Gal. 3:11). But men who organized religion try to do something in order to get the acceptance of God and His good will. They do things against the Holy God. Actually they know nothing of the personal “sin”. The men also know nothing of the sovereign grace that can make a sinner a saint, a son of God and a citizen of heaven.

Regarding the identification of that lady of the night is that it is written upon her forehead “mystery of Babylon the great. The mother of harlots and abominations of the earth (Rev. 17:5). The name written on her forehead identifies her as who she is and what is her livelihood. After examining her way of life one can easily say that she does not belong to God but to Satan. The word “Mystery” can be found a good number of times in the Bible. Among such examples – the mystery of the termination of Israel; blindness (Rom. 11:25), and the mystery iniquity.

The Biblical mystery is something of Divine design which had been concealed in both Old and New Testaments. The mystery that apostle John wants to reveal that the ancient city of Babylon on the shores of “Euphrates” river the

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modern Iraq is all false religion, so far we have seen the harlot, seated upon the beast and holding only golden cup in her hand and from that cup sprung only false religious beliefs of the world. The cup contained all religious abomination throughout human history.

So, any religion without the sin of man, without God's Holiness and salvation by grace through faith in Christ are against God Almighty. In the early days of human history there was a cruel king by name Nimrod the Babylonian. He was a mighty one before the Lord. Bible scholars suggested the meaning of the name Nimrod is "let us revolt". The Hebrew Scriptures also said Nimrod was a mighty rebel before God. The Jerusalem Targum said that Nimrod was mighty in sin before the Lord, a hunter of the sons of men. Nimrod established a kingdom of his own and the main city was Babel (Babylon) (Gen. 10:10).

King Nimrod was also an important person in building the "tower of Babel". The main purpose of this tower was to build a high platform and from that height to observe the movements of heavenly bodies in order to worship the sun, the moon and the stars. The dual purpose of the tower and the city were for the unity of mankind for one religion and one political kingdom and then under the Satan and the Anti-Christ, finally disagree with God and God's plan on the earth.

According to ancient history the name of the wife of Nimrod was "Semiamis". But she was more popular as "the Queen of heaven". In the mean time Nimrod died. Then people believed that to continue the worship of the heavenly bodies, Nimrod said to have ascended to heaven to be one with the sun. The innocent people were told like that at that time. it was also believed that from the sun Nimrod's "sperm" was carried on a sunbeam and impregnate his widowed wife Semeamis. Then this counterfeit virgin gave birth to a son whose name was "Tammuz".

The origin of the harlot was Babylon that when Nimrod rebelled against God and opened the flood gates to all men made counterfeit religions. She would be destroyed at the end of the age especially at the pouring of the seventh bowl judgement. "It is said every man made religion there would be some influence of Satan". But by critical contrast of the Biblical Christianity alone says, "just as I am without one plea but that by blood was shed for me". There is clear distinction Babylonianism the mother of the harlots and the Biblical Christianity are centered in one word "Grace" and in one person Lord Jesus Christ as He is set forth in the Bible.

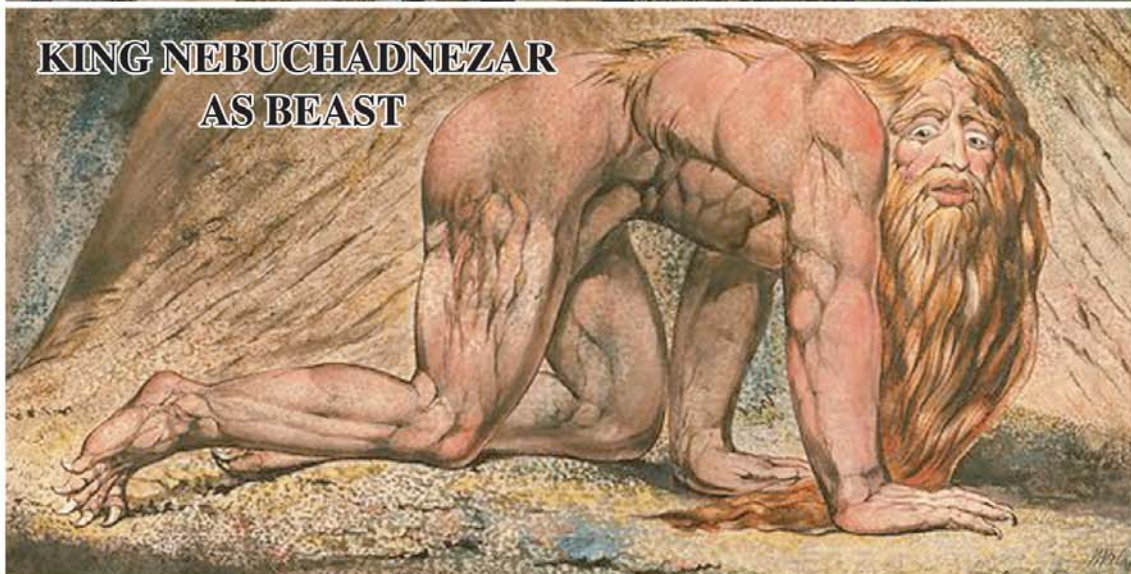
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**THE BABEL TOWER**



**KING NEBUCHADNEZAR  
AS BEAST**





# BABYLON THE HARLOT





The harlot hates both the grace of God and the son of God with great passion. He has come for the redemption of our sins and is a high priest. He must make the grace possible. There was a great difference between the ancient city of Babylon which has the great graphical location in modern Iraq which had the origin of all false religion and Babylon the mother of harlots who had established world with counterfeit religious system which is still continued. According to the prophecy the destruction of Babylon and its religious system will like places at the end with the pouring out of the seventh bowl. Babylon the mother of harlot has not only become a source of all false religion but also very intoxicating to hire.

If we look into the good and God fearing people even the saints were brutally persecuted by false religion. It is really strange that the woman said to be drunk with the blood of the saints. In such critical terms Nehemiah was asked by God to restore walls of Jerusalem and establish the former glory to the city. In action to that he tremendously solved the financial condition. Then being on the Judo-Christian principles he looked to the Lord for the restoration. It is only the sincere effort of Nehemiah that we have the existence of great city. If we recollect the pest days of Nehemiah it is unfortunate a great famine came in his time.

At that time if we were there we could have bitter experience of that terrible famine. During that period the mortgages and loans were forgotten. When the borrowers were not in a position to pay, the loans were no longer given by the individuals but by the banks only. In such conditions even if a bank declares bankruptsy the people that took loan need not pay if the judge would give positive judgement basing on mercy. The word “mercy” was not a legal term, yet if the judge was merciful no one can stop him when he wanted to give his judgement with mercy as he was all in all. In this context the word of Jesus is mentioned saying that your communication be you may say (Malachi 5:37) yet what it comes “yes” cannot be “yes” it’s true.

The famine at that time was undoubtedly pahetic. It was financial famine. Many people who enjoyed all kinds of comforts now turned to God for help and in such conditions Nehemiah came to their rescue to pray for them and find out a solution. We can give a reference in this connection of the famine in Egypt during the time of Joseph. Seven years of plenty would be replaced by seven years of wantings (Gen. 41 chp.).

As Nehemiah said in Neh 5:4-5 there were also said that we have borrowed

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money for the kings tribute and upon the lands and vine yards yet now our flesh as the flesh of our brothers and children as their children and Lo, we bring into bondage our sins and our daughters to be servants - neither is it in our power to redeem for other men have our lands and vineyards. It was the time of Nehemiah that for most people there was no power for resumption for those people whose lands or houses had been taken.

It was only due to their debts they made beyond their capacity to repay even many Christian families suffered much as they lost their jobs they lost their lands, their inheritances. Unfortunately during the time of Nehemiah there was no scope for redemption for those people whose lands or houses were taken for extended creditcards made many people in bondage and families crush that included even many Christian families.

The believers and non-believers equally followed the wise saying of peace that prior to the economic crisis, we owe no men say anything but to lose one another for he that loveth hath fulfilled the law. Those words were no doubt very beautiful and contained full of wisdom. After hearing this kind of wise saying the Israel had completely changed their minds and wished to serve Christ if they were not in bondage or in Mortgage.

The Lord also understood the tremendous pressures and bondage of debts. So He set up His own method that required the forgiveness of debts among the believers. What God said in the following words? "At the end of every seven years, there shall make a release. And this is the manners of the release. Every creditor that lendeth ought to unto his neighbor shall release it he shall not exact it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the Lords release".

During the time of Nehemiah the ancient walls of Jerusalem were not in good position. The responsible people of the city did not care about it. But the believers of Christ were unhappy about it. In addition to that the lands and houses of these Gods people were taken away by the creditors. Nehemiah got angry over this and wished to do something with a master plan. He tackled this matter in an unique way. He asked the people who took the lands and the houses by lending the money to restore everything to the concerned people to take their lands and houses and also to give part of the money. When he put forward this proposal God must have changed their minds miraculously and they simply followed him. And Nehemiah did this to Gods people. Whatever was spoken by Nehemiah they wanted the implement and even to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem with proper plan

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and budget. It seems the rebuilding of walls took place in just 52 days.

Nehemiah, a cup bearer in the royal palace of the Persian king was made the governor to the land of Israel with Jerusalem as headquarters with much responsibility. So he wanted to make the required improvement to Jerusalem. And the people also gave full support to whatever was proposed by Nehemiah. As the governor he did not enjoy the privileges and even he did not take his salary due to him. He feared God and sacrificed his life to serve God's people by honouring the principle, "service to humanity is service to divinity".

The noble words of Nehemiah were in the minds of the people which gave them courage to follow and to look to Jesus who spoke of preserving our places in heaven when he said "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). Had Nehemiah remained in the present days what he would have done to Gods people. Undoubtedly he would have done abundantly. He would have asked every person to build his own financial position. Nehemiah made the people to understand that with the help of God nothing is impossible to people.

He also made the people to understand that with God's help even the most impossible, desolate and seemingly unsolved things or situations would be solved. Today by keeping in view the countries' economy, can we try to build the walls of our nation like the beautiful walls of Jerusalem? It will be an unanswerable question for modern scholars, readers, business magnates etc. But still we must take a note of Nehemiah's advice. He was only a cup bearer to the king who rebuilt the Holy city of God in 52 days and saved Jerusalem from its financial crush about 2200 years ago.

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## TWO WORLDS COLLIDE

One of the popular English poets of his time Robert Browning said, “*God’s in his heaven - All’s right with the world*”. He might be a great poet of his time. But according to some scholars have questioned the quotation at the above words, and then understanding of not their meaning needed some clarification. It is no doubt too. God is in His heaven; so far it is more than correct. But it is not correct when he said “*All’s right with the world*”. If you sit on the table and think seriously about it, then it would come to your mind, that the word is in moral and spiritual chaos.

When you watch T.V., listen to radio, read the news paper, discuss the problems with your neighbours, share prayer requests or Sunday school or Bible study or receive a phone call regarding some problems from your friend or relatives or visiting of a doctor on serious illness or attending the funeral of you kith and kin you will certainly realize that “All is not well with the world” and you will undoubtedly come to a conclusion that something is wrong with the world.

“The philosophers of the world are flawed.  
The governments of the world are corrupt.  
The pleasures of the world are fleeing.  
The glories of the world fade.  
And the destiny of the world is destruction”.

Corruption, wickedness and perversion pervade every area of the society. Actually from the high and mighty to the low and the feeble, from the righteous to the Atheist and from the conservation to the liberal, somebody may try to make the world work for them. The monk who by solitude tries to withdraw from seductive influence of the world and the epicurean who by indulgence tries to saturate himself with the carnal pleasures of the world, all these people have one thing in common. The world beats them everywhere, thereby they lose the battle.



As we all know King Solomon was one of the most powerful and influential in his times. He was the wisest and also the atheist man of his day.

And with God's blessings he was crowned with incomparable glory. He had one thousand wives anything he wanted was his. The whole world lavished itself on Solomon. In spite of all that he said in his book Ecclesiastes "that vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Eccl. 1:2). And the king's philosophical words can be conveniently translated as soap bubbles of soap bubbles all is soap bubbles. A soap bubble, leisurely floats by. It is coloured and appealing. The soap bubbles promise something but when the man reached to grasp it the beautiful bubble breaks and vanishes from human sight.

If we study the above said examples we can easily come to a conclusion that the world is without God. The world is colourful, attractive and magnetic. It gives a flood of promises to man. But the man reaches to catch those things of this material world, they always break and vanish. The larking secret is that man is unable to understand the world sometimes.

The son of God while speaking to his disciples once said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul" put in every way to understand man's soul is more important than the world itself. Even in the present days man is not able to understand the world in its true sense. It is not like the lyric of an old popular song which suggest a great and wonderful world you have and what you see is a cursed world, which will one day should come under divine judgement.

The word "world" (*cosmos* in the Greek) appears in the New Testament more than two hundred times. And this word here described both alienated from God standing in opposition to God. Jesus while speaking to corrupt religious teachers said "you are of the world. I am not of this world" (John 5:23). The apostle Paul wrote, "For what men knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of a man which is in him even so the things of God knoweth no man but the spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the spirit which is of God that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God" (Cor 2:11-12).

The secular scholars defined the word "world" in different ways. One wrote the "world" (Cosmos) is the orderly systematic universe.

A second writer wrote the "world" (cosmos) refers to a universe that is complete harmonious – an orderly system.

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And a third person wrote “world” (cosmos) is the embodiment of order and harmony as distinguished from chaos a complete harmonious system.

But according to the opinion of these three distinguished writers that the world is an ordered system, but it is an ordered system which is headed by Satan. When Jesus was wandering in the wilderness after He took baptism from John the Baptist, He was tempted by Satan. As written “the devil taketh Him up unto an exceeding high mountain and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them and saith unto Him, All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matt. 4:8-9).

If there is no world for Satan to give, there would not have been this temptation scene of incident in the Bible. And it is also said in the Bible that the Lord Himself called Satan “the prince of the world.” That means the Satan's own world on the earth. Hereafter I will not talk much with you for the prince of this world...” At the same time apostle Paul also wrote to the Corinthians about Satan. He said “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them” (2 Cor 11:11).

It is very discouraging to hear what you would say about this ordered world system headed by Satan. God is in this heaven, but all is not right with the world. “In the world ye shall have tribulation problem and pleasures but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

A true Christian should not get startled when he has to face some problems in his life. When sometimes he will be depressed by the word or comments from others. It is due to his partially living in the world which is under the control of Satan as prince. This Satan made man from believing that this world as basically good and all men have to be in bondage in this world. It is said even some theologians are deceived in their thinking that through the spread of the gospel, they can save the world. God never called the church to salvage that world which will one day come to judgement.

It is not at all advisable to teach the gospel to them who are already in no touch with men of God. But Christ can alone accomplish this in His second coming. The book of Genesis recorded the creation of the world. And in spite of the egoistic attack of some evolutionists who wanted to give unscientific and untrue information about the origin of life, echoing the fact that God created the

world into existence out of nothing. And the divine commentary on God's creation is that "it was very good". God used this small sentence "it was good" six times on each day of this creation. After six days, He summed up His wonderful creation with the following words. "And God saw everything that He had made and behold it was very good" (Gen 1:31).

And now we are facing the reality, that on one hand God created the world and it was good and on the other, this world in which we are living and breathing with our existence appears to be exceedingly bad. Now the question is what transformed the world which was very good into the world which is now very bad. "Satan has blinded man's eyes so that they took the world's good or at the least they continued it good. The reality is that the world has been under Satanic influence and undoubtedly evil. Man was created on the sixth day. Though he was created on the last day, he was made most important. God created man in His own image and gave him more prominence and also domination of all living things created by God. Man was given the power to rule the world as a vice regent under his sovereign God.

It was called to be theocracy rule, by God through man; He was given complete freedom but there was only one prohibition that he will not set on the fruit of the forbidden tree, which was in the middle of the garden of Eden, which would cause the physical as well as the spiritual death. Then Lucifer, the highest of the angelic beings planned to rebel against God. He solicited Adam and Eve to eat that forbidden fruit.

The clever and cunning approach of Satan made Adam and Eve to be disobedient even to the creator God and thereby brought sin into this world and planted the seed of death, both physical and spiritual into the bosom of every human heart. With this bitter experience man had forfeited the scepter of kingship over the world and Satan seized the opportunity and wrapped the man's right to the throne. Satan now is god of this age and pride of this world. The whole world is now in a decent stupor, insensitive, unaware and unmindful of its fallen estate. The true Christian has been "regenerated, born again," "born from above" and saved whatever may be the name you call, a man it means the believer had changed his citizenship. Through "faith" only one can become the citizen of heaven but living for a while as an enemy to this material world, which is in the control of Satan. Christians should live righteously and godly in this present evil world. So the believer has the option to yield to God and follow Him.

It is not healthy either to be rich or to be poor. Buying of things or possessing them or enjoying them and leading a luxurious life is not appropriate to the believers. At the same time being in love with them, and not loving God is also a disqualification to a believer. When we say he is worldly it means that he is participating more in this ordered world system headed by Satan, it means he is throwing away God and his belief into the secondary importance place to God and then one becomes completely worldly. Worldliness does not mean smoking, drinking, chewing or falling in love.

There is no wrong in going to college, falling in love, marrying that woman or eating dinner at a costly hotel, or buying a car and many other such things. Christians also can do that kind of things. But if any Christian does these things with the influence of world order system headed by Satan and outside the will of God that is called worldliness. In such conditions Christians are advised to seek the divine guidance for their lives. The believer is said to be “light” and “salt” in the world. We have to tell man that we who are poor and helpless have found the one who the bread of life is. It is only where the righteousness of Christ was manifested through believers living in the world of God and that His light pierce into darkness.

Historically groups of believers like the first century church “Baptists” reformers and puritans brought light to the parts of Europe for a time and when the light was rejected the darkness came back. The missionaries who had been trying to spread the Christianity at that time attacked Satan and then pierced into the darkness and brought back the light into many parts of the world but it was only for a limited time.

## **The New world**

The beloved and aged apostle John came to the final and climatic section of the book of Revelation and in many respects the apex of the human history itself. He said, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and first earth are no more, and there was no more sea. The new heaven and the new earth which apostle John was permitted to see was not knew with the respect to origin. It was knew with the respect to quality; John saw the new heaven and the new earth were totally cleansed, completely regenerated and absolutely perfect.

John saw the new heaven and new earth in all their pristine beauty as Adam and Eve saw them in the Garden of Eden before the advent of sin and the

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consequent curse upon all of creation. John saw all of them with Satan, the former prince of the world and God of the age now in chains. In the Greek New Testament there are two words translated into English. The Greek words are *neos*, *neos*, *kainos*. All these words give the same meaning 'new' in English.

According to Apostle Paul, a believer in Christ is a new creation. When John speaks about the new heaven and new earth he uses the same Greek word 'kainos' for 'new'. He uses this world in this connection for the special quality of both heaven and earth. As John said both heaven and earth are cleaned and regenerated.

Henry Morris, a commentator, while commenting on Revelation said, "the new cosmos (world) is not a novel cosmos; it is a renewed cosmos. It is just like the first except all that its age long ravages of decay have been expunged and it is fresh and new again".

As it is said the present heaven and earth are not blotted out nor seveft to nothingness, but refreshed, purged, purified, cleansed and regenerated. With these modifications all the disorders and the imperfectness had gone permanently.

Joseph Seiss, another famous commentator wrote about Revelation more than hundred years ago. In that he explained fully about the new heaven and earth which John saw in his vision. He said, "think then what its regeneration must bring – on earth which no longer smarts and smokes under the curse of sin – on earth which needs no more to be torn with hooks and irons to make it yield its fruits – an earth where thorns and thistles no longer infest the ground nor serpents hiss among the flowers nor strange beasts lay ambush to devour – on earth whose sod is never out with groves, whose soil is never moistered with tears, or saturated with human blood; whose fields are never blasted with unpropitious seasons, whose atmosphere never gives wings to the seeds of plague and death.

Whose ways are never linked with funeral processions or blocked up with armed men on their way to war – an earth whose hills ever flow with salvation and whose valleys know only the sweetness of Jehovah's smile – an earth from end to end and from center to utmost verge clothed with the eternal blessedness of paradise".

Jesus Christ on the day of His crucifixion, the Son of God stood before the Roman procurator pontius Pilate for justice. And the Pilate put Him some questions. Among such questions one is whether he was the king of the Jews. For



that Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not of this world". Unluckily some people misunderstood the hidden meaning of that sentence. But what Jesus wanted to reveal through these words was that He was talking about the spiritual kingdom "the hearts of men", but not the physical kingdom on the earth. Because of the misunderstanding the statement of Jesus so much chaos and confusion took place among the people.

As a matter of fact, Jesus Christ's denying the physical, visible and liberal kingdom upon the earth means He will also rule as He said, "My kingdom is not in this world". He was telling, he will not rule the present heaven and earth which are totally defiled by Satan and sinful men and every part of the world is corrupted. Then Christ speaks on that day with His disciples. He said "verily I say unto you, that ye will have followed me in the regeneration when the son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones' judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28).

The word "regeneration" is used for the meaning of New birth. And this word is particularly used by Apostle Paul when he was describing the believers new birth. Thayer, a noted scholar in his Greek "Lexicon" (dictionary) of the New Testament has written concerning the word regeneration. "It is that signal and glorious change of all things in the heaven and earth for the better that restoration of the primeval and perfect condition of the things which existed before the fall of our first parents".

If there is any writer who can suggest that the old heaven and the old earth said to pass away (Rev. 21:1) and therefore cannot be new heaven and new earth. It should be noticed that the greek verb translated "pass away" in the king James Bible comes from the root. The Greek word is "pararchomai" (Matt. 5:18; Mark 13:30; Luke 10:17 and Peter 3:10). Some must have taken the meaning for that Greek verb "transgress" and with some turn out the final meaning came into existence and that is "great change".

Peter also spoke about the elements in heaven, melting with fervent heat, and the works of earth (all are of man's accomplishments in every area of endeavor) being burned up peter appeared to have found some realities; he prehistorically enquired "seeing them that all these things shall be dissolved. What manner of persons ought ye, to be in all Holy conversation and godliness"? (2 Peter 3:11). The word "dissolved" in this content is used for the meaning to loose, loosen to loose him, to loose them etc.,

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God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good. But before the sin of Adam and Eve, there was no death, disease, famines, war, natural catastrophe, pollution, hatred, murder, lying, corruption, government, wife beating, child molestation, greediness and a thousand of all its that have plagued men for at least see thousand years.

The heaven and earth which were created very well now became very bad. Before the sin of Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, there was no death, famine, disease etc. As a result of sin under the reign of Satan, man has protected the oceans, repeal the earth, and poisoned the heavens the very spheres which God committed to man's authority.

### Regarding the New world

Apostle Peter wrote that one day the present heaven and the earth will be burnt away. And the Lord comes as a thief in the night, at that time the heavens shall pass away and the elements will burn with fervent heat and at the same time whatever is there on the earth shall also burn up according to Peter (2 Peter 3:10).

But for those people who are made themselves in Christ, a glorious prospect of a heaven and earth are waiting to invite them. For said people all the sadness and tears will go away from them and they will be replaced with perpetual joy and peace. Now you may question yourself when do the New heaven and earth will commence. Then those people who had faith in the Millennial return of Jesus, they can take it for granted that the new heaven and the new earth commence at the end of the Lords thousand years reign. We may also call that time the Messianic or Millennial age.

Then what will happen to Satan at the end of thousand years? It is really a serious question that many people may get. But John does not want to keep the readers in doubt or suspense. He said Satan will be let free for some time so as to deceive the nations and then cast him into the "Lake of fire".

John now tells about the faithful and honest martyrs of the great tribulation. According him they will return at the beginning of the Millennium as part of the first resurrection unto life. "And I saw them and they sat upon and judgemant was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God and which had not worshipped to beast neither his image neither had received the mark on their foreheads or in their hands and they loved and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev 20:4).

But regarding to unfaithful who died before the Millennium, and their impact upon the resurrection. John said, they will participate in the second resurrection at the end of the Millennium and they will be eternally damned and throne into the hell, at the “Great white throne judgement”.

It is said clearly about the position of Satan and the wicked that died at the end of the Millennium. And also it is described in the 21 chapter of Revelation regarding new heaven and new earth. It has been argued by some in connection with the new heaven and new earth that there will be no sea. Apostle John wrote "... for the first heaven and the first earth has passed away and there was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1). But according to Ezekiel 47:1, the Bible says that there will be the sea during Millennium and the new heaven and the new earth the Millennium has run its course. The heaven an earth are spoken of genetically for all that God has created. Hence the new heaven and the new earth world smoke indicate a new sea.

The day of the Lord was defined by a noted scholar F.F.Bruce as the day when “YAHWEH (the Lord) will vindicate Himself”. Another noted scholar said the time of God’s intervension (discussion) into history for the judgement, when it comes? It is the outpouring of His wrath when His long suffering had reached its end. The description of the day of the Lord reveals that the day of the Lord shall be as follows –

1. A time when God ariseth to shake terribly the earth (Isiah 2:19-21)
2. A time of destruction from the Almighty (Isaiah 3:6; Joel 1:15)
3. A time of divine wrath and fierce anger (Isaiah 13:13)
4. A time when God will punish world for their evil and the wicked for their inequity (Isaiah 13:11)
5. A time when Gods indignation and fury will be directed against nations (Isiah 34:1-2)
6. A time when God’s vengeance will be revealed (Isaiah 34:5)
7. A time of darkness in the heavens (Isaiah 13:9; Joel 2:31; 3:15)
8. A time of fire from the Lord (Joel 2:3; 5:30)

The above said verses would give us and relate about the Lords judgement of the earth and the second coming. This will happen before the commencement of His Millemial reign.

But Apostle Peter in his teachings put the Lords day is in the following important discourse.

1. In the last days there would be scoffers walking after their own taste (v. 3).
2. They would ridicule the promise of Christ's return (v. 4b)
3. The reasoning of the false teachers was based on their presumption of an uninterrupted flow of history. Things would continue as they always had (v. 4b)
4. Contrary to the philosophy of the scoffers, Peter noticed that God in fact did intervene in the course of human events in judgement through Noatic flood (v. 6)
5. The present heavens and earth are reserved for judgement once again. The next time it will not be by water (flood) but by fire (v. 7)
6. Judgement has been withheld by a long suffering God giving man opportunity to repent.
7. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night and the heavens and the earth will be judged by fire.
8. In the light of certain fact of coming judgement men are to live holy lives looking for the coming of Christ (v. 11,12)
9. His coming would be followed by a new heaven and new earth (v. 13)

If we look into the verses mentioned by Peter in this context, his argument completely revokes around the fact that God entered the flow of human history, for the sake of His judgement with the Noatic flood. And God wished to enter human history in order to give His judgement for the second time during the day of the Lord.

As pointed out by Peter, the day of the Lord will come at end of the Millennium (an absolute requisite for the new heaven and new earth to commence at the time since the two are interlinked). During the time of His second coming, the Lord will imprison Satan and execute the Anti Christ, purge the earth, destroy the false religion, judge the wicked and brings in a thousand years Messianic age.

Prophet Isaiah spoke about the new heaven and new earth as renovated ones which commence at the beginning of the Millennium, but not at the end. And he also said that right. The Old Testament prophets and Dr Luke, Paul and Peter from the New Testament and then great men spoke about the coming of the Lord. All

these prophets and apostles together described that a judgement by fire in heavens and earth quite similar to the one that Peter also described. When the king of glory return, to usher in a golden age in order to rule and reign for one thousand, years the curse of the sin will be lifted and peace will come to the people. The righteousness and justice will be established among men.

John saw not only the new heaven and the new earth, but also the holy city New Jerusalem coming down from god out of heaven duly prepared as a bride and adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2). This Jerusalem is mentioned for the first time in the Bible when Abraham met Melchizedec upon his return from rescuing his nephew Lot. You also come across the name Melchizedec for the first time in (Gen. 18:14). Melchozedec means “king of righteousness”. He was a priest of “ELELYON”, the most high God.

He was originally a shepherd boy around the area of “Mount Hararath”, a great, great grandson of Noah. God anointed him and assured him to go to a distant place called Salem and continue his priesthood by serving bread and wine to the people. The word “Salem” means peace which is called later the historical city of Jerusalem. Melchizedec was divinely appointed ruler to Jerusalem. One who is a royal priest, the king of righteousness, the priest of the most high God.

When Abraham wanted to sacrifice his son Isaac, he came to the mount Morea which is in Jerusalem. It was on Mount Morea king Solomon built the temple to be a habitation to God on earth. it was the same mount which was later called Jabus because a tribe called Jebusites lived there, and king David came to defeat these Jebusites that were living there. He somehow defeated them and made their fortress his capital which in course of time called Jerusalem. It was the same Jerusalem the Lamb of God died for the sins of the world.

To the same Jerusalem, Jesus will return for His coronation as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to become king of kings and Lord of Lords. Jerusalem is the center of the capital of human history.

## **New Jerusalem**

1. New Jerusalem will be the center and capital of Christ's Millennial kingdom.
2. New Jerusalem is the city that father Abraham looked for which had foundations, whose builder is God Himself (Heb. 11:10).



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3. New Jerusalem is a city built for the church, the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9,10).
  4. New Jerusalem is a city which will descend out of heaven like a chandelier and rest upon the earth (Rev. 3:12).
  5. New Jerusalem is a city in which God himself will dwell (Rev. 21:11).
  6. New Jerusalem is a city constructed with more precious materials (Rev. 21:18-21).
  7. New Jerusalem is a city of safety and perpetual day (Rev. 21:25).
  8. New Jerusalem is a city where nothing but defiles can enter.
  9. New Jerusalem is a city whose inhabitants will know good only and endless life (Rev. 22:1).
  10. New Jerusalem was the city of unending and abundance of provisions (Rev. 22:2).
  11. New Jerusalem is a city whose inhabitants shall have intimate access to the Lamb (Rev. 22:3-4).

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## **19**

### **ISRAEL AND MIDDLE EAST**

There has been tension and restlessness among Israel and Muslims nations for some years in the Middle East even up to the breaking point. But the Bible believers all over the world are wondering how long that tension would continue. In this context a Bible reader and lecturer “Mark Rosenthal” took more interest to answer some doubts about the political conditions and other facts of the Middle East and also the part played by the so called Christians at this critical moment and the prophecies in the Bible.

#### **Why should Christians be more concerned about the Middle East?**

Christians of the whole world are more concerned because what was going on in the Middle East has direct prophetic implications. And this issue has direct link with the Christians of the whole world. If we look into the Bible and the events that took place at the time of the coming of Jesus Christ then we must know Israel is like a barometer of what is happening and about all the prophetic scripture. Therefore it is necessary to know what is going on in Israel in order to understand the prophetic scripture.

#### **When did Israel and Palestine compact begin?**

The “UNO” made a partition for Palestine from Israel country in 1947 and called it Palestine. They are supposed to call Jewish state and Palestenian state. They gave time to the British to withdraw its army of 1,00,000 troops in six months time. The understanding was that there would be two states and that might be declared on May 14th. But surprisingly there was partition only and no separate Palestinian state and Israel occupied that area. Actually the Turkish government controlled that part of Israel from 1517 to 1947. And from the first World War to the Second World War the British government controlled that area.

As a matter of fact, there was no Palestinian state up to the end of the Second World War. At that time that particular area was in the control of Jordan. Then in 1948 May 14th, Israel declared its independence. After that the Arab countries including some Palestinians in Israel began to attack Israel with dangerous weapons including suicide bombers. Just at that time a Muslim by name “Yasser Arafat” came to limelight and became a leader to the revolutionaries.

Why the world appears to be steered towards Palestinians in the conflict?

Most of the Americans supported Israel and most of the Europeans and some other countries supported Palestinians. There are some reasons for that. One reason is many people do not know about the historical, legal and moral background of Israel and their way of life. If we look into the reality, the Jewish population is only 5 million where as the Arab-Muslims are 1.5 billion and 1.8 billion in the world. And most of the oil mines are under the control of Arab-Muslims which are like precious gold.

Then in France, the Muslim population is more than the total population of Israel. In Germany there are many Muslims. In London there are more Muslim Mosques than Christian churches. If we compare 1.5 billion Muslims with 5 million Jews in Israel then we can understand the physical strength between the two rival groups. At the same time there is wonderful comparison and perception that Israel is Goliath and all Arab-Muslim nations are like David.

And another more pathetic thing is that the land area of Israel is even less than 1 percent before the mass land of the Middle East. But Israel and Arab were in loggerheads politically for separate states of Israel and Palestine and Yasser Arafat wished to achieve that under his leadership through the weapons of terrorism and suicide bombers. As he was a Muslim he could have the support of all the Muslim nations around Israel. The main idea in supporting Arafat for the battle was that all Muslims did not want to see Israel country in their midst. His plan was to wipe out Israel from the globe itself and that was the reason why they supported Arafat.

The Muslims hated even Jewish God. They thought both “Allah” their God and Jewish God are enemies. That was the political and religious condition in the Middle East. In such positions Israel did not continue war. Instead the Israel government offered peace four times with some modifications. But they bluntly

rejected that offer with some aulterial motive. Then one of the Israel statesman and historian “Abba Eban” commented that Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian “have never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity”.

Israel offered them great concessions but they did not want them and they wanted war only for their survival and that was the result of their recent bombing and had to respond desperately and attacked them. If we think about the second world war for a while, the Americans killed more Japanese than Japanese killing Americans. But Japanese were held responsible for starting the war. They bombed America's Pearl Harbor and used suicide bombers. The media may give surprising news about "Israel tanks rolled in the west bank". It is only for their defence and for that survival they continued the war. Yet they were not aggressive. They might have powerful army and they had been forced to fight by the circumstances.

Golda Mier made a wonderful comment in this connection. She said we can forgive you for killing our children, but we can never forgive for making us to kill your children”. This kind of heart breaking statement would never come from the mouth of any one of Arab muslims of the Palestinian world.

First of all, we must be thankful to the president of USA for having taking the correct step at the correct time by interfering in the Middle East conflict. He planned to save the world from terrorism in general and save Israel from the same trouble in particular. He realized that terrorism should be defeated both in terms of terrorist organizations and the nations that support such activities. They worked on to provide something extra and allow them to forge the "passport" and their required “visas” and the concerned documents in order to draw money and “sanctuary” by which they can get the necessary material that they needed.

It is understood that everyone would say Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world and at the same time Muslims were on the opinion that the whole world should worship “Allah” only and the prophet “Mohammed”. And according to the Bible, the Christian believers in the world believed in the evangelism. Jesus Christ gave His last commandment to his disciples to go into every nook and corner of the world to preach and to make more disciples. Biblical Christianity itself is expanding through love and choice and nobody would try to enforce his own views upon others but Islam is trying to expand its religion through war and the strange methodology they use.

In such political conditions America is the only country that stood against terrorism and no other country extended any support to America in the world except England to certain extent. The speaker in his opinion said that all must work together for the world peace. But there will not be any worked out plan and peace declared until Jesus Christ returns as the Lord of lords and the Lord of the tribe of Judah and Lord of all lords. If we understand particularly the Middle East might become worst politically because of the terrorism that prevailed in the Middle East.

If we look into the conflict the Bible makes a reference – the emergence of Antichrist and persecution of Israel what is called the time of Jacobs's troubles.

### **What must be your opinion about the conflict?**

A lot of conflicting things and events moving Israel into a position to embrace an agreement they would not have otherwise embraced. That is what we are looking Biblically. Ultimately there will be a ten nation confederation, one of which arose an individual that we call theologically Antichrist.

In the mean time, peace makers came to take care of the terrorist activities. But Israel expected peace makers either from 'America or from Canada' only so that they can be plain and reliable towards all. There was a short time peace keeping or short enduring peace agreement and at the same time an attack on Israel by the coalition took place. And Turkey also became one of the peace keeping nations which were moderate towards Muslim Coalitions.

The coalition Muslims frequent attack on Israel became a problem to the peace keepers. But the Bible says the Muslims are going to be defeated by God Himself on the mountains of Israel. The Bible also says "I will bring all nations up against Jerusalem, and Jerusalem could be a burdensome stone for all the nations of the world".

### **Where does America stand in prophecy?**

America is not mentioned in the prophecy or prophetic scriptures. There are two reasons for that. America might not be a powerful country when those events took place. The nations that are mentioned in the prophetic scriptures are the nations that really bothered Israel in the negative sense. So, God has shown some justification in not mentioning the name of America. If we look into the book of



Revelation chapter 15, it clearly tells about God's wrath in destroying the economic growth of the world. According to the Bible, the destruction may be with the help of the massive explosives.

At that time nations will lament for the destruction and economically those nations would become poor by that time. At present the economic center of the world is America and if any crisis takes place it would be worldwide.

### **What is the believers understanding about the Middle East?**

In the Middle East, it is good if the prophetic events precede the coming of Christ: At the same time we can believe the coming of Christ may happen at any time in a generation. And also the unfolding events made us believe those events are prophetically related and moving us towards the end of age. Then regarding America's economy, though it is bad, the employment is better than most of the nations in the world. America is marching forward but there was a sudden break in the going further with September 11th incident.

But still this horrible incident gave all Americans the ease of unification. What should have happened after September 11th tragedy is that the people have fallen out their faces and out to God for repentance, acknowledging that they are sinful and their nation on the whole is sinful, and that they are wicked and needed Divine forgiveness. God must change the mental set up of Americans so that they would come to Him and hear His word with repenting spirit for what they have done or what is happening in their country and ask for God's forgiveness etc.,

Instead, many Americans are indulging in decaying drugs, home-sexuality and other sinful activities and these are rampant in American society today. God will judge America one day or other for its own unpardonable and unethical way to life. According to the statement of the speaker said above, it seemed he is more worried and more common to his people and to the country. He finally compared America and its people to the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah. He expressed his agony regarding his people and said if God does not punish America for its sin and wickedness, then he has to ask pardon both Sodom and Gomorrah for punishing them.

It is true, God is a true God and righteous God; to whom much is gain and much is required that is only a matter of time. Until divine judgment fall on America the speaker is fully regretted for the present way of the life of the people and wished for the punishment from above like Sodom and Gomorrah. He is

looking forward for the blessed hope of the church, for which Jesus Christ is coming again. When He comes, those who died in Christ will be resurrected and those who are living will be raptured.

The speaker believes that “there will not be any legitimate enduring peace over Israel until Jesus Christ returns”. Actually it is a unique theory in history, when many people are open to the claims of Christ. He hoped and wished for himself and for co-Americans, to seek the unique opportunities and seek to live godly, righteous and justfull life in this present evil world.

But in this struggle between the Middle East and Israel according to Zachariah astonishing end days prophecy, Israel will win the battle.

It is really inhuman that a suicide bomber entered into a sea side resort restaurant “Nstanglia”, Israel. At that time, hundreds of people were gathering ready to celebrate “passover”. All of a sudden, the bomber blows himself up and the result was 27 Israelis died on the spot and 127 wounded. A Palestinian militant happened to fire a Jewish bat “Mizvah”. The result was 6 died and 30 injured. Another suicide bomber blew himself up in a pool Hall of “Tel Aviv” and the result was 15 died and dozens injured.

People who have hearts can understand the political condition of Israel. They were under anticipation when and where the terrorists would attack them; so they were living fear gripped and spending sleepless nights in their homes. Hundreds of people were dying due to such incidents. It is pitiable that even some Muslim countries are supporting the Palestine but only America is supporting Israel.

When Israel confined “PLO” leader Yasser Arafat in the west bank town of “Ramallah” about 30 activists joined him calling themselves “human shields”. One of them was an Israel-canadian. He said “I know that the only chance for Israel to have peace and security is for the Palestinians to have peace and security”. If such was the thinking of Palestinians, it is an affront to Israel.

There is no doubt Israel will win at the end. But before that she has to face and endure some frightful stress from its enemies. There are only two books in the Bible discovering the bright future of Israel. They are the books of “Zacharia” and the book of Revelation. For the conflict with Palestine, Israel will stand alone. One day people will see Israel stand as a single unit for the battle. Both

America and England are supporting Israel with some doubt about the other nations that could support Israel. The oil nations may put a question to the countries that support Israel that they should either stop supporting Israel or accept the price rise of oil. And finally the countries may withdraw the support.

In the final battle as Zacharia said in 12:3 that Israel would stand alone in “Armageddon” the final battle place. If the world nations think Israel is in the control of history, they are wrong. They are in the control of God. And at the end of the age God wished to punish Israel very seriously for the purpose of moulding them into a nation.

It shall come to pass that in all the land saith the Lord, two parts there in shall be cut off and die and the third shall be left there in. “And I will bring the third part through the fire and refine them as silver is refined and try them as gold is tried. They shall call my name and I shall hear them, I will say it is my people and they shall say The Lord is my God” (Zechariah 13:8-9).

All the nations that joined together against Israel shall meet with a tragic end – and two thirds of the Israel population shall be wiped out in that “Armageddon” battle. The main purpose of the loss of life according to God is that, He wanted to refine the remaining one third of Israel, so that they would repent for their past life and live as true Gods people. “the Lord also shall save the tents of Jewish people first, that that glory of the house of David, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah”. When one’s the Lord interfere in the battle, then Israel does not need any foreign support of any nation. At the end of the age God Himself will come into battle field.

The Lord says He will destroy every nation that comes against Jerusalem. He said –

I will smite every hand with astonishment.; I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah. I will seek to destroy all the nations that came against Israel.

In this passage (Zechariah 12:4-9) the pronoun “I” is used three times. These lines indicate that He will empower Israel to defend itself but He Himself will do the fighting.

The Lord will rise from heavenly throne and wage war against the enemy of Israel. And on the day of the war Jesus will come and stand at the top of the mount of olives and look at all directions. In this context prophet Zechariah

pointed out some images which are more significant, magnificent, terrifying and awesome and also he pointed Christ as a warrior. People must have to know that it is Messiah who will redeem for which He has come two Millennia ago.

The people of Israel are overwhelmed by the Lord's grace which they never had before and also by the provisions He made for them. They must have to know that it is only through Messiah, Israel can be saved and that He has come only to redeem them from their “sins”.

“Make no mistakes about it, All attacks on Israel – past, present and future – fly in the flee of God’s love – care and provision for the nation”. After a long time Israel has realized that Jesus is the only Messiah on whom they must depend for everything. And the grief of their long rejection will be deeply felt. On that day the prophet writes "shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem – and they tend shall mourn long family apart – the family of the house of David apart and their wives apart - all the families that remain, every family apart – and their wives apart” (Zechariah 12:4).

The mourning of Israel will be felt so great by all of them. So they mourn not only collectively but also individually. The people try their own means to reach Messiah and the Israel at last on reaching Messiah receiving Messiah will receive glorious and unimaginable blessings. The fear that has been in their minds all these days will be finally taken out. The hatred that was heaped in the nation shall close.

### **Spiritual blindness**

The spiritual blindness that blunted Israel for a long time will be taken out finally. Then the remaining one third population will accept Christ as their savior and in the Millennium Kingdom the promised 1000 year era of peace. When Jesus begins to rule all nations of the world, then all nations will feel jealous of Israel. After their repentance God will bless them abundantly, their lands will be restored then they look more beautiful, their blood stains will be cleansed. Their crumbled buildings will be restored properly. Their land can be blessed with fruits, trees and grain. Finally, the young men and women will thrive in that land as they are completely forgiven by the God Almighty.

Though peace is declared today in the Middle East the scars of the wounds of hatred and merciless deeds were unforgettable when the Lord restores everything of Israel. The people will flourish under the lovely caring God.

“I will strengthen the house of Judah.  
I will save the house of Judah.  
I will bring them against to place them....  
I am the Lord their God” (Zachariah 10:6)

These lines show God’s concern and plan to strengthen Israel as a special one in a large scale. He will treat them as if He never cast them off. He will cleanse them from their sin. In order to restore and redeem the Israel there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

It seems the fountain spoken of here is not likely a literal one. Instead of that the prophet Zechariah is conveying an image of perpetual cleansing from the sin that the nation restores Israel the sins of all centuries since the time of Abraham will be wiped out. Then in the Millennial Kingdom, Israel will be a redeemed, cleansed and restored ones and they may be called protected Israel.

Israel will be eternally secured at last. Even though peace agreement took place between Israel and the Middle East, they may flare up at any movement and break the peace formalities. In such position, peace agreement is simply a waste. If God brings peace to Israel it will stand forever so that the whole world will be in perfect peace.

The book of Zechariah is really a gallery of pictures of the end of age and prophet Zechariah is a great painter who never handled a brush. Here he painted a glorious picture of the entire land – from Giba in the North to “Remmon” in the south will be supernaturally prevalent. Jerusalem means “city of peace”. But unfortunately it became a city of unending brutality and bloodshed for many years by the neighboring Arab-Muslims. But now the city will be under the control of the eternal God and it will be inhabited by people in safe and secure.

If at all partition takes place between Israel and Palestine, with the intervention of “UNO” and request for some concessions to Palestine, Israel may have to lose some land. Recently some protection is given. But still God will have to redeem from their perpetual suffering materially due to the surrounding enemies. Finally Israel will remain and stand as the crown Jewel of God’s Kingdom. Those who like and love the Holy land can take into their heart of hearts that in the end Israel will win the battle. Amen.



## CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

Most of the Biblical colleges and seminaries in certain parts of the world regularly offer courses in non-Christian religions to students especially to future missionaries for the purpose of better understanding of what to others believe of their own religion. And the main purpose of this article is that only. From the Biblical point of view, while there is much that is said in condemnation of Islamic teaching, practice and politics, which are not at all an attack on Islamic religion. Knowledge followed by word and love, with certainty help us more effectively exhibit on Christian faith.

### Islam

It is a religion that came into prominence and forefront and became a world important one because of the political and military confrontation in the Middle East with Israel. Some people might know what the history and beliefs and some others with unanswerable questions. The prominent sects among Muslims are "Sunnis" and "Shiites". I am trying to produce as far as possible that authentic information about Islam and the sects in this article. As a matter of fact there is a gulf of difference between Christianity and Islamic religion, theologically and mutually and some of the differences are quoted below.

Christianity teaches to humanity a "grace through faith and salvation". And Islam needed certain requirements like praying five times a day. And this praying must be done by looking towards Mecca only. In addition to that, one should study Quran as one of the basic needs for a true Islamite.

New Testament says that a person can be saved and forgiven of his sins and justified by believing in Christ as his only Savior and other good works will save the sinner and will be forgiven in order to get a place in heaven. As it is said in Ephesians 2:8-9, "for by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

Christianity teaches us that Jesus was the only begotten Son of God, who was also Messiah promised in the Old Testament prophecies. The New Testament tells us that Christ died on the cross voluntarily for the atonement of the sinners. Then He arose from the grave on the third day and went to heaven. He will come again to give His judgment to the dead.

But Islam denies what all is said about Christ. They believe it is Judah Iscariot that was crucified but not Jesus Christ. They also did not believe Jesus died and rose on the third day. According to their belief Jesus was only a prophet. In the order of them Jesus was the tenth prophet out of fourteen prophets.

Christianity teaches us that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah who was the Savior sent by God.

Islam denies this also, and said their prophet Mohammad superceded Jesus and corrected many errors taught by Him in the New Testament. Christian theology is theistic which means God answers our prayers within the will of God and can change things.

In Islam it is said “submission” to “Allah’s” will and it is understood in such a way that all things that are written and all things that are settled will be accepted.

The fundamental principle of New Testament is “Love thy neighbor as thyself”. It means that we shall forgive even our enemies and pray for them. As Christ said “but I say unto you love your enemies and bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you and pray for them who are spitefully use you and persecute you” (Mathew 5:44). So, Christianity also explains the pacifism but the general outlook of Christianity is everlasting peace and harmony.

Unfortunately history gave a discouraging account of Christian wars particularly after the reformation which is not in the direction of our Lord. However the teachings of Christ were not at all interesting to Muslims. They vehemently opposed His teachings. As God promised heavenly abode is there to Christians, if they live faithful life in the same way, if a terrorist is promised heavenly reward to kill innocent people, he will do that inhuman work whole heartedly. That is the impression of the Muslims regarding the salvation and our heavenly life.

## **What is Islam and Quran?**

This Islamic religion was proclaimed in about seventh century A.D. in the

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month of “Ramadan” (July). It is the belief of Muslims that in 610 A.D. in the month of “Ramadan” that Allah (name of Muslim God in Arabic) revealed his words to Prophet Mohammad through the angel Gabriel. It is like the Judaism and Christianity and Monotheistic, but its roots take us back to the father of all nations Abraham, and through his son Ishmael.

This Muslim relation seemed to have begun with the following words, “In the name of God the compassionate the Merciful”. As mentioned in the Quran the Muslims prayer will start with three words. The main theme of it is that there is only one God (Allah) and that he is great (Akbar): "Allah Hu Akbar - God is great - above all beings and above all human beings.

The Koran is divided into 114 surahs (chapters, sections, recitations). The introduction by the translator showed his respect to this work while writing. It is said Koran is the earliest and the first work of classical Arabic prose and for Muslims it is the infallible work of God, a transcript of tablet preserved in heaven safely and later revealed to the prophet Mohammed by the angel Gabriel. In that book there are some verses and a few passages spoken either by the prophet, or by Gabriel angel in the first person and the rest of the book is spoken by God Himself.

The Koran regularly distinguishes between what is called “the people of the book” who are Christians and Jews, who lived carefully in peace, though they were punished hither to as they became infidel, atheistic, unbelievers and idol worshippers, who could not be tolerated.

An example for Koran – as said in “the people of the book” we will attain nothing without following “Torah” or “Pentateuch” (the five books of Moses) and the Gospel which had been revealed to us through God. The present believers, Jews and Christians and whoever believe in God and live faithfully till the end of the day and do what is right - have nothing to fear or regret in their life time.

Koran – Surah, (The table 5.58-69). The Islam also invites believers into its fold but the Muslims look down upon those people who come to their faith by leaving their original faith. If a Muslim wants to embrace Christianity, he feels like a fish out of water without the help of Arabic Bible translation. If a Muslim wished to contemplate on Christian theology and the truth, a challenge will be added to him, through the presence of missionaries who remain standing as western foreigners and a typical Muslim can never associate with that kind of

Christian Missionaries. The total difference between Christians and Muslims in language and culture made them isolated and difficult to understand the preaching's of Christ and the "Good news of Christianity". At the same time the Muslim community is afraid of one thing that is if any Muslim family wants to embrace Christianity that family's social standing, educational opportunities and even the safety it may have to forgo. In such circumstances no one will dare enough to leave his faith and go to other faith.

So, the Muslims consider Jesus as one of the prophets but they consider Mohammed as the last prophet and the greatest of all prophets. Their impression about Jesus was that He was a true prophet of God but never the embodiment of "divine power" and also He was never 'crucified'. Regarding His mother Mary, their impression was that she was a model of woman and of purity (Koran 4:155,169, 66:12).

Muslims view of Koran is that it is a correction and explanation of prophesy as well as adding the past revelation of Moses and Jesus. They look at the Koran as the book which presents the practices (like prayers, alms, pilgrimage etc.,) and a faithful person shall observe the above said rules and regulations in order to please God. Their religion is Islam which means "submission" or it is peace (Salaam) and adherent known as Muslim who submits to the will of God and simply one who has peace (Musalmaan).

The reader in this context can see the difference between Arabic and Hebrew words for peace. "Salaam" is an Arabic word for peace. "Shalom" is a Hebrew word for peace. These two words are spelled with the consonants S,L,M - years ago. The common spelling used by the westerners was "Muslim" which today preferred as Muslim.

Prophet Muhammad became a prosperous teacher in the western part of Arabian peninsula and at the age of 25 he married a widow who was very wealthy by name "Khadijah" and at the age of 40 he became popular as a prophet. Then he was accepted by all Muslims as a prophet. According to Muslims he was the last prophet in the line of the prophets (they included both Abraham and Jesus as prophets).

Mahammad's first disciple was his wife; then his friend "Abubaker". the third member was his cousin "Ali bin Abe Talibe". At that time, Muhammad got a vision, and as per the vision he was lifted up to heaven on his horse.

Borag while he was praying upon the rock he encaved inside al-Haram, the "Dome of the rock" in Jerusalem. Because of this rock Jerusalem became the most holy place to Muslims after Mecca and Madina. When the Muslim rule was in prominence in the middle ages, Bagdad became the most influential city of all Muslim states that is the greatest city of all cities. The Muslim calender began in 622 A.D. when Mahammad made his 'fligth' (Arabic Hagean) from Mecca to Madinah, carrying with him the faith of Muslims.

The so called A.D. means (Anne Domonei) in the year of our Lord. It is also labelled as C.E. (Common Era). And for Muslims they had their own patern of calling. It is A.M. which means After Hegean. This is strictly followed by orthodox Muslims. It indicates the year. That is to say 2010 A.D. becomes 1388 A.H. for Muslims. To be clearer  $2010 \text{ A.D.} - 622 = 1388$ . Muslims calender was bron on 622. So their years are counted from that time. Mohammad happened to flee from Mecca to the city of "Yathorib" which is about 275 miles to the north in the western Arabian peninsula. And the Muslim calender started from the day of Mohammad fleeing from Mecca.

He was properly received by the people of that city. His presence made the people to call the city as "the city of the Prophet" and consequently it became the second sacred city. Finally Mohammad died in the year 632 C.E. at the age of 63. After him "AbuBaker" was chosen as the leader or Calif (Imam). He was called the chief Muslim religious ruler.

## Principles of Islamic Religion

The first revelation of Sharia (religion based law or tradition) seemed to have come with the principles of -

1. Umma - means kingship with fellow muslims.
2. Justice - including right of punishment for criminal cases.
3. Manumission - Compassion especially towards slaves, who were to be freed when they accepted Islam.
4. Right to Life - Particularly against the practice of the time of killing inwanted female babies.
5. Adhem - Call to prayer five times a day.
6. Biblea - Prayer was to be no longer made facing Jerusalem, but towards Mecca.



7. Toleration (tolerance) - of the people of the book, namely Jesus and Christians.

### **According to Koran, Muslims are prohibited from**

1. Drinking Alchohal, gambling, and eating pork.
2. They are also prohibited from keeping the images of other gods in their houses.

Apart from the above said formalities there are five more observations for them.

1. Sha-ha-dah – witnessing to their faith.
2. Salat – Prayer of adoration and submission to Allah's five times a day facing Mecca.
3. Zahat - giving alms to the poor.
4. Saurm - or fasting during day light hours or during the entire month of Ramadan and Haji.
5. Haji - Taking a pilgrimate to Mecca which is accomplished at least once in a life.

To go on a pilgrimate to any sacred places in olden days was very difficult because of the transportation problem as we have today. We have all facilities today.

### **Spreading of Islam**

The inception of Islam is 622 A.D. then it spread into Arabeen peninsula and then it spread even into Israel and Palestine. This expansion of Islam took place during 622-632 which was the life time of Mohammad. Then in the next 80 years most of the North Africa was influenced by this Islam during 710 A.D. In 711 A.D. Muslim troops travelled towards Spain. They influenced Spain, some portions of China, France etc.,

The population in those places rapidly increased and especially majority of African countries are Muslims. Islam is further extended from Moracco to Egypt and today it remained as a crescent. As time went on, there was a break for the spreading of Islam.

In 1070 A.D. the Turks took control of the Arabic power in Israel and Spain.

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They conquered Bagdad (Iraq), Persia (Iran) and Anatolia (Turkey). The Turkish Muslim army threatened European Christian church in Constantinople. The Muslims became more hostile to Christianity. These two communities even made some barriers for not allowing the Christians to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

These circumstances led the passion of Pope “Urban.” He visited France in 1090 A.D. ordered for the crusades. He took this hasty step only to save the Holy land from their grip. The pope had taken timely action for the sake of all Christians. These crusades continued from 1090 to 1300 A.D. about two hundred years. They marched with crosses atop. During these two hundred years there were four major crusades and some more minor ones.

There were also children's crusades. The first crusade was at the time of “Jeoffery and Baldwin” who conquered Jerusalem and for 75 years the Latin kingdom was established for the first time. This Latin kingdom was existed under Christian rule and influence. At that time, some major repairs were done in Jerusalem city like enlargement of the church of the Holy Sepulchre, raising of the traditional location of the crucifixion (Calvary) and the burial place of Jesus Christ and also His resurrection.

In the middle of this era “saladin” (salah-ad-din) the Egyptian Muslim Mamluk ruler defeated the Christians including the Lionheart of England at Hattin in 1187 A.D. and took back Jerusalem. Many books were written about different kings and their kingdoms during the last five hundred years and also about crusades. All the books were written in Arabic language only. So many people could not read them.

### **Jerusalem and Dome of the Rock**

According to the historical evidence, the Dome of the Rock was built on the mount Morea in Jerusalem. As written in the Bible, in (Genesis 22nd chapter), Abraham took his son Isaac to the mountain as God asked him to do so, in order to sacrifice. And on the same mountain king Solomon built the temple which was destroyed in 586 B.C. Then the second temple on the same foundation was built and that was also destroyed in 70 A.D. as Jesus predicted. It was ruined by Romans.

Then the prominent Muslim leader Caliph-Abd-al-Malik built the “octagonal” domed shrine known today as the “Dome of the Rock” in between

689-691 A.D. and that time the dome was covered with lead. Since then the Dome of the Rock became a sacred place to Muslims. Before that it was the place that Abraham took (Ishmael) the Bible name is Isaac in that account. The Muslims also believed Abraham as the father of faithful. These two incidents that are Abraham's sacrifice of Ishmael (alias) Isaac and Abraham's faithfulness made the Muslims more concern to the mount of the Dome of the Rock. And it was the place identified as the location where they believed that Mohammed prayed to God and translated into heaven either bodily or in vision.

During the reign of Suleman the Magnificent between 1526-1566 Ottoman Turk empire reached its height and Suleman rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and that construction remained till today. He restored the Eastern and Western walls of Jerusalem and moved the North wall line to the South; leaving part of the southwest hills of Mount Zion outside of the city. This time the Dome of the Rock was decorated with gold. This golden Dome was again regilded in recent times with more gold. It was decked with blue and yellow geometric patterns with alphabetic Koran verses written in swirls and unlocking Arabic letters.

This is really an impressing sight to the visitors or tourists to Jerusalem. These visitors should not forget the Holiest place to Muslims in Jerusalem is 'the Dome of the Rock'. The Holy place to Jews is the western (wailing) wall and the holiest place to Christians is the church of the Holy Sepulcher. And also for many Bible believers have another holy place and it is the 'Garden Tomb'.

But during the 1st world war the British tried partially against Turks who were with the central power of Austria, Hungary and Germany. "General Allenby" conquered Jerusalem for the Allied forces and Jerusalem was held by the British under mandate by the League of Nations from 1917-1947. And in 1945 in the month of May the United Nations Organization asked the British to declare independence to both Israel and Palestine as separate countries. This is historically an important event that the sovereign state of Israel was formed and Israel Jerusalem was created.

In the partition the Dome of the Rock was cut out of the land of Israel and given to the young country Jordan. This was part of the west bank land on the west side of the river Jordan and that place was cut out of the land of Israel and given to Jordan. Then during the "six-day" war in the year 1967, Israel came to know that the surrounding Arab nations were going to attack. But fortunately Israel won the battle and the west bank territory was kept in their control in spite

of the controversy in both external and internal until today. Since the Dome of rock was Muslims Holy place the Israel government gave complete authority and freedom to them to take care of it by themselves.

## **Muslims in the world**

According to authentic information the Muslims population today is about one billion, ie., 100 crores. It may be even more in the world. The Islam actually began in 622 A.D. in Arabia and the initial Muslims were completely Arabic. In Arabic nations the Muslim population was found in Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq. Their religion spread further in the middle Ages.

Many people from the west have an incorrect belief that all Muslims are Arabic and it is equally incorrect that all Arabic's are Muslims. Many Arab's in Israel, Libanon and the United States are Christians. In the same way many non-Arabic people are of Islamic faith. We can find many people of this type in Iran, Indonesia, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan. There are also 2.3 million Muslims in Bosnia, 1 million in Bulgaria and many millions in India and south west Asia.

We can see today the high percentage of Muslim immigrates into European countries. Their population is rapidly increasing in the United States, Germany and France. Each country seemed to have an estimation of 3 million and the Great Britain has 1.5 million Muslims. It is said the Muslim Mosques are more in Britain than Christian churches.

For centuries Christian, Jews and Muslims lived together peacefully and happily. There are even Christian quarters, Jewish quarters and Muslim quarters in Jerusalem. It was done depending upon that particular population lived there. At other times some Muslim armies went around Europe and South Africa and conquered the places which were originally Christian lands. The crusaders of 12th and 13th centuries saw Christian armies marching forward and tried to recapture the lands that were lost including Holy places in Israel.

If anybody wanted to see "Sharia" (Muslim Law) their out look towards Christians and Jews and about their countries, they simply oppose the religion and the people as they oppose America and Israel. But there are some moderate Muslims who always wish for peace and harmony. When all other countries have been trying for peaceful co-existence, America was shattered by the radical

bombing of the “World Trade Center” in New York. That destruction caused a colossal loss to the American government. So this September 11, 2001 tragic incident was memorable one in American history.

### **Sunnis and Shiites**

After the death of Mohammad the Muslims were divided into two major parties. They were Sunnis and Shiites. The name Sunnis is referred to the majority of the people that followed Islam. They followed the practice of Prophet Mohammad and they were loyal to the community. The Sunni Muslims followed Koran and Islamic law and established themselves.

The word “Shiites” is derived from “Sheath Ali” and this party seemed to be the second largest one. The reason why they were separated from ‘sunnis’ was that these Muslims wanted that the highest post like Imam or Caliph must go to the descendents of “Sheath Ali” and Fatima the son-in-law and daughter of prophet Mohammad. The Sunnis opposed the proposal. So the two parties are- the Shiites are the supporters of the cause that the highest position of caliph or Imam must go to the descendents of the sheath Ali and Fatima. And the other party Sunnis opposed this proposal. Since then these two parties were in existence till today. In the political affairs Saddam Hussein, the ex-president of Iraq belonged to Sunnis party. He happened to kill thousands of shiit members in the country during his reign and he was finally hanged to death. This is the present political condition of the Middle East. Let us hope the United Nations Organization find a permanent solution for the peaceful co-existence of Christians and Muslims in the Middle East.

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