

## ISRAELITES LEFT IN THE DESERT

**After the number of days in which you spied out the land, even forty days, for each day a year shall you bear and suffer for your iniquities, even for forty years, and you shall know My displeasure (Numbers 14:34).**

When God called Israel out of the Egypt, He gave them instructions and guidance on how to live for their success in entering the Promised Land. But Israel's sin of unbelief and idolatry followed by the hardening of their hearts became a stumbling block on their way to enter the Promised Land. Israel had closed their eyes to the wonderful deeds of the Lord on their behalf: it didn't matter to them that God had opened the Red Sea for them to pass through, saving them from the Egyptian's army; it didn't matter to them that God had satisfied their hunger with heavenly manna; it didn't matter to them that God had gone ahead of them in a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. It just didn't matter, when they had to face a crisis.

After the experience of the Red Sea, having wandered for three days, Moses led them to the wilderness of Shur, where they had found no water. Their reaction was that of murmuring, complaining and doubting God's faithfulness. God lovingly blessed them with twelve springs of water, one for each tribe, and seventy palm trees. God used the number seventy to form the nation of Israel; Jacob's family consisted of seventy people when they left for Egypt. The number seventy is also connected with God's punishment of Israel; so those seventy palm trees were speaking to them of future seventy years of captivity in Babylon. It is prophesized in the book of Daniel that seventy weeks of years (70x7) have been given to them to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness and to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the most Holy (Daniel 9:24). That was the frame of time that God gave Israel for forgiveness in the number  $70 \times 7 = 490$  years. There is one more week of years left for the completion of God's plan in the life of Israel.

The experience of Israel in the desert was long and difficult; all of those people from the generation that left Egypt died in the desert, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb. In this we see also to be prophetic in relation to the Jewish nation and to gentile nations, in the fact that Caleb was from the tribe of Judah and Joshua from the tribe of Ephraim, son of Joseph, whose mother was an Egyptian woman. God said, Forty years long was I grieved and disgusted with that generation, and I said, It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they do not approve, acknowledge, or regard My ways. Wherefore I swore in My wrath that they would not enter My rest [the land of promise] (Psalm 95:11). As the writer to Hebrews said, when the message given is not mixed with faith, it will be of no benefit to the hearer; and that was the problem with the nation of Israel, on their way to the Promised Land, which the Lord swore to give to them. It was their uncircumcised children whom He raised up in their stead that entered the Promised Land.

Israel's experience in the desert is a picture of the Church of Christ today. She is wandering through the desert "forty years", symbolized by tests, trials and probation, without a

relationship with God and His Written Word. The instruction on how to live a life of faith is somewhere on the desk, or bookcase collecting dust. In their journey through the desert, they lose focus of their call to a holy life through sanctification. They murmur, abandon the faith and go back to "Egypt". And as it happened to the Israelites, who were left in the desert for their unbelief, so will be for the believers who walk the way of the flesh even after they have passed through the "Red Sea" in their acceptance of Christ and baptism. The letter to the Hebrews describes their situation well, **For it is impossible [to restore and bring again to repentance] those who have been once for all enlightened, who have consciously tasted the heavenly gift and have become sharers of the Holy Spirit, and have felt how god the Word of God is and the mighty powers of the age and world to come, if they then deviate from the faith and turn away from their allegiance [it is impossible] to bring them back to repentance, for they nail upon the cross the Son of God afresh [as far they are concerned] and are holding [Him] up to contempt and shame and public disgrace (Hebrews 6:4-6).**

We believers have received manna from heaven, Yahshua the Bread of Life; we have been washed with His blood and have been continuously cleansed by His Word and the ministry of the Holy Spirit; His presence is with us, guiding and protecting and providing for our every need. But the Church of Christ is in the state where Israel was when they were left behind in the desert. The root of apostasy has entered the churches and have deviated many from the Truth-Yahshua to follow the teachings of Ball. To them there is the warning: Today, if you hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as it happened in the wilderness when Israel tried God's patience and tested Him, proved Him and saw His work[ of punishment] (Psalm 95:8-11). "Let us therefore be zealous and exert ourselves and strive diligently to enter that rest, that no one may fall or perish by the same kind of unbelief and disobedience [into which those in the wilderness fell] (Hebrews 4:11). Yahshua said, His sheep listen to His voice and heed to it; they are called by their own name; He walks before them, and they follow Him because they know His voice; they will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him because they do not know the voice of strangers or recognize their call; He said, I am the Good Shepherd; and I know and recognize My own, and My own know and recognize Me (John 10:3,5,14). In the listening of the voice of the Shepherd and in the following Him, He will give eternal life, a gift that no one can take away from them. Only the true sheep of Yahshua will enter the rest of God. Eternal salvation is only for those who persevere following Him to the end! We have only today; consider returning to Him, if you have left the way, "For it is a fearful thing to incur the divine penalties and be cast into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:13)!

The Church of Christ is asleep on the comfortable pews of the churches, and being comforted with words that bring her good feelings and the tickle of her ears. God is calling His remnant out of the Babylon churches to cleanse and prune them. The desert was given only for sanctification and preparation to enter the Promised Land, not for us to stay and die in it, unless we are found to be murmurs and complainers against our God and indifferent to Him. God's warning for Israel stands also for the church: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion [of Israel] and their provocation and embitterment [of Me] in the day of testing in the wilderness (Hebrews 3:7-8).

Today is a definite day; a day for the opportunity to listen and to turn around, to return to God; we have only today! Turn around, my friend.

**THINK ABOUT IT!**