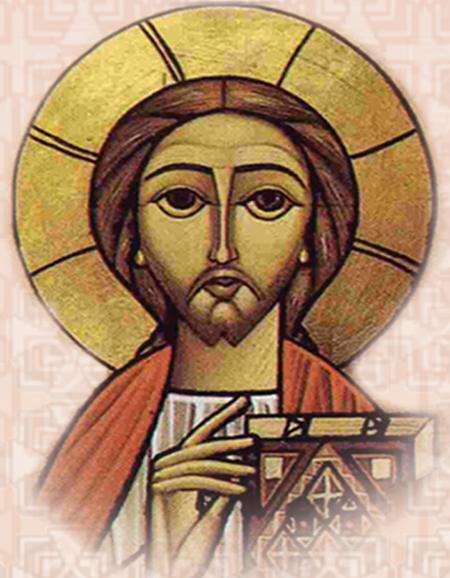


A Patristic Commentary



THE BOOK OF 1 Chronicles

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

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A COMMENTARY ON

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THE FIRST BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES

By

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(Translated by Dr. George Botros)

A HEAVENLY LIFE IN THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD

Ezra the scribe and priest, author of the first and the second books of the chronicles, lived in the land of captivity, denied of the enjoyment of ministering to the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. He led the second batch of those returning from Babylon to Jerusalem; not to support the worship in the temple, rebuilt by Zerubbabel, as much as to motivate the leaders and the people to experience the holy heavenly life in the temple of the Holy God.

And here he is, in the first and the second books of the Chronicles, drawing our attention, by the Holy Spirit of God, to the holy history from the time of Adam to the fall under captivation; and to that, there is a divine promise of return from captivation.

The first and the second books of the chronicles call us to have our hearts rise up as though to heaven to enjoy its deposit.

Noticing that only few among the Christians care to enjoy these two books, St. Jerome presented to us the following warning: [Whoever thinks that he got acquainted of the holy books, without reading these two books, would be deceiving himself].

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST AND THE SECOND BOOKS OF THE CHRONICLES

According to the Latin version 'The Volgata', the name of these two books came as 'Chronicorum liber'; And according to the Hebrew origin, it came as (The events of Time) 'Devri Hoyyamim', or (The Registers of Days); And in the Septuagint version, it came as 'Paralipomeno' or (Things left over); namely, not mentioned in the two books of the kings.

The author is unknown; Yet, according to the Hebrew tradition, it was probably written by 'Ezra' the scribe and priest, directly after returning from the Babylonian captivity.

According to some, these two books are bound to the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, as testified by the following inclusions in the two books.

- 1- They referred to the return from the Babylonian captivity, according to the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia (2 Chronicles 36: 21-22).
- 2- They were recorded after the era of the prophet Jeremiah who was a contemporary of the captivity (2 Chronicles 35: 25); and who lamented the desolation of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the captivity of the people.
- 3- According to some, the language of these two books came somewhat weak; as it was generally the case of the books written directly after the captivity; including some words foreign to the Hebrew language; as a result of the departure of the Jews from their land, and their getting in contact with other peoples in captivity.

- 4- It is obvious that the author of these two books was a contemporary of Zerubbabel, leader of the first batch of those who returned from captivity; with whom he has been in direct contact, cared for him and for his family, including his daughter 'Shelomith' (1 Chronicles 3: 19).
- 5- The name 'Hattush' (1 Chronicles 3: 22), that also came in (Ezra 8: 2); a descendant of David, returned from Babylon together with Ezra.

Between the two books of the chronicles and the two books of Ezra and Nehemiah:

The two books of the chronicles are two books in one; dealing with the history of the people of Israel from Adam to the decree of Cyrus king of Persia concerning the return of the children of Israel from captivity in the year 538 B. C.

According to the Jewish Telmud, Ezra the priest who wrote the book in his name in the Old Testament, is the author of the two books of the chronicles; which is confirmed by many scholars. Although rejected by some, yet we cannot disregard the following close connection between the two books of the chronicles and those of Ezra and Nehemiah:

- 1- What came in the two books of the chronicles refer to a priestly author; because of the concentration on the temple, the priesthood, the collective worship, and the theocratic line of David in the Southern kingdom of Judah.
- 2- There is resemblance between the language of the two books of the chronicles and the book of Ezra; concerning the priestly point of view, the ministry of priesthood, the worship in the temple, the submission to the divine law, and the mention of genealogies. Moreover, the two expressions at the end of the second book of the chronicles (2 chronicles 36: 22-23) are repeated in the beginning in the book of Ezra (Ezra 1: 1-3), opening before us a window upon the time of building the second temple,

and the life of the people of Israel in the days of the Persians. The book of Ezra may be a consummation of the two books of the chronicles, the way the book of Acts is to the gospel according to St. Luke.

- 3- In the two books of the chronicles, as well as in the book of Ezra, there are certain expressions not known before the captivation; an evidence that Ezra is the author of the three books.

The integration between the two books of the chronicles and the two books of Ezra and Nehemiah:

- 1- If the book of Ezra cared for the rebuilding of the temple that was burned by the Babylonians; and the book of Nehemiah cared for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem to protect the city against the surrounding nations oppressive to Israel and Judah; The two books of the chronicles, on the other hand, dealt with the spiritual and Scriptural basis of what is needed by the nation that lost its independence, and even its mere existence.

Some of the Jews returned to Jerusalem, yet with no king. God has promised that the descendants of David will be forever on the throne. The two books, confirming that the descendants of David have lost the throne because of their persistence on evil; came to prepare the hearts to receive the Savior Son of David as a King over the hearts, and an everlasting heavenly High Priest. The promises of God, being steadfast and faithful, are realized according to the exalted divine thought, and not according to the literal human thought.

- 2- The two books cared specifically for the two tribes: the royal Judah and the priestly Levites. Yet through disobedience, those two tribes lost their roles to a great extent; And there was an urgent need for a King, a Priest, and a Sacrifice, at the same time, capable of carrying the believing humanity up to the divine throne.

The reform done by Ezra, Nehemiah, and others, in essence, was a preparation for the coming of the Lord Christ, the Son of David according to the flesh; the King of kings, the heavenly High Priest, and the Sacrifice capable of carrying the sins of the world; being the lamb of God, who, instead of the sin, would clothe us with His exalted righteousness.

- 3- If Cyrus, the Persian king allowed the return of Zerubbabel – a descendant of David – to Jerusalem, he did not send him as a king with free hand to act, but rather as one of the governors (sutrapies) appointed by the Persian king to rule over certain regions. It was not the intention of the Persian king to let Zerubbabel remain permanently in Jerusalem, nor to give him independence from the Persian empire.

Giving the Jews the right to return to their land; and feeling that God sought from him to build His house in Jerusalem, yet Cyrus had no intention of setting a kingdom for the descendants of David.

- 4- Together with the gladness for the return to Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the temple and the walls of Jerusalem, and the beginning of offering sacrifices and burnt offerings to the Lord, many questions lingered in the minds of some, for which they had no obvious and practical answers, of which are:

- Many elders who, while children, have seen the temple of Solomon as one of the wonders of the world, started to weep, because there was no comparison between it and the new temple; and wondered if the time will come to demolish the new temple, being temporary, and to build another as magnificent as the old one has been? ... Who will do that? And who will subsidize it, the way David and Solomon did?

- Is it possible for priesthood, with its purity and glory, as it was in the days of Aaron, to return?
- Could the worship in the new temple, specially during the feasts, be compared to those in the days of Solomon; when the people from all the tribes used to gather together?
- Will every tribe have back its portion of the land given by Joshua, and inherited by the generations?
- Will Israel have back its unity between all the tribes, its greatness, glory, riches, and authority, as it was the case in the days of Solomon?
- With the running of time, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah, getting used to submit and to surrender to the Persian Empire, that granted them the return as a gratuity; yet did not let them choose for themselves a king of the descendants of David; started to wonder where is the divine promise concerning the house of David. Will it ever be realized? Will the prophecies of the prophets be realized, even those during the days of captivity, like the words of the Lord on the tongue of Ezekiel, saying: *“I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them – My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord have spoken”* (Ezekiel 34: 23, 24); *“They shall be My people, and I shall be their God. David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. They shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and children’s children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever”* (Ezekiel 37: 23-25).

And the words of the Lord on the tongue of the prophet Zechariah, saying: *“I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication”* (Zechariah 12: 10).

Now, after the return from captivity, the two books of the Chronicles came to bring to remembrance the plan of God concerning the royal house of David, caring for the worship of the living God. Yet the returning Jew stands to see that the Northern kingdom is no more!

Between the two books of the chronicles and the second book of Samuel, and the second book of the kings:

While the second book of Samuel and the second book of the kings were written before the captivation, the two books of the chronicles were written after returning from it. While the two former books followed the historical aspect from the prophetic view point; the author of the two books of the chronicles concentrates upon the worshipping priestly aspect, on that of the rite of the temple; and on the blessing and grace of the Lord upon David, who longed to build the temple; and being denied, he cared for fulfilling all the financial possibilities for his son Solomon to realize his father's desire; and for establishing the system of worship and the groups of praise singers in the temple.

While the kings of Judah cared for the temple, those of Israel, opposed it.

According to St. Jerome, the two books of the chronicles were a 'resume' of the Old Testament. They both include the history of the Jewish nation, particularly what is written in the second book of Samuel and the two books of the kings; in what is counted as a spiritual interpretation of them. ... Parading the history of the Jews from the beginning of the reign of king Saul to that of king Zedekiah; But that does not mean that the two books of the chronicles are a repetition of

what came in the books of Samuel and the kings, without an obvious goal; for the following reasons:

- 1- The Holy Book, sometimes uses the repetition for a certain wisdom; like for example what came in the two gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Mark, where the Holy Spirit cares, to present the Word of God as Truth in a concentrated form, then chooses to shed more light on certain parts of it. It is as though the Holy Spirit looks at the whole text through a telescope, then zooms on certain parts to concentrate on details. That is exactly what happened with the two books of the chronicles.
- 2- While the second book of Samuel and the two books of the kings, present the political history of Israel and Judah, and the prophetic and ethical point of view; the two books of the chronicles, present the religious view of the descendants of David in the kingdom of Judah; or the spiritual and priestly point of view.
- 3- In the two books of the chronicles, God overlooks the basis upon which the books of Samuel and the kings are written, in order to confirm certain points, He considered as important, as for example:
 - a- The concentration in the first book of the chronicles is on David; while in the second book of the chronicles, it is on his descendants. And when mentioning the dissension into two kingdoms, the Northern kingdom is completely disregarded.
 - b- The first book of the chronicles does not mention most of the faults and weaknesses of David, on account of that they were completely forgiven by God.
 - c- While the two books of the kings give the history of the nation from the point of view of the throne; in which the royal palace is the center; the two books of the chronicles, it is given from that of the altar; in which the temple is the center.

- d- The two books of the chronicles are an interpretation of the two books of the kings; hence we often read in the later books the expression saying: “*Are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?*”

To whom were the two books of the chronicles addressed?

These two books were written, mostly to the kings and the religious leaders, to let them perceive that the true Leader is God; so that none of them should boast or be self-esteemed. It is written, as well to the people, to let them perceive that their salvation will be realized, not by the leaders and their might, but by their return to God. ... We, as Christians, perceive that our salvation is by Christ, the true King, the heavenly High Priest, and the delivered Lamb of God, to lead our procession up to heaven.

These two books of the Chronicles open before us the gates of hope in the mercies of God, who, even if He chastens us because of our sins, it will only be for a moment, then he will pour His mercies upon us. They reveal to us, as well, what God anticipate from His believers – leaders and people.

They, in one way or another, proclaim that our whole hope is in the new Israel – the church of Christ – whose King, Priest, Sacrifice, and Intercessor, is the Lord Christ, the Son of David; who carries humanity to His eternal kingdom.

Divisions of the book of the chronicles:

The two books of the chronicles were originally one book; as were the books of Samuel and the kings. Then it was divided into two books in the Septuagint version during the third century B.C.

At that time they were given the name 'Pawa leipomenon', namely, (the things not included or omitted), a reference to the things not mentioned in the books of Samuel and the kings.

The name 'Chronicles' was given by St. Jerome in the Volgata (385-405 B.C.); who, seeing that the two books are counted as a resume' of the Old Testament, they would properly called "Chronicon" of the whole holy history.

The circumstances that prevailed around the author:

In spite of the fact that the author of the two books of the chronicles recorded the events of the same epoch of the two books of Samuel and the kings; sometimes used the same language, and probably quoted from their pages; yet, he wrote from a different point of view, and with a designated feature. In the time these two books were written, the people of Israel were going through a new very critical epoch in their history, different from that during which the books of Samuel and the kings were written.

'Ezra' returned to Judea in the year 458 B.C.; when the royal system was on hold for as long as 130 years, after a bitter suffering from evil kings. The nation had no more hope in the renewal of the royal system; as it was decades since the first batch of people returned from captivity to set the nation anew in Jerusalem. Although surrendering to their new situation as mere citizen of the Persian Empire; while their civil government was that of a defeated people, yet their national identity has been obviously designated, albeit taking a different form; not being both royal and religious, but only religious.

Other than what concern the religion, they were submitted to the governors and the laws of the Persian Empire, of which they were a part. ... Within the frame of their religion, they were Hebrews, submitted to the Jewish theocracy; yet in its superficial form, that went through further changes; on account of that the royalty

departed, together with the designate series of ministers related to the ordinance of God; namely the chain of prophets, who controlled and disciplined the royalty. The earthly representative of the theocracy became therefore the representative of the religious system; namely, the high priest; and the nationality of the people became religious from that time onward.

That change in the Hebrew people was the reason for Ezra to rewrite the last part of the history of their race. While the two books of kings referred to the relationship between the two kingdoms and the designated system, represented by the prophets; the two books of the chronicles referred to the relationship between the legitimate kingdom of David and the general system of ministry and worship ordained by God. This key for rewriting the history, has been meant to prepare the minds to that the Son of David is the Center of the whole history. At the end of the tenth chapter of the first book of the chronicles, the author started to follow up the theocratic kingdom.

As far as the history of David and Solomon is concerned, the author wrote it merely from the religious point of view. King David occupied several chapters, mostly concerning bringing back of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, fixing the site of the temple, the preparations for building it, and setting the systems concerning the divine worship. As to the family relationships of David, his sin with Bathsheba, the rebellions of Absalom and Adonijah; the psalm of thanksgiving for his victory, and his last words, they were all not mentioned.

Likewise with the history of Solomon; six out of the nine chapters were designated for the building and the dedication of the temple (2 Chronicles 2 – 7); while the worldly things concerning the forty years of his reign, were nearly summarized in three chapters (2 Chronicles 1, 8,9)

In the same way the history of the kings following Solomon was written:

- 1- The priests and the Levites escaped from the faulty worship of Jeroboam in the Northern kingdom of Israel; and gathered around Rehoboam to support him (2 Chronicles 11: 13-17); as it came in the statement of Abijah, directed to the citizens of Jeroboam, in which he scoffed against the kind of worship he invented, that was a mixture of idol-worship and that of the living God; comparing it to the old religious glories, kept intact in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 13: 9, 12).
- 2- Asa revived the worship in the temple, and renewed the covenant between God and His people, who, when they readily sought Him, He was there for them, and gave them rest on all sides (2 Chronicles 15: 1, 15); So were the chronicles of kings Jehoshaphat and Joash. In the chronicles of Joash, special importance was given to the high priest Jehoiada for his position during the calamity caused by Athaliah by killing all the descendants of David (2 Chronicles 22); and also the long account of the reign of Hezekiah and Joash, talking in several chapters about the several renewals in the temple and the ministering therein, while leaving only few chapters for the other services (2 Chronicles 29, 31, 34-35).

It is however obvious that, by writing the two books of the chronicles, Ezra intended to put before the Jews a certain consideration of their history; to show them that, before setting their system of government as a theocracy, the glories, as well as the weaknesses, even those of king David, were closely connected to the acknowledgment of the presence of God, through keeping the ways of worship designated by God for this goal. The goal, from the point of view of their history, is to strengthen the religious sense of their nationality, to teach them that the climax of their glory is in God's reign on them; and that, although reign was practiced through the prophets, yet, its regular and normal appearance, was in their dependence upon the priesthood system (the Levite).

The bond between the kingdom of Israel and the house of the Lord:

1- King Solomon, known for his wisdom, riches, and fame all over the world; his life seemingly concentrated on building the house of the Lord; And seeing him intercede and pray for his people; he was a symbol of our Christ, our heavenly atoning Intercessor (1 John 2: 1-2).

+ How great it was, for the lamb of God to be slain to lift the sin up, not just of a few, but of the whole world; *“For if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world”* (1 John 2: 1-2); As He is the Savior of all mankind, the believers in particular (1 Timothy 4: 10). *“Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it”* (Colossians 2: 14-15). So we learned to be of good cheer when we have tribulation in this world; and the reason of our cheer is that the Lord Christ has overcome the world (John 16: 33). that surely submits to Him who has overcome it; hence, *“He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy; and will break in pieces the oppressor”* (Psalm 72: 4).

(The scholar Origen)

2- The bond between the kingdom and the worship of the Lord appears in the godly kings. We read that the secret of success of good kings like Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, was their bond to the temple and the worship of the Lord.

- 3- Ahaz the evil king, having attempted to destroy the worship of God, through his intense hatred of the house of the Lord; the kingdom was partly destroyed in his days.

With every oppression by the devil against the worship of God, God sends a leader or more to mend what was damaged. Even when the kingdom of Israel, followed by that of Judah fell into captivity, God sent prophets to bring the people back to God; and spoke to the heart of Cyrus the Persian king, to allow the people to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.

The oppression of the devil against the worship of God will never cease, but will rather increase. Even when the incarnate Word of God came, the oppression of the devil turned into the crucifixion of the Lord of glory for the salvation of the whole world. The enemy will keep on oppressing the house of the Lord until the coming of the antichrist to corrupt the world. But with every oppression,, many will return to the Lord, and the children of the Lord will be justified, until the proclamation of the church – the glorious bride, who will enjoy the fellowship of the eternal glories.

A deep look at the role of the king or of the leader:

The two books of the chronicles present to those returning from captivity, an answer to the hidden questions that ran in their minds, touching the life of every believer, and supporting him who enjoys the work of God that brings man back from the captivity of sin, and the humiliation of bondage to the devil.; to live in the church of Christ, the spiritual Jerusalem, the deposit of heaven. Those returning from captivity have undoubtedly lost the hope for having a king from the house of David to sit on the throne, to bring back to Israel its prestige as a kingdom led by a king, capable of standing with his head high up among the kings of the surrounding nations and peoples. They see in the king a pillar on which the people, as well as, every believer lean for support; No enemy will ever dare to

take away from them the promised land which they inherited since the days of Joshua, extended in the days of David, and on which peace prevailed in those of Solomon.

What the two books confirm is that the secret of power in a king or a leader is his attachment to the Lord, his care for the true upright worship, keeping the statutes of the Lord, and his bond with the divine commandment.

If David was the role model on whom the success or failure of any king is measured; The secret of David's success was not his ability to govern, nor his personal charisma, his courage, or his military experience; but, as the first book of the chronicles presents David to us, being like Moses. The way Moses has been the leader of the people of God in the wilderness, so David has been their leader in the land of Canaan. David got preoccupied with organizing the people in the name of the Lord, and with preparing for the building of the house of the Lord, to proclaim the dwelling of God among His people; the way Moses set the tabernacle of the meeting, where God met His people.

Whenever the second book of the chronicles spoke about a good king in Judah, it said: "*he did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God*", then added sometimes, "*as did his father David*". The secret of the success of David, therefore is that "*he did what was good and right in the eyes of God*", not in his own sight, nor in that of the leaders or the people.

And whenever the second book of the chronicles spoke about Solomon as a king, it showed him as only preoccupied with building the temple, the plan of which was laid by his father David by a divine guidance; then he dedicated it with an incomparable luxury.

And in parading the kings of Judah who sat on the throne after Solomon until the days of the captivation, the author was only preoccupied with proclaiming

whether the king has done what is good and right in the eyes of the Lord, or has done evil.

It is as though the author intended to draw their attention, not to men, who are weak and will eventually depart from this world, but to look forward to the Son of David to sit on His throne in His holy church, as well as in the heart of every believer.

It is befitting of them, as well as with us, not to be preoccupied with the earth of this world, but with the Lord of the whole earth, who is capable of granting us a new earth and a new heaven, through sanctifying our bodies and our souls; to have the righteousness of Christ dwell in us, and proclaim His splendor inside us.

What we said about David, Solomon, the temple and the worship, lead us to a specific look that make God a King on His people in His land. For the Jewish congregation was founded by God, who set David a king on it; But it is God who is the only King; whereas David reigned on the throne of God in His name; For that is how the book of the chronicles should portray the kingdom of God as represented by any man..

It is as though the two books of the chronicles intended to draw the attention of those returning from captivity, to the eternal righteous King, anointed to set the fallen tabernacle of David, whose kingdom will extend all over the earth; whose law is the divine Truth.

Here we quote some prophecies that came about His amazing Person, as a heavenly King, and about His exalted kingdom:

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will raise to David a branch of righteousness; a king shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth” (Jeremiah 23: 5).

“Ask of Me and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession” (Psalm 2: 8)

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore, God, Your God, has anointed You, with the oil of gladness more than Your companions; ... At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir” (Psalm 45: 6, 9).

“Give the King Your judgments, O God; and Your righteousness to the King’s Son” . He will judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with justice; ... He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the end of the earth” (Psalm 72: 1, 2, 8).

“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2: 44).

“I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom; that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion” (Daniel 7: 13-14).

“He is the Lord of lords, and the King of kings” (1 Timothy 6: 15; Revelation 17: 14); with whom we unite to carry the fellowship in His feature as a king, to be counted as kings; and He to be called ‘The King of kings’.

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“He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19: 16).

- + Those who were anointed in the old covenant were either priests, prophets, or kings; Whereas we, Christians of the new covenant, are committed to be anointed to become kings with dominion over our desires; priests to *“present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service”* (Romans 12: 1); and prophets on account of that we shall have knowledge of very great and important secrets.
- + I wish we do not take off from ourselves the royal seal and sign, lest we would be counted among the unsealed; It is befitting of us to be securely set upon the foundation, so as not to be carried away here or there.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- + The way you will never dwell except in a pure and clean house; and would be reproached if you dwell in a dirty house;
How could the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, dwell in a soul full of rotten filth?!
- You should, therefore, drive away from yourself all the evil desires; for then the King and His great hosts will come to dwell with you.

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

The priestly lineage in the two books of the chronicles:

The way the two books of the chronicles cared for the royal lineage, they cared, as well, for the priestly lineage; with a deep consideration to

priesthood:

- 1- The two books bind between the royal work, and the priestly work; For the prosperity of the house of David has gone hand in hand with the prosperity of the priestly work; and any perversion in one of them would affect the other.

The two books reveal the interest of the priests in the continuity of the throne of David; and, at the same time, the great and strong zeal of the good kings of the house of David on the temple and those working in it. We saw how Jehoiada the priest cared for to hide the seven year old infant Joash to protect him from being killed by Athaliah to ensure that there would be someone from the house of David to sit on the throne after 6 years. And on another aspect we saw how Joash having become king, cared for the renewal of the temple up to the day Jehoiada died. And when king Joash killed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, we saw how it was said in the book: *“Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but killed his son”* (2 Chronicles 24: 22).

- 2- The second book of the chronicles confirmed the commitment of the kings not to take the priestly work over by force; nor the priests to take the royal work; to let the two categories work in harmony for the edification of the people of God. The book told us about that unique event during the reign of Uzziah, who attempted to transgress against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense; and when the priests opposed him, they were supported by God (2 Chronicles 26: 16, 21); who struck Uzziah with leprosy, and was a leper until the day of his death; while his son Jotham reigned in his place.

- 3- The second book of the chronicles referred to the weaknesses of the priests, saying: "*The Levites were more diligent in sanctifying themselves than the priests*" (2 Chronicles 29: 34).

The book calls us to seek a king of the seed of David, yet not on the level of the kings of Judah, but to have His kingdom everlasting, and extend to all nations; not a king in harmony with the priests of Israel, but, being the King of kings, He, Himself, is the heavenly High Priest.

What preoccupies the heart of the Christian in the two books of the chronicles, is to see this harmony consummated in its most exalted form in the incarnate Word of God; For He is amazing in His royalty, and amazing in His priesthood. By that, according to the Christians, what came in the two books of the chronicles, serve the Christian faith.

Concerning His royalty, the angel Gabriel, giving St. Mary the good news of the incarnation of the Word in her womb, says: "*He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end*" (Luke 1: 32-33).

Concerning His priesthood, the Christian believes that Jesus Christ offered Himself on the cross, a sin sacrifice and an atonement sacrifice for the whole world. The Lord Himself says: "*This is My blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matthew 26: 28); And the apostle said: "*Christ died for our sins*" (1 Corinthians 15: 3); and: "*You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*" (Hebrew 7: 17); and: "*We have such a High Priest who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*" (Hebrew 8: 1).

In his epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle confirmed the unity between the royalty of the Lord and His Priesthood; As His priesthood is consummated

by His sitting on the throne in heaven; saying: "*When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*" (Hebrew 1: 3); and in the same chapter he says: "*But to the Son He says: Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom*" (Hebrew 1: 8).

In his epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul presents to us a living portrait of the Lord Christ as the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, who brings us forth to the heavenly sanctuaries; intercedes for us with His blood; and offers His life a sacrifice for our sake. In the fifth chapter he started his talk about Aaron, although being the first high priest, directly called by God for this task; and who surpasses all the high priests who followed him, yet he was in need of offering sacrifices on his own behalf because of his weakness, before offering them on that of the people; to introduce to us Him who is incomparably greater than Him -- our Lord Jesus -- who brings us forth into the heavenly sanctuaries, interceding for us on a new and unique level.

What we said about the Lord Christ as the heavenly King of kings, we say about Him as the heavenly High Priest. On one aspect, we enjoy fellowship with Him, to enjoy the general priesthood; we stretch our hands in prayer, to be received by the Father through His Son, the Highest Priest, as a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise; As priests, we present worship for the whole world; pray the Lord's prayer in the name of the whole church, saying: "*Our Father who are in heaven*".

+ You are the Priest, and You are the Sacrifice; You are the One who offers, and You are the offering.

+ I think that no one among the believers doubts that the Jewish priesthood was a symbol of the royal priesthood, that had to be

realized by the priesthood which is in the church; where those who belong to the body of Christ, the Highest and Most exalted High Priest, are all consecrated; being all anointed; while, in the old days, the anointment was confined only to the kings and priests. And when Peter wrote to the Christian people, he talked about the royal priesthood, showing clearly that the people now are given the two titles together, for which the anointment is meant.

- + Christ prays for us, and prays in us, and we pray to Him. He prays for us, being a Priest, prays in us, being our Head; and we pray to Him, being our God. That is why we recognize our voice in Him, and recognize His voice in us.
- + Let everyone of us pray **for** the sake of the other, the way Christ intercedes for our sake.

(St. Augustine)

- + Great is the difference! He is the Ransom, the Priest, and the Sacrifice. For if it is not the case, there would be need for offering many sacrifices; and He would be sacrificed many times.

(St. John Chrysostom)

The Levites in the two books of the chronicles:

Caring for the ministry in the temple, the word '**Levite**', which came in the book of 'Leviticus' only five times in one chapter, we find it repeated in the

two books of the chronicles 99 times; And if we add to them the two books

of Ezra and Nehemiah as a consummation to them, we shall find that this word in the four books came more than 158 times, more so than it came in all the other books of both the Old and the New Testaments together.

The two books of the chronicles cared for the genealogies of the Levite families, that came here in more details than in any other book; not disregarding a single one. Commending their zeal and their exalted skill in ministering to the Lord, it is said: "*The Levites were more diligent in sanctifying themselves than the priests*" (2 Chronicles 29: 34).

The two books of the chronicles revealed the role of the Levites in stirring up the spirit of praise and joy among the people, devastated by captivity; in invoking the spirit of security and peace in the temple, beside caring for teaching and running the regular affairs of the temple. According to many scholars, the Levites fulfilled many of the works of the prophets in the period prior to the captivity.

The talk came about the activity of the singers of praise, and the musicians in the temple (2 Chronicles 23: 13); that some scholars assumed that the author of the two books was most probably of the grandchildren of one of

the head singers who were assigned for this task by King David.

The two books of the chronicles talk to us about the ministers of the temple, all being the sons of Levi. While the job of the priests was to sound the trumpets before the ark of the covenant (1 Chronicles 15: 24; 2 Chronicles

13: 12); and to sprinkle the blood on the altar (2 Chronicles 30:16); The Levites, on the other hand, far from being of a lower level, had their role

concerning the statutes of worship. They carried the ark of the covenant, they opened the gates of the temple; guarded its entrances; played music, sang praise; and shared with the priests in preparing the sacrifices, though not in offering them (2 Chronicles 29: 24; 30: 16-17).

Talking as Christians about the basis of worship in our churches; about the role of the priests and their helpers in practicing the holy rites, we could say that everyone of them has his indispensable role; and that the rites of worship have their importance today and every day. The people of the old had their ways of worship, based on offering sacrifices in the temple, and raising prayers to God. And the people of the new covenant have their own, yet, around the unique Sacrifice, our Lord Jesus Christ, that we live on our altar in the liturgy, and in our life in the rest of the sacraments and rites. The essence of the worship is the same; but the godliness is necessary to take us forth from our normal regular world up to heaven.

The Levites in the new covenant:

Since the apostolic era, the church cared for the '**deacons**', who carry out the role of the Levites in the church of the new covenant. The apostles felt that it is not desirable that they should leave the word of God and care for material things, even if it was for the sake of the widows and the poor; They did not let the administrative or financial affairs of the church draw their hearts or time away from their main mission of preaching the word and praying; considering those other tasks, despite their importance as "serving tables", not the responsibility of the apostles.

A condition set by the apostles to the people for choosing the seven deacons, was to be “*full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom*” (Acts 6: 3), to serve the daily tables, namely, to serve the widows and the poor.

The task of the believing deacon to serve the widows and the poor, was not only to satisfy their material, psychological, and social needs, but also to set out of each of them a temple for the heavenly Lord, where the Holy Trinity dwells. His task should not be not be confined to taking money from underneath the feet of the apostles to give to the needy, but also to take from the riches of God’s grace in himself, and pour into the hearts of other by the Spirit of God dwelling in him, and by the Lord Christ Himself, the Wisdom of God.

- + The congregation cared for choosing the deacons, to spare the apostles from retreating from preaching the word of God.

(St. Augustine)

- + The deacons were not just spiritual people, but “*full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom*”; on account of that, their ministry required a high level of delicacy in dealing with the widows. For what would be the benefit if the deacon is honest and does not cheat, if he, at the same time, is slothfully scattering the money, or dealing arrogantly with the poor, and easy to be stirred up?!

(St. John Chrysostom)

Ministering to the temple in the two books of the chronicles:

1- In short we could say that the two books of the chronicles are preoccupied with the kings, the priests, and the Levites, who, on their turn, were completely preoccupied with the ministry of the temple, more than any other works or tasks. As the royal and the priestly lineage and the temple were pillars upon whom the believer and the whole nation, as the people of God, lean; When those pillars collapsed, the people lost their hope. They, actually, had to collapse, on the literal level, to spare the people from leaning upon weak and mortal pillars and buildings. Going into captivity, many of the people perceived that God is the Lord of the whole earth, heaven is His throne, and earth is His footstool; Understanding that, the people were committed to anticipate the fulfillment of the divine promises through a new spiritual concept.

2- The temple and the worship, being the centers of the two books of the chronicles; they presented to us the history of the holy city, and the celebrations that were carried out in the temple. Hence the two books presented to us the genealogy of Judah in some detail, because of their bond with the temple; and in particular those of the kings after David, whose main preoccupation was building the temple, and organizing the rites of worship in it.

That same tendency also shows in the two books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The most prominent of those kings are:

- a- Asa (2 Chronicles 15)
- b- Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20)
- c- Joash (2 Chronicles 24-25)
- d- Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29-31)
- e- Josiah (2 Chronicles 34-35)

About the temple, the books of the chronicles say: There is no temple other than the temple of Jerusalem; and no legitimate worship outside the place chosen by God for His dwelling. Hence we notice the rejection of all attempts to set a temple beside that one, to set rites of worship outside that temple; the violent attack on the Samaritans for building a temple on Mount Gerzim; and dropping any news of the kingdom of Samaria that cut off all relations with the temple in Jerusalem after the death of Solomon.

3- The temple that was rebuilt after returning from captivity, and was deeply cherished by the Jewish people, has been defiled in the days of the Solokians, and by Antiochus Epiphanos in the second century B. C.; its priests were scattered, and its sacrifices were cancelled; to be mourned by the new Christians who came from the Jewish world. But the epistle to the Hebrews proclaims that there is no further use of the sacrifice; for we have now only one Sacrifice, namely Jesus Christ; and there is no further use of the priests who were in need to offer sacrifices for their own sake and for that of the people; for Jesus is both the Priest and the Sacrifice; He who presented Himself only once, to become the reason for our eternal salvation; and there is no further use of a temple of stone, on account of that the body of Jesus, is the new temple, and the center of the presence of God among men, that we are in no need of any other intermediary.

Obedience to the law in the two books of the chronicles:

The worship has been in one place, namely in the temple of Jerusalem, a city holy by faith, joy, and exultation, because of the presence in it of the priests and the Levites. The obedience to the law of God has been the first of the duties of the people in their daily life; the relationship between God and His people was translated in the principle of reward and chastisement; God rewards the faithful people by His blessing; and chastens any slothfulness or disobedience, in what

concern the temple and worship in particular; Such a teaching is obvious in the life of the successors of David.

In this concern we mention the Pharisees and the 'Comran' congregation, who sought to give a holy nature to their daily life; Yet the Pharisees observed the law, and the practices of the ancestors according to the deadly letter. And the 'Comran' congregation separated themselves from the people, kept away from the temple, and lived in seclusion. But the idea they proclaimed is still alive in our monastic congregations nowadays, yet according to a spiritual concept, love, and prayers for all mankind, particularly in those congregations that dedicate their life to work and liturgical prayers. Although living in seclusion in the wilderness and monasteries, yet they never separated between the daily and the holy lives; For there is no separation between the daily life and the law of God, on which it sheds light, and guides man toward the divine and the brotherly love.

Prophecy in the two books of the chronicles:

Prophecy goes back to the days of our parents in the garden of Eden, when it was said that *"the woman's offspring will strike the serpent's head; and the serpent will strike his heel"* (Genesis 3: 15); the sister of Moses, the first leader of the people who led them out of the bondage of Pharaoh, was a prophetess; and there were prophets in the era of judges, among whom was Deborah the prophetess; and in the days of the kings like Saul and David.

In the Northern kingdom, where evil strongly prevailed, particularly in the days of Ahab and his wife Jezabel, there were the prophets Elija and Elisha, etc. And in the Southern kingdom prophets appeared to proclaim the will of God, to support the kings, the leaders, and the people, and to call them to repentance and to return from evil.

The two books of the chronicles reveal the role of the prophets in the two kingdoms.

Christ in the two books of the chronicles:

As believers, we are committed to perpetually proclaim the divine presence in our practical life. If we wish for the kingdom of God to come, as we pray the Lord's prayer every day, we are perpetually committed to be sanctified, so that God would proclaim His kingdom in us, being His holy temple.

According to some fathers and scholars, the goal of these two books of the chronicles is to exhort believers to put their hope in the Son of David, to reign in their hearts, and to set His kingdom and His temple in their souls.

Sources of the two books of the chronicles:

It is obvious that the two books of the chronicles have quoted from the books inspired before them, as well as from public records and Jewish genealogies – for which the Jews very much cared, beside recording the important historical events. That is obvious in the commentary by the first book of the chronicles on the census done by Joab the son of Zeruah by an order from king David, saying: *“the number was not recorded in the account of the chronicles of king David”* (1 Chronicles 27: 24).

The most important sources of the two books of the chronicles were:

- a- The book of the chronicles of king David (1 Chronicles 27: 24)
- b- The book of the chronicles of Samuel the seer: *“The acts of King David, the first and the last, indeed they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of God the seer”* (1 Chronicles 29: 29).

- c- The book of the chronicles of Nathan the prophet (1 Chronicles 29: 29; 2 Chronicles 9: 29).
- d- The chronicles of Gad the seer (1 Chronicles 9: 29).
- e- The prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite: *“The rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, are they not written in the book of Nathan the prophet, in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nabat?”* (2 Chronicles 9: 29).
- f- The visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nabat (1 Chronicles 9: 29). The annals of the prophet Iddo: *“The rest of the acts of Abijah, his ways, and his sayings, are written in the annals of the prophet Iddo”* (2 Chronicles 13: 22).
- g- The book of the kings of Judah and Israel: *“The acts of Asa, first and last, are indeed written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel”* (2 Kings 16: 11; 25: 26; 27: 7; 26: 28; 25: 27; 36: 8). This book is other than the two books of the kings within our hands.
- h- The chronicles of Jehu the son of Hanani: *“The rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, the first and the last, indeed they are written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, which is mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel”* (2 Chronicles 20: 34).
- i- The prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz: *“The rest of the acts of Uzziah, from first to last, the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz wrote”* (2 Chronicles 26: 22)
- j- Vision of Isaiah the son of Amos: *“The rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his goodness, indeed they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amos, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel”* (2 Chronicles 32: 32).
- k- The chronicles of the kings of Israel: *“The rest of the acts of Manasseh, his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the Lord God of Israel, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel”* (2 Chronicles 33: 18).

- l- The books of the seers: “*Also his prayers (of Manasseh) and how God received his entreaty, and all his sin and trespass ... they are all written among the sayings of Hozai (the seer)*” (2 Chronicles 33: 19)
- m- The lamentations: “*Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah, and to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom in Israel; and indeed they are written in the laments*” (2 Chronicles 35: 25) (Those are lamentations written by Jeremiah at the time, other than those within our hands.

Beside those sources there are others from which the names of the mighty men of David are taken (1 Chronicles 11: 10-47); and of those men who came to David in Ziklag (1 Chronicles 12: 1-22); as well as a source which included the message of the prophet Elijah to king Jehoram (2 Chronicles 21: 12) that we do not have.

+ There are rich information in the two books of the chronicles, written as a consummation of the two books of the kings, and to preserve the memory of certain important events.

The first book of chronicles, starting by a genealogy, written to confirm that the human race has come from one man, concentrates only on the kingdom of Judah (Numbers 10: 14; Judges 1: 10; 2 Samuel 2: 4, 7; Ezra 8 ; Nehemiah 1: 3; 3: 1-32); and tells us about cities and villages, and how they derived their names.

Here we can recognize ‘Nathan’ (Sirach 47: 1; 2 Samuel 7: 3; 8-17; 12 1-14; 1 kings 1: 1, 14, 22, 27, 32-38); from which the blessed St. Luke (Luke 3: 23-38) set the genealogy of our Lord and Savior Son of David,

brother of Solomon and his brothers on his mother’s side, who were all born in Jerusalem (*Shamua, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon*”, all born by Bathsheba daughter of Ammiel”.

It confirms that 'Rahab', referred to in many books of the Holy Scripture, was said to be of the tribe of Judah. And it confirms, as well, why Reuben the son of Jacob, lost his firstborn right, saying: "*The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel – he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright. Yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's*" (1 Chronicle 5: 1, 2).

Through the will of God, Judah got the honor to have the Lord, according to the flesh, born of him. That is the meaning of the words, saying: "*from him came a ruler*"; This expression indeed seems to confirm that, not only the kings of the earth come from Judah, but the eternal King Himself, who is without beginning nor end, comes from him.

It also tells us the condition of the tribes beyond (East) of the River Jordan; namely, those of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh; Besides, telling us how they fought, prevailed, and made the children of Hagar (the Naphiseans) flee; it also tells us the reason behind their conquest, it says: "*They cried out to God in the battle. He heeded their prayer, because they put their trust in Him. Then they took away their livestock – fifty thousand of their camels, two hundred and fifty thousand of their sheep, and two thousands of their donkeys – also one hundred thousand of their men; for many fell dead because the war was God's. And they dwelt in their place until the captivity*" (5: 20-22).

(Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus)

A comprehensive look on the two books of the chronicles:

The two books, presenting a comprehensive look that brings us back to the era of creation, and extends to the fifth century B.C.; came to include the following four divisions:

(1) **The first division: A genealogy** (1 Chronicles 1-9), in nine chapters, from Adam to the twelve tribes; and from the twelve tribes to David, chosen by God....

Why does it give chronicles already known by the reader? For it intends to bind David to the first man on earth; and subsequently to prepare the Jews to the time the Gentiles received faith at the coming of the Messiah, the Son of David; And to bind humanity to the Son of David.

These nine chapters may seem boring to the reader; Yet they express a deep view; which is, that building the temple and setting the order of worship in it, go back to the start of humanity; in which the tribes of Judah (David), of Levi (the priesthood), and of Manasseh (where the temple was built), played important roles in setting that prominent event, namely, building the temple; for the incarnate Word of God to come, He who said: *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”* (John 2: 19)

(2) **The second division: King David the founder of the worship in the temple:** (1 Chronicles 10-29). It starts with the death of Saul, and ends with the death of David. It includes some of the works of David. And the parade of events in this division sometimes conform to what came in the two books of Samuel.

This division presents David the godly king who cares for what relate to the Lord, the temple, the priesthood, the religious praises, and the celebration of feasts. David was a king, yet in the service of the Lord Jehovah; For the Lord, alone, was the king of Israel, David was His

steward; and the people of Israel were the house and kingdom of Israel. The throne of David, being the throne of the Lord in Israel; David's mind was only preoccupied with glorifying the Lord. It was not enough for him to think about building the temple, but he set the design, and did not forget even the vessels of service, the lampstands and the lamps (1 Chronicles 28: 11-18). Preparing everything before his death, he was worthy of having the incarnate Word of God come from his seed.

(3) **The third division: King Solomon the temple-builder** (2 Chronicles 1 – 9): Characterized with loyalty and godliness, Solomon was worthy of building a house in the name of God (2 Chronicles 6: 8-9). The author talks profusely about building the temple, while talking only a little about Solomon's political activity. Once Solomon finished the work prepared by his father, he departed in peace, trusting in the words of the Lord: *"I will establish him (Solomon) in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever"* (1 Chronicles 17: 14). Yet, what Solomon has built will not eternally endure; but the King of peace will come to open up the gates of heaven, about which it is said: *"For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple"* (Revelation 21: 22)

(4) **The fourth division: The good and the evil kings of Judah** (2 Chronicles 10-26), from Rehoboam to Zedekiah, telling what came in the book of the kings in more detail. It accompanies the kingdom of Judah from the death of Solomon until the captivation, then to the start of the return to Jerusalem. The huge establishment built by David and Solomon started to collapse once the tribes of the North dissented and rebelled against the house of David (2 Chronicles 10: 19), and the author rarely spoke about them. And when some of the kings of Judah, as well, have gone astray from David's path, the author rebuked them, confirming what David said to his son: *"You will prosper if you take care to fulfill the*

statutes and judgments with which the Lord charged Moses concerning Israel” (1 Chronicles 22: 13), and what the prophet Azariah the son of Oded said to king Asa and his people: “The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you” (2 Chronicles 15: 2).

That warning was realized in case of Rehoboam, Azariah and Josiah, who prospered as long as they were faithful to the Lord; but when they forsook Him, they knew nothing but tribulation and defeat: *“Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah, who were gathered together in Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them: ‘Thus says the Lord: You have forsaken Me, And therefore I have also have left you in the hand of Shishak’” (2 Chronicles 12: 5, 6).*

And to Asa He sent Azariah the son of Oded (2 Chronicles 15: 1-7), and Hanani the seer who said to the king: *“Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the Lord your God; therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand” (2 Chronicles 16: 7).*

And to Jehoshaphat, He sent Jehu the son of Hanani the seer (2 Chronicles 19: 1-3), and Jahaziel the son of Zechariah (2 Chronicles 20: 14-17). And when the Spirit of God dwelt upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest who stood above the people and said to them: *“Thus says God:’ Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He also has forsaken you’; So they conspired against him, and at the commandment of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord” (2 Chronicles 24: 20).*

Those prophets were sent by the Lord, for He had compassion on His people and on His house; Yet the people did not understand; and the kings did not repent; and therefore calamity dwelt upon them.

THE TWO BOOKS OF THE CHRONICLES AND THE JOYFUL KINGDOM

The goal of the Holy Book is to let the believer, with all his mind, heart, senses, and feelings, enjoy the experience of the joyful heavenly kingdom, to set forth with his whole inner being, day after day, by the spirit of hope, amid the tribulations and events of this world.

Here, Ezra, by the divine inspiration, records to us what is befitting and what is not, of those returning from captivity to experience and to live. It is not befitting of them to live depressed because of the past seventy years of captivity. And on another aspect, it is befitting of them not to have their minds closed shut within the limits of the promised land in a literal way; but to see their return from the Babylonian captivity as a setting forth toward the high and free Jerusalem, and a practical fellowship with the heavenly hosts, with the spirit of exultation.

All the divisions of the book came confirming one important essential fact; namely, our need to enjoy the joyful kingdom.

- 1- By parading **the genealogies**, we are called by the Spirit of God to be sure that our names will never be forgotten by God, but will be engraved on His palm and be cherished by Him.
- 2- **The person of David:** is introduced by the first book of the chronicles, to exhort us, through imitating the sweet Psalmist of Israel, to concentrate our sight upon the Source of the true joy – the Son of David, Savior of the world.

- 3- Caring for **the groups of singers of praise** among the Levites, the second book of the chronicles means to confirm the secret of our conquest; namely, the joy and exultation amid our battle against the devil and all his hosts (2 Chronicles 19-21).
- 4- The second book of the chronicles, ending by **the fulfillment of the divine promise concerning the return from captivity** in the previously assigned time, tells us that it is befitting of us to trust and hold fast to the promises of God.
- 5- The main common tune of the two books is disregarding many of the faults and weaknesses of the godly believers; For God does not intend anymore to remember them after our repentance and return to Him.

1- God will no more remember the weaknesses and the sins of the kings of Israel:

In our comparison between the other historical books and the two books of the chronicles, we notice that the other books, while introducing the life of the good kings, whether before or after the division of the kingdom of Israel, revealed as well the most prominent of their weaknesses and sins in some detail; Whereas, speaking about the same personalities, the two books of the chronicles, mostly disregard their weaknesses and sins, as though they did not ever happen. Why?

By speaking openly about some of the weaknesses and sins of very prominent men of faith, like David, Solomon, Hezekiah, and others, the other books intend to confirm to us that no man, however great is his godliness, is without sin. It is therefore befitting of us, in humility, to perceive that as long as we are still in the flesh, we are committed to hold fast to the grace of God, to wrestle with God to keep us safe until our last breath; and not to be slothful, nor to boast of any good deed we might have done. Hence, some fathers of the wilderness say that God, sometimes, allows for us to discover our weaknesses, and to fall, even in our old age, in what we have not fallen during our youth or adolescence.

This weakness is called by some fathers 'the watch dogs' guarding the good holy life in the Lord. If it so happens that a thought of haughtiness comes upon our mind, that we are more godly or righteous than others; in the contrition of heart, perceiving our weaknesses and sins, we should return to God, and cast ourselves into His divine bosoms, with the spirit of hope and joy, and with no pride nor haughtiness.

Concerning the two books of the chronicles, written after the return from captivity, as many have lost hope that the people of Israel will ever return to the early eras of glory, whether in the days of David, of Solomon, or those of Hezekiah, etc. the goal of these two books is to make the whole people, and the believer as a member thereof, perceive that the Son of David is to come as the Lamb of God who carries the sins of the world. Whoever believes in Him, attaches himself to Him, and walks in Him by the spirit, will hear the divine voice saying to him about his sins: "***I shall remember them no more***". What should preoccupy the believer in his daily repentance, should be his trust, hope, and joy in the Lord, the Forgiver of sins, and the Savior of the souls from corruption.

As long as man is still in the body, he should not cease to walk along the way of repentance, being the sign of his attachment to the Forgiver of sins. The apostle Paul says: : "*Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he falls*" (1 Corinthians 1: 12). For the devil will never despair to stir in us the evil will, to receive it instead of the good will of Christ working in us.

The believer, indeed, wrestles between two wills; and is in need of the grace of Christ, lest his will would lean toward evil. He sometimes longs toward the good will; yet in weakness, the evil will would prevail over the good one, and he practices wickedness. St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi, entreating the Savior to save him from the humiliation of the evil will, seeks from Him to show him His compassion by forgiving his sins; as though he says to Him: [By You, O Lord, I

shall conquer; for I am weak, too weak to conquer by myself. I need Your amazing work in me].

+ I seek forgiveness; I need forgiveness; but my will stand in the way!
I ask my will to return from its evil ways; but it rejects my request!
I wish for the good deeds; but I lean toward the evil ones. I hate iniquity,
yet I do it every day!

Two wills are battling in me; one against the other; and it is the evil will
that prevails every day;

By You, O Lord, I shall prevail; for I am too weak to prevail on my own.
Your amazing work is enough to make me prevail!

Have compassion on me, O Lord, For I do not want to perish! By Your
conquest, grant me conquest;

Instead of sins, You, Son of God, came with Your forgiveness; Show it to
Your servant who seeks Your compassion!

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

2- Your name is inscribed on the palm of your Creator:

You, therefore should rejoice; for Your Creator will never forget you. The genealogy that came in the first nine chapters of the first book of the chronicles, should bring joy to our hearts. When no one in the world know me, recognize me, or care for me, my God who created me in His image and according to His likeness, and realized my salvation by His cross, will not forget me. My name is inscribed on His palm, He keeps my name in the book of life; I have a special place in His heart.

I am in need of a compassionate fatherhood; sometimes in **the Father** who opens His bosom up for me, having enjoyed adoption to Him in the water of

baptism; and other times, when I am in need of a friend, I find my **Christ**, not forsaking me even while asleep; “*His left hand under my head, and His right hand embraces me*” (Songs 2: 6). And when I need someone to guide and lead me, I find **the Spirit of God** dwelling in me , grant me the flood of His grace, to become an icon of the Groom of my soul.

It is not befitting of us to feel bored because of the many names that came in those nine chapters; For our God finds pleasure in all our names, particularly of every true believer, His beloved, who has a place in heaven itself.

Just writing down the names, pours in us the spirit of Joy by the Holy Trinity, preoccupied with every single one of us.

These are our feelings while being in the flesh in this world, as long as the Lord Christ sets His kingdom in us, confirming to us: “*The kingdom of God is inside you*” (Luke 17: 21).

- + Although it may be possible to count the number of person, yet every one of them has his own movements, behavior, goals, feelings, and emotions, that are beyond counting. There is only One who can absolutely control all of these; on account of that He is aware of the convenient and befitting work, the convenient time to do it, and the ways of guidance and training; **the Father** of the whole universe!
- + God’s care is for us on a daily basis, on the level of the congregation, as well as on that of the private life; in secret and public; even when we are completely unaware of it.

(The scholar Origen)

3- David, the Psalmist, our role model:

The books of the chronicles cared for the person of David, concerning his preparations for building the temple, setting the systems of ministry and singing praises; the sweet psalmist of Israel (2 Samuel 23: 1); who desired to set a choir to praise the Lord in His temple. He wrote down psalms of joy and exultation, in spite of his sufferings from his childhood till the end of his life. He was an example of an ideal exultant man, who desires for all believers to enjoy a life of praise, not just by the tongue, but by the whole being and all the body members.

+ Being created to praise, Men should do that in abundance!

The sun is luminous, not for its own sake, but to give light to men;
For their sake, there are luminous stars in the stratosphere, through which men enjoy days and nights.

Men have the discernment, knowledge, words and voice, to praise the Most High;

You have got the mouth by which to praise, give thank, exults, and bless;
Praise; for you have the praising word; Exult, for you have the voice full of tunes;

Give thanks, for you have the mind and discernment;
Bless, for you have become an uttering and non-silent vessel;
Having been nothing, and the divine mercies made you something great;
Give, therefore, thanks with amazement; Why keep silent?!

Entering into yourself, and looking at your person within yourself; you will find all wonders of the Creative Might.

+ O Lord, help me to marvel with such unusual senses; And once the mind admires You, You will be described by the mouth you have opened!

The mind praises You for the sake of Your hidden works, too exalted to be perceived by the mind;

The heart praises You by its fast pulse, and the pure thoughts, set like angels to minister;

O Lord, the Conscience, as well, will praise You; for it sees how You are worthy of praise by Your works;

O lord, both the spiritual and the carnal senses praise You; for You are worthy of praise;

The eye praises You, for You have given it the beauty of all creation to enjoy;

The ear praises You, in which all the sweetness of voices are poured, to enjoy;

The two hands with their ten fingers praise You, that move to work on behalf of the whole body;

The legs praise you, that carry the body as a chariot everywhere;

The sense of smell praises You; for You gave it all the fragrances to enjoy;

The mouth praises You, for You gave it the discernment between the sweet and the bitter in all kinds of food;

The mouth parts and the teeth praise you, through which the voice vibrate;;

The tongue praises You; for You gave it the words by which to praise You, on behalf of the whole body;

The mouth is undoubtedly committed to praise on behalf of the other members of the body that are without word;

O Lord, the whole body is committed to praise You, and behold, the mouth is open to praise on behalf of the whole body;

O Lord, help by moving the mouth to praise You, and to fulfill all these things on behalf of all the silent senses.

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

4- Care of the two books of the chronicles for the groups of singers of praise to the Lord:

Do not marvel to see how the two books concentrate on the ministry of singing praise, not only in the house of the Lord, but even in the midst of the battle against the hosts of darkness. When Jehoshaphat confronted oppression from some of the heathen nations, the Lord commanded him, together with his army, to stand still and watch. The battle started by the entrance of groups of praise-singers of the temple; and the conquest was realized without need for the use of weapons.

The weapons of the believer in his battle against the devil are the thanksgiving and praise. ... The kingdom of Christ experienced by the believer is joyful, even in our strife against the devil, the sin, and the love of the world..... We should have the language of praise even during our tribulation.

5- Joyful divine promises amid the chastisements:

The two books of the chronicles came to an end by talking concisely about the work of God through the prophet Jeremiah and Cyrus the Persian king. The former proclaims that the period of chastisement is temporary; And the later proclaimed that God has put in his heart to allow the Jewish captives to return to Jerusalem..

We, therefore, even if we enter under chastisement, Yet God promises us to enjoy the new life, free from the bondage of the devil (the Babylonians), and the return to our Jerusalem.

Let us then, trust in our Merciful, Wise, and Mighty Father, with confidence that He desires for us a holy exultant life.

God's wrath, particularly upon His church or His children, is not for revenge like that of men; and does not come from hatred; For God is whole love, particularly toward those attached to Him.

The following words of St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi reveal the exaltation and sweetness of God's wrath. God calls us to carry His image, and to walk our whole life, unceasingly, until we all reach "*the unity of faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God; to the perfect man; to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4: 13).

God allows for tribulations for they support us by His grace to join the almost heavenly creatures.

+ Gory be to You, O Lord; For You, with all ways wish to gain all those who hear with reason and discernment

By righteousness and grace, You approach us as a Physician, for everyone in need of health;

The Lover of all cares to heal; for He is capable of granting life to all men; He has both wrath and forgiveness; zeal and anger; peace and love;

On one aspect, He gives those who ask Him in abundance; And on another aspect, He refrains from giving a drop of water to others;

His mercies mix with fear; and His wrath with great love;

He threatens and gives joy; He is full of both mercy and wrath;

On one aspect, He invited the robber to enter His paradise; And on

another aspect, He rejected those who did wonders in His name (Matthew 7: 22);

At a time, He received the tears of a harlot (Luke 7: 44); And at another time, He told the daughters of Jerusalem not to weep (Luke 23);

In one situation He gave one denarius to the laborers of the eleventh hour (Matthew 20: 9); And in another He drove the Pharisees out of His kingdom (Matthew 8: 12);

He did not recognize those who cast out demons in His name (Matthew 7: 22); And to the robber He said: “*Today you will be with Me in paradise*” (Luke 23: 43).

He called a tax-collector to follow Him (Matthew 9: 9); While He denied that privilege for another (Mathew 8: 19-20);

All that for the sake of the life of men; In every way, He does not allow for anyone of the Father’s household, to perish.

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES AND KING DAVID

King David and the liturgical worship of the true God:

Of the 65 chapters in the two books of the chronicles, 19 chapters were dedicated to speak about David (1 Chronicles 11-29); and his name was mentioned in the two books more than 220 times. That reveals how much the two books cared for the person of David.

What preoccupied the book as far as David is concerned, was not his conquests over the his adversaries, nor the extension of his kingdom, or his constructions and achievements; but it was amazingly preoccupied with how David motivated Israel to worship God as is befitting; as shown by:

- 1- Out of the 19 chapters concerning king David, we find 11 chapters; namely, more than half; telling about his zeal toward the collective worship (1 Chronicles 13; 15-16; 22-29).
 - a- Bringing the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem
 - b- Organizing the ministry of the priests and the Levites in the temple

- c- Establishing the holy music in the temple
 - d- His commandments and instructions to his son Solomon concerning the temple
- 2- King David confirmed that what he does and what he prepared concerning the temple and organizing the worship, are commanded by the Lord Himself (2 Chronicles 29: 25).
 - 3- He is credited with the use of music in worship (2 Chronicles 29: 27; Nehemiah 12: 26)
 - 4- If the two books of Samuel referred in 77 verses to David's care for the liturgical worship, Here in the two books of the chronicles it came in 323 verses.
 - 5- The two books of the chronicles were not preoccupied with David's battles and conquests, except to refer to them sporadically; Nor with his weaknesses like falling into the sin of adultery with Bathsheba, and murdering her husband; or even with his weaknesses before sitting on the throne. All what preoccupied David's heart and mind has been to set Liturgical people, who practice a holy and disciplined collective worship to the Holy God. All the rest of his life and its events were based on that vital foundation.

On another aspect, if every king refers to the kingdom of God set by the King of kings in our depths; That is why the weaknesses of those kings were not mentioned; because there is no weakness in the work of Christ in us.

The liturgical worship and David's successors:

The two books of the chronicles give a record of the life of David's successors, and an evaluation of their works, based on their commitment to the liturgical worship of the Holy God:

- 1- While the second book of the chronicles do not refer to the huge achievements of Solomon; it dedicates six chapters of nine that concern Solomon, to building the temple and all what concern it.
- 2- The second book of the chronicles, alone, tells us about the Levites of the Northern kingdom who fled to Jerusalem to minister in the temple in the days of king Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 11: 13-17)
- 3- Through the books of the chronicles, we come to know about the liturgical reforms done by king Asa (15: 8-15); the commitment of King Jehoshaphat to send the Levites to the cities of Judah to teach the people (17: 7-9); His prayer in the temple (20: 5-12); And in some detail it tells about the liturgical reforms done by king Hezekiah (29: 12-31); Manasseh (23: 15-17); and Josiah (35: 2-18).
- 4- The book of Chronicles alone condemned king Uzziah for forcing himself upon the priestly ministry in the temple (2 Chronicles 26: 16-22).

In short, we may say that the main concern of the books of the chronicles is the enjoyment of the liturgical worship in the church of God through the work of the Son of David who reigns in it forever. It is as though the two books have referred to that the Lord has put in the heart of Cyrus to build a house for the Lord in Jerusalem, in order that the Jews would return to their country as a preparation for building the church of the new covenant that bears the deposit of the higher Jerusalem; where an almost heavenly spiritual worship is practiced, until she encounters the heavenly Groom, and lives forever in a heavenly liturgy, singing the new song (Revelation 5: 9), which will never get old.

The two books of the chronicles and Psalm 132:

'Reardon' presents to us a magnificent portrait of the relationship between the two books of the chronicles and one of the psalms of ascent (Psalm 132 or 131 LXX), which was sung by those ascending the hill to go up to the temple in Jerusalem, saying: *"Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions...For Your*

servant David's sake, do not turn away the face of Your anointed. The Lord has sworn in truth to David, he will not turn from it: I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body; ... There, I will make the horn of David grow; I will prepare a lamp for My anointed" (Psalm 132)

By that the Psalmist binds between the prosperity of David's household, and the blessings of the house of the Lord. According to the Psalmist, in case the Lord remembers David in truth, His priests will be clothed with salvation, and His godly men will praise with exultation; while the devil will be clothed with shame. This psalm came to be in harmony with the two books of the chronicles, There is nothing in it but David's bond with the liturgical worship.

The people remember David because, unless they do, they will not enjoy encountering God in His house. ... Who is this David, but the Savior of the world, the Messiah Son of David?!

The books of the Chronicles distinguishes between king David and the rest of the kings, the way the ancient Israel was distinguished from the other peoples. We, therefore, through our connection to the Son of David, the King of kings, shall become the distinguished church of Christ, the subject of pleasure of God; the fellows of the heavenlies in their heavenly life; We shall become in truth, *"Members of the household of God"*(Ephesians 2: 19).

Some may wonder why the books of the chronicles have not spoken about the beginning of the liturgical worship, received by the prophet Moses together with his brother the high priest Aaron?

According to some, the two books of the chronicles were satisfied with what came in detail in the books of the Exodus, the Leviticus, and the Numbers. But I believe that the two books of the chronicles have concentrated on king David and his role in this concern; on account of that the people at that time, passing

through a condition of near despair of returning to the kind of life they enjoyed in the days of Moses and Aaron; the divine inspiration intended to confirm that the liturgical life will come back in a spiritual way that surpasses that in the days of Moses and Aaron, bearing a heavenly feature, through the heavenly High Priest, the Son of David, and not through the symbol as it was the case in the Levite priesthood.

According to 'Reardon': [In the program of the Orthodox worship, we perceive the historical view of the author of the books of the chronicles]. He who meditates in the two books of the chronicles has in his mind a true and deep perception of the understanding of history; the liturgical worship set upon the covenant between God and His people. This is the essence of the history concerning the people of God and their salvation.

By the same spirit, Ben-Sirach says: "*Let us now sing the praises of famous men, our ancestors in their generations*" (Sirach 44: 1); and records for us the written history of Enoch, David, Abraham, Elijah, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Josiah, Jeremiah, Zerubbabel, and Nehemiah, and what those great men have accomplished, up till chapter 49; then in chapter 50 he spoke about the greatness and the beauty of the liturgy of the temple under the leadership of 'Simon the son of Onias' the high priest, together with the sons of Aaron while prostrating themselves to the ground praising God, and with them all those true worshippers; saying:

"Then the sons of Aaron shouted; they blew their trumpets of hammered metal; they sounded a mighty fanfare, as a reminder before the Most High".

Then all the people together quickly fell to the ground on their faces to worship their Lord, the Almighty, God the Most High.

Then the singers praised Him with their voices, in sweet and full-toned melody.

And the people of the Lord Most High offered their prayers before the merciful One, until they end the order of worship of the Lord,, and complete their rituals.

Then Simon came down and raised his hands over the whole congregation of Israelites, to pronounce the blessing of the Lord with his lips, and to glory in His name.

And they bowed down in worship a second time, to receive the blessing of the Most High.

And now bless the God of all, who everywhere works great wonders, who fosters our growth from birth, and deals with us according to His mercy.

May He give us the gladness of heart, and may there be peace in our days in Israel, as in the days of old.

By that, Ben-Sirach binds history to the liturgical worship, in conformity and likeness to the two books of the chronicles.

Why do the two books of the chronicles bind history to the liturgical worship?

We are bound to history that takes us back to the first man 'Adam', then brings us through the generations, for nothing but because we see our Lord Jesus Christ, the Almighty, raises us through history up to beyond history, through the life of true worship.

Speaking about the men of faith along the history, the apostle Paul says: *"For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, ... But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven"* (Hebrew 12: 18-22).

All the true and faithful men of faith when worshipping the Lord, they are bound to the heavenly worship; and as it came in the book of Revelation: *"Then another angel having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar, And he was given*

much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thundering, lightening, and an earthquake” (Revelation 8: 3-5).

Between the persons of Saul and David:

The book referred to the person of ‘Saul’ as the first king of Israel; who started successfully and with the spirit of humility; But, having got exalted conquests, he fell into pride; envied the successful, godly, and brave young man ‘David’, and intended to get rid of him at any price, even at the expense of the whole nation; to become a serious example of what the believer should not be, particularly he who is in the position of leadership.

David, on the other hand, seemingly young with the spirit of godliness, although having, himself, serious faults, that might seem more serious than those in which Saul fell, yet the difference between the two persons were:

- 1- While Saul’s center of thoughts has been his temporal success, his conquest over his enemies, gathering around himself mighty men of valor, to gain popularity for himself; David’s center of thoughts, on the other hand, was God Himself as the Leader of his life, and of the whole people. He was only preoccupied with being in the presence of God, praising, glorifying, and giving Him thanks, day and night.
- 2- While with every fall into sin or fault, all what preoccupied Saul’s mind was to cover up his shortcomings before the people, lest he would lose his popularity; the treatment of the fault was therefore more serious and worse than the fault itself; David on the other hand, with every fault he did, he used every night to flood his bed with his tears. And his response to

every chastisement was “*May the Lord do whatever is right in His eyes*”, That is why, despite the seriousness of his sins, he and never surrendered to despair. He was the ideal saint, not on account of that he did no sin, but on that with every sin he commits, he experienced the mercy of the Lord even in His chastisements however harsh they might seem.

- 3- While Saul sought mighty men of valor, not to the account of the glory of God and the kingdom of heaven, but to his own account. David, on the other hand, as God was the goal of his whole life, he drew to himself the mighty men of valor, even those of the kinsmen of Saul, his tribe, or his men; who readily and through their own free will forsook Saul and joined David.
- 4- While Worship for Saul was mere formalities, to do, even forcing himself on priesthood; For David, on the other hand, even in his battles and his relationship with other nations, he was only preoccupied with the dwelling of God among His people.
- 5- While Saul’s heart, not preoccupied with the unity of Israel, there was nothing that would keep him from dedicating all his energies and those of the military leaders, to kill David and those around him. David, on the other hand, never stretched his hand to harm Saul and his sons. And with the spirit of love and unity, he gathered together all Israel, not around himself, but around God working in him.
- 6- In his last days, David did not talk about his conquests and his heroic works, but he exhorted the leaders and the people to contribute to building the house of the Lord, which the Lord, not allowing him to build, promised him that it will be realized by the hands of his son Solomon. Such a spirit was never found in Saul’s mind, heart, or plans.

Was the first book of the chronicles written to defend David?

Together with the care of the two books of the chronicles for king David and his royal descendants; as though that was the main subject of the two books, Yet they were not intended to defend David's royal throne; but to introduce David the king, on the aspect of worship more than that that of royalty. It is as though David's main role has been the ministry to the temple which he desired to build himself, more than his service to the royal household. The care of the two books of the chronicles for David and his seed was, therefore, a care for the sanctification of the people of God, as His worshippers.

Why did God allow for the dissention of the kingdom and for the captivation of the people?

Some wonder:

- 1- Why did God allow for the dissension of the kingdom into two kingdoms: Northern and Southern; And why did David's throne lose 10 tribes?
- 2- Why Does God, sometimes, allow for some of the evil kings to have a long life, and consequently an extended reign?
- 3- Why did God allow Assyria to captivate the Northern Kingdom, and Babylon to captivate the Southern kingdom?
- 4- Why did God allow for the desolation of the temple of Solomon and His city Jerusalem?

To such wanders and the likes, that come into the minds of many, the books of the chronicles answer in an indirect way; saying:

- a- God, not intending to move humanity as pieces of chess, but giving man the great divine gift of the freedom of will, He does not commit the wicked to walk according of what is befitting of them as God's creation.

- b- With the corruption of the people, God allowed for the dissension, to let the two kingdom taste the bitterness of evil, dissension, and hatred, in the hope that they would eventually return to Him.
- c- Amid that dissension, evil prevailed upon the Northern kingdom during the reign of all its kings, as it also did, sometimes, in the Southern kingdom. Yet there was for God, a holy few who chose to be attached to Him. So we hear about the Levites and the priests who fled from among the tribes of the Northern kingdom, to Jerusalem, together with godly men of some tribes, to the kingdom of Judah. At the same time, as His grace would never cease to work for those who seek it and respond to it, the prophet said to king Asa: *“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him”* (2 Chronicles 16: 9). And another prophet said to Jehoshaphat: *“Good things are found in you, in that you have removed the wooden images from the land, and have prepared your heart to seek God”* (2 Chronicles 19: 3); And about the good kings of Judah, it was said that *“they did what was right in the sight of the Lord”* (2 Chronicles 29: 2; 34: 2).
- d- If the mutual fault of Jeroboam and Rehoboam has led to the dissension of the kingdom, and for the people to walk in evil, The two kingdoms ended up into captivity; Neither one of them would boast on the other; for both have lost their identity, to come to be one kingdom, together with the Gentiles, by the coming of the Son of David, who set all free of corruption.
- e- God did not forsake the two kingdom without care, as He, in all eras, set prophets to proclaim repentance and the return to Him.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES

DAVID, A KING, AND A MAN OF WORSHIP

The first book of the chronicles among the divine books:

The Holy Book started by the book of **Genesis**, where we see God Himself preoccupied with the creation of man, not by saying a word, as He did when He created the light, saying: “Let there be light, and there was light” (Genesis 1: 3)), But He prepared the whole universe for His beloved king and queen to come; namely, for Adam and Eve, to live in the garden of Eden, planted by the Lord (Genesis 2: 8).

Man fell and collapsed; Yet God’s love for him did not. Preparing salvation for him, God set of his seed a people He called “the people of God”, that enjoyed freedom from servitude, as it came in the book of **Exodus**.

Intending for His people to be holy as He is Holy, God presented the way of holiness through the sacrifice, the priest, and the commandment, as shown in the book of **Leviticus**.

He made the life of humanity in this world a journey in the wilderness “the book of **Numbers**”; yet an enjoyable one, on account of that it was in the company of the Lord Himself and under His care, despite the arrogance and continuous grumbling of His people.

At the entrance of the promised land, a symbol of the heavenly Canaan, the prophet Moses proclaims God's longing for humanity to be in friendship with their Savior "The book of **Deuteronomy**".

With Joshua, the symbol of Jesus Christ, humanity enjoys, not the promised land, but the eternal inheritance "The book of **Joshua**".

But the people of God, in their weakness, resisting and rebelling, to fall every now and then under chastisement; to be humiliated by violent heathen nations, oppressive of the divine Truth; God sends to them judges to save them from their adversaries "The book of **Judges**".

Amid such atmosphere of corruption there were holy examples commended by God, like Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi; (the **Book of Ruth**), worthy of having the Word of God come incarnate from her offspring.

The people of God, intending to out- run the time, insisted on having a king like the other nations, in whose greatness, riches, and beauty, to boast; even if he is violent, and abusive of his people like Saul (The **first book of Samuel**).

Not to forsake His people under the cruelty of a violent king, God sent to them a king according to His own heart (David) – (The **second book of Samuel**).

Then came Solomon the son of that righteous king, to seek the wisdom from God; but, unfortunately, not persisting on walking in it, he surrendered to his evil desires, and fell into marrying heathen women who drew him to idol-worship. The fruit of his behavior was the dissension of the kingdom, and the collapse of the two kingdoms (Israel and Judah) (The **first and second books of the chronicles**).

Now, as the people were allowed by God to return from captivity; and Ezra the scribe and priest led the second batch of them back to Jerusalem, he wrote for us the two books of the chronicles.

The goal of the first book of the chronicles:

This book came to bring us back to our first father Adam, then to set forth with us along the generations, to present to us the genealogy, not as a concise parade of history since the creation of Adam, but to provide us with the following facts:

1- God will never forget the believers:

Man may feel bored by reading the names of persons most of whom he knows nothing about. History may forget men, and may only recall their names, and not even all of them; Nevertheless God will forget none of them, but will write down the names of His believers who partake of His heavenly glories. They are inscribed on God's palm, recorded in His book, and kept in His heart. How much will be our happiness when we encounter on the clouds billions of billions from every nation, tongue, and race, all bearing the reflection of the splendor of the Lord, not to have their faces become radiant like that of the prophet Moses (Exodus 34: 29), but to become ourselves light; to see one another the icon of Christ, the Savior of mankind. Each of us would represent beauty that could not be separated from the beauty of the church of Christ, gathered together from Adam to the end of time.

Writing down this genealogy in the divine book, calls us to enjoy the divine grace, and to persist with the spirit, to have a place in the heavenly church.

Following up the royal genealogy, the author rebuked king Saul on his hatred even against David who saved him and his people from the mighty

Goliath. He disregarded the northern kingdom for their dissent from the kingdom of David and his descendants, to proclaim that the persistence upon arrogance, oppression against God, and rejection of the divine commandment, would deny man of the eternal inheritance.

Not giving a record of the whole history. the book did not mention David's weaknesses; for they were forgiven through repentance, and there is no more mention of them in eternity.

Recording these names represent a call to give thanks to God on His works in the past with our godly ancestors, who delivered to us the deposit of faith, to experience God's dealings, grace, and gifts, and to walk with faithfulness in order to deliver it to the generations to come.

2- It makes the believer recognize his true position in life:

This book presents to us a magnificent portrait of the life of the believer, being a man of God, of authority, and of a fellowship with the King of kings. The book concentrated on the person of David, successful in every thing, for God was with him.

This book calls us to recognize our true position, being the privileged creation, that bears the image and the likeness of God; It calls us to practice our authority given to us by Him who loves us more than any other creation; and to recognize our position and place in the bosom of the Father.

The main personalities in the book:

1- David, the king

We may say that the book cared to show the person of David and victories. Its key came to be: "*David perceived that the Lord had established him as king over Israel, for his kingdom was highly exalted because of His people Israel*" (1 chronicles 14: 2).

It is as though the goal of our whole history is setting the heavenly church of Christ, not just being one nation, but "*the household of God*" (Ephesians 2: 19), that embraces members of all peoples, nations, and tongues; not under the care of David the king, but in the bosom of the Son of David, the heavenly Groom, the King of kings and the Lord of lords (Revelation 17: 14; 19: 16).

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful" (2 Timothy 2: 13); and His divine promise will be realized when his divine glory is transfigured upon His beautiful church, the object of admiration of the heavenlies.

If sin cause dissension of the kingdom, God allowed for the captivation to bring the people back as one nation. Setting forth from this world, In eternity, we shall encounter all as one nation, and an undivided eternal kingdom, where all will enjoy the one Christ, our eternal Head.

2- Solomon the sage:

David longed to build a temple for the Lord; but denying him his wish, God granted him to contribute to the preparation of the building of the temple, the organization of the priests, the Levites, and the system of worship; so that his son Solomon would build the temple. God seeks from us to work with His grace as much as we could, and to rejoice that the work will be consummated by our brethren or children.

The tabernacle of meeting was set in the midst of the camp, to proclaim the dwelling of God among His people. The temple, was built as the center of the

true worship; particularly in celebrating the daily worship (the morning and the evening services); the weekly feasts (the Sabbaths); the monthly, the annual, the Sabbath of Sabbaths (every seven years), and the Jubilee (every 50 years). It is as though the temple represents the throne of God who grants the blessed and joyful life, on the daily, weekly, monthly, annual, and Jubilee level. It is an invitation to enjoy the deposit of the exultant heaven.

3- The priests and the Levites:

The book cared to record the appointment of the priests and the Levites to lead the people in worshipping the true God, according to the system set by God. Then the Word of God came incarnate to offer Himself a Sacrifice for the sake of the whole world, and to be a High Priest on a heavenly level, to intercede for us by His blood before the Father.

4- Hiram, king of Tyre:

The two books of the chronicles refer to the care, not just to open the door of faith before the Gentiles, but to exhort them to preach and to work to the account of the kingdom of God. The two books referred to the fact that the house of God is open before all mankind.

The first book of the chronicles ended by the death of David "*in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor*" (1 Chronicles 29: 28); preoccupied, even in his last moments, with nothing else but the preparation for building the temple, and the worship of God in it. The location of the building was chosen, beside its contents, the system of worship in it; and gathering together all its material requirements. The main task of David was to see the people of God enjoy a worship that bears the shadow of the heavenlies, and to walk according to the divine law.

Then the second book of the chronicles starts by talking about Solomon the sage, who seemed as though had no other preoccupation than realizing the heart-desire of his father. We see him open the door before 'Hiram' king of Tyre to contribute practically to the building; to confirm that the door of faith is open before the Gentiles, with the incarnation of the Head of the household, the Word of God; Then the queen of Sheba came to hear and to marvel at the wisdom of Solomon; as a symbol of the church of the Gentiles in the new covenant.

- + The way Solomon sought from Hiram, king of tyre, to cut the wood and stones from Lebanon, to float them in rafts by sea, to the site of the building; The Lord Christ, after receiving the Jews (the wood), and the Gentiles (the stones) from the forests of non-belief, sends them over to the site of the builders of the temple, not to be built by human hands.

(St. (Mar) Ephraim the Syrian)

The main locations in the book:

After providing us with the genealogies from the beginning of the creation of man, up to the return from captivity (1 Chronicles 1-9); recording the death of Saul, who denied himself and his descendants the throne of Israel; and starting to record the era of David and his descendants, as a symbol of the royal kingdom, the first book of the chronicles cared to mention the locations bound to the life of king David:

- 1- Hebron:** Where David was anointed by the hand of the prophet Samuel according to a divine command (1 Samuel 16: 13). But he did not start his reign until the leaders of Israel proclaimed him a king in Hebron (1 Chronicles 11: 1-3).

- 2- Jerusalem:** David took over Jerusalem and made it the capital of his kingdom (1 Chronicles 11: 4- 12; 20); It became “the city of David” (2 Samuel 5: 9); was even called “the city of God”; And heaven was counted as “*Jerusalem above, which is the mother of us all*” (Galatians 4: 26).
- 3- Kirjath Jearim:** After the Philistines captured the ark of God in war, they brought it over to Kirjath Jearim (1 Samuel 4-6). When David failed to move it to Jerusalem, because the way he moved it was not according to the commands of God, he left it in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite, until he came to know the sound way to move it (1 Chronicles 13: 1-14).
- 4- Tyre:** Hiram, king of Tyre sent laborers and building materials to build the house of David.
- 5- Baal Peracim:** When the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over all Israel, they went up to attack him, in retaliation for killing one of their mighty men (Goliath) in the days of Saul (1 Samuel 17). On their way to Jerusalem, David defeated them in Baal Peracim twice; “*his fame went out into all lands, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations*” (1 Chronicles 14: 11-17).

After that battle, David moved the ark of God to Jerusalem with a great celebration (1 Chronicles 15: 1 – 17: 17). Then he spent the rest of his days preparing for building the temple and organizing the worship of God.

The two books of the chronicles reveal the steadfastness and the goal of God’s planning. Even when it so seem that desolation has prevailed on all, He grants us rest in the Lord and comfort along all eras. God’s plan for the (catholic) church, as well as for every believer will never fail as long as we believe in Him, and trust in His work in us.

If it so seem that the first book of the chronicles is a repetition of what came in the first and the second books of Samuel; And it so seem that the second book of the chronicles is a repetition of what came in the first and the second books of

the kings; Yet the two books of the chronicles present a new and deep portrait of what came in the books of Samuel and the kings. What came here represents the spiritual aspect of the events; while what came in Samuel and the kings represent their historical aspect.

Yet the two books of the chronicles disregarded the painful episodes concerning Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah, and the perversion of Solomon.

The divisions of the book:

(1) The genealogies (1 Chronicles, Chapters 1 to 9):

- a- From Adam to Abraham (the fathers Patriarchs) 1: 1-27
- b- From Abraham to Israel 1: 28-45
- c- The descendents of Israel:
 - 1- Judah 2: 1-4: 23
 - 2- Simeon 4: 24-43
 - 3- Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh 5
 - 4- Levi 6
 - 5- Issachar 7: 6-12
 - 6- Benjamin 7: 6-12
 - 7- Naphtali 7: 13
 - 8- Manasseh 7: 14-19
 - 9- Ephraim 7: 20-29
 - 10- Asher 7: 30-40
 - 11- Benjamin 8
- d- Those returning from captivity: 9: 1 – 34
- e- Genealogies of Saul 9: 35 – 44

(2) The death of Saul (Chapter 10)

(3) King David (Chapter 11-29)

a- David's army and followers	11 – 12
b- Moving the ark of God to Jerusalem	13 –16
c- David's desire to build the temple	17
d- The conquests of David	18 – 20
e- The census of the people and the plague	21
f- The preparation for building the temple	22 – 26
g- The leaders of the army and the government	27
h- Delivering the task to Solomon	28
i- The celebration of offerings	29

**AN INSPIRATION FROM THE FIRST AND THE SECOND BOOKS
OF THE CHRONICLES**

SET YOUR JOYFUL KINGDOM IN ME, O SON OF DAVID

- + How amazing is Your love and care for me, O my Savior.
Whenever I meditate in Your book, I become amazed by Your care for me;
Before creating us we were on Your mind, and in Your heart;
What language can express Your plan for me?

- + Your incarnation was in Your ordinance the day you created Adam and
Eve;
You brought them into the Garden of Eden; while setting for us the
paradise of joy;
Billions of billions of people died and were forgotten;
But You forget none of them all along the generations;
The names of those who believed are inscribed on Your palms;
And recorded in the book of life;

And have a special place in Your bosoms.

- + History quickly passes on us;
Let us stand for some moments before David Your servant;
You testified to the purity of his heart and his attachment to You;
Despite his serious and painful weaknesses;
Yet, Your grace granted him tears by which to wet his bed every night;
You incarnated from St. Mary, daughter of David;
And You sat on Your throne in the hearts of believers.

- + Solomon built a house for You;
And You granted him repentance after he perverted from Your way;
He became a man of faith, received by You;
Set out of me a temple for You, not made by human hand;
Reign in me, O Lord of Solomon.

- + Carry me, O heavenly High Priest on Your hands;
To bring me forth to the bosoms of Your Father;
My whole inner being, move together with my senses;
To Partake of Your praise by the heavenly choir;
You make me a king, O King of kings, and Lord of lords.

- + You grant me the authority to trample on scorpions and serpents, and on
all the hosts of darkness;
By You I challenge the devil with all his hosts, and his evil works;
By You I challenge the sin; For Your compassion is greater than my sin
By You I challenge every tribulation and bitterness.

- + Grant me fountains of tears, the way You did to the sinful woman;
Grant me that treasure, to draw from it, and present from to You.

You grant me tears which I offer to You together with a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise.

+ In the temple of Solomon, You set priests and Levites;
To offer animal sacrifices and offerings of thanksgiving and praise;
Let Your Holy Spirit sanctify my whole being;
To make it a holy temple, and a new Golgotha;
Through the dwelling of Your rightness in me, I will be sanctified by You, O Holy One;

I find pleasure in Your commandments and Your statutes, and enjoy the sweet taste of Your word

+ Take away from me every perversion, right and left;
To walk by, and in You, and to set forth toward You;
I find pleasure in Your divine promises, in the midst of Your chastisements on me;
And my soul exults by the works of Your love for all mankind.

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THE FIRST DIVISION

THE GENEALOGIES

(1CHRONICLES – CHAPTERS 1 to 9)

A note by the author: Because some may feel bored by going through the genealogies in some detail; I advise to read the prayer at the end of each chapter of this division; Then to refer to the special commentaries on the verses when studying them. And I hope to publish a concise interpretation of this book on a popular level.

THE GENEALOGIES AND THE KINGDOM OF DAVID:

The genealogies were of utmost importance before the Assyrian captivity of the kingdom of Israel, and the Babylonian captivity of the kingdom of Judah; in order to keep the distinction and rights of the tribes. After the captivity, it also had its importance to keep the distinction of the royal tribe (Judah), and the priestly tribe (Levi).

These chapters include the widest and most comprehensive genealogies in the Holy Book, by which we can follow up David's family tree. Starting the book by the genealogy indicates that following genealogies has been common at the time.

We notice here that, after the dissension of the kingdom, the genealogies disregarded the Northern kingdom, and only cared for the Southern kingdom, particularly with the genealogy of king David. It reveals God's care for choosing His own people, and for keeping them from the beginning of the

history of man, up to the period following the Babylonian captivity. The genealogies proceed from the creation of man down to the Patriarchs (Abraham to Jacob); then to the national era (Judah, Levi, and the other tribes of Israel 2: 3; 9: 44); revealing the care of God to keep His promise to the household of David along the generations; The point of view of priesthood in the book of chronicles is apparent in its special care for the tribe of Levi.

From the Christian point of view, It is obvious that the author of the book was inspired to parade the history of David's household, as a principal part of the holy history; starting from the first Adam, up to the second Adam, our Savior Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15: 45). And as the genealogies before Abraham include the three early families of man (the sons of Noah: Sam, Ham, and Japheth), the author confirms that God the Creator *"has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation"* (Acts 17: 26).

In a quick look at these genealogies, it may seem as mere gathering together from all the past genealogies that came in the Holy Book; beside the records kept by the Jewish nation. But with a more elaborate study, one will perceive that they are written with a clear goal, and pre-appointed ordinance; Namely, to set a strong foundation for the rise of the kingdom of David and Solomon, and of worship in the temple; which was organized by both kings, with the goal of being attached to the Son of David, the King and heavenly High Priest.

In those genealogies we clearly see the rise of David in Israel, against a huge background of Israel as a nation (1 Chronicles 1), and the twelve tribes, among which the royal tribe of Judah dominates, as a leading tribe with a prominent role (1 Chronicles 2 – 8). As to the importance of the temple and the system of worship in it, they occupy a principal place, that cared for the genealogies of the Levites in some detail (1 Chronicles 1-9).

The genealogies came to bind the past since the creation of Adam, to the present (at that time); Namely, the condition of worship before the captivity to that after the return from it.

WHY DO WE NEED SUCH EXTENSIVE GENEALOGIES THAT OCCUPY NINE CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK?

For a long time, I used to avoid reading these nine chapters concerning the genealogies, on account of that they include many names of which I know nothing, and are even difficult to pronounce, being no more familiar today. Why then does the Holy Book care to record them? In what way will they preoccupy me? Will they be of any benefit to me? Does parading them touch my salvation and my spiritual edification? ... According to Peter H. David; Walter C. Kaiser Jr.: [For the first moment, mentioning these genealogies may look as being of no use, if not boring. Why are they given such a great area if they have no apparent spiritual benefit for the generations to come?].

1- The first book of the chronicles starts by nine chapters of genealogies, that may probably benefit someone of direct interest, to locate a certain relative in the list; But, as far as our salvation is concerned, with the same

attitude, we should go through those genealogies, being connected to our great human family; For our earth was blessed by Adam, Eve, Shem, and Abraham. Namely, those genealogies concern a great family which we cherish.

2- With the coming of the promise of the inheritance of the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants, it was imperative to make a record of his descendants to confirm their right in the promised land. To them, others

were added who came to be counted as members of the people of God, through their acceptance of the true faith, their cherishment of rejecting paganism with all its abominations, and their zeal to be bound to God; Hence they were included in the genealogies.

3- Those genealogies make clear that there was a prior divine ordinance in the mutual general history of the people of Israel, whether of the Northern or the Southern kingdoms; the rich and the poor; that theirs is the true God

who guided His people, and kept them to realize their salvation.

4- Having reached the promised land, and enjoyed conquest over many Canaanite nations; Every tribe of the people of God had to know its members, for all to know their portion, and to keep it along the generation. But by

the coming of the Lord Christ, *“the land and all its fullness became for the Lord and His Christ”* (Psalm 24: 1-2); and every believer, whatever his citizenship may be, feeling that he enjoys the sonhood to God, will not hold

fast to a designate border or a spot of land in the literal sense.

5- This genealogy reveals God’s care for mankind, whether on the personal, family, tribe, church congregation, or humanity level. God wishes for every man to perceive that God cherishes him personally, knows him by name,

cares for his family, and for everything that concern him. Yet, indeed, the Holy Book confirms that it is difficult for man to perceive the extent of God’s care for him; which will be more clearly proclaimed on the day we

encounter our Christ on the clouds.

6- These genealogies that go back to Adam, provokes us not to isolate ourselves, neither from the near or the far past.

7- This genealogies constitute persons who lived on this earth, then were forgotten by the time, and their names were buried in ancient records One day, our names will also be buried in similar records and be forgotten.

Whereas he, who enjoys the new spiritual birth, As a son of God by baptism, he has got the grace of adoption (John 3: 3-6); and has got a place in God’s heart and plan; And as a son of God, his name is inscribed on His

divine palm; is recorded in the book of life, that even death cannot wipe out. *“The world is passing away, and the lust of it, but he who does the will of God abides forever”* (1 John 2: 17).

In His love for humanity, God is not only preoccupied with recording the names of billions of men in the book of life, but He even inscribes every name on His palm; personally knows him; grants

him a personality unique from all others; and keeps for him a specific mission in life. Everyone gets attached to God perceives that he is unique, and an object of God's personal care. While meditating in such amazing love of God, St. Augustine wonders, as though he is the only one on earth, and if God loves anyone as He loves him. That is the kind of feeling oby him who experience the adoption by God, and counts himself the unique cherished son, who preoccupies the mind of God.

8- The genealogies provoke us to renew our trust in God, our relationship with Him, and our anticipation of encountering Him eternally.

9- This genealogies represent Abraham's family tree, then that of Israel and Judah, and finally of David; for our souls to make sure that our Lord Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of David, who reigns on the hearts. As

to the genealogies going back to Adam, it is to confirm that the kingdom of God is set in man, whatever his race is, being a son of Adam.

10- Genealogies are important to set the lineage of the tribe of Levi concerning the priesthood, and the Levites as ministers of the temple; until the heavenly High Priest comes.

11- Those genealogies had their importance for those who returned from captivity; and those born in captivity, or carried there as little kids, who know nothing about the promised land, the city of Jerusalem, the temple of the

Lord, the offering of sacrifices, singing praise, and celebrating feasts. Having returned according to the divine promise, they need to live in faith, and to experience the fellowship with God. If the Babylonian captivity

passed on them like a great flood that wiped the past away, and brought on men some kind of confusion, these genealogies came to call on us to cast a quick look at the past, to consummate the walk, and to enjoy the

holy life lived by good fathers.

12- These genealogies help anyone to search for his origin, to perceive that, as a descendant of Abraham, he has a portion in the divine promises that were offered to Abraham for the sake of his descendants.

13- These genealogies has their specific importance for the Jews, to anticipate the coming of the Messiah the Son of David, the Son of Judah, the Son of Abraham, the Son of Adam. And they have their importance, as well,

for us Christians; confirming that Jesus Christ is a descendant of David the son of Abraham, the One promised to the people of God as the Savior of the world; in whom the prophecies were fulfilled.

14- Going through these chapters, we encounter people along the generations, through whom we would get lessons for the edification of our souls, and would learn from some of them how they came to be great in the sight of

God, and the sight of the heavenly creatures, through the purity of their hearts, and their faithfulness in the few that was within their hands, and now that we have more talents within ours; ... Some of whom have fallen to depths, but with the grace of God, they rose up again, grew, and became righteous.

We encounter 'Jabez' who, even his name refers to being sorrowful and suffering; yet he overcame his name, and "*became the most honorable of his family*".(4: 9)

We encounter Abraham whose name was changed to become Ibrahim, father of a multitude of nations

We encounter Reuben who, by his sin lost the privileges as the firstborn..

We encounter Joseph who rejected the sin, to be honored by God.

We encounter women who surpassed many men in righteousness..

15- The author, quoting long parts from Genesis 10, kept from the genealogies coming down from the first man, only Abraham the Semite, then his sons Isaac and Jacob.

16- Disregarding the details of the events of human history of the period prior to king David; the two books confirm that that period, in spite of its importance, longevity, and the multitude of its events, has been not more than a

preparation for the covenant set by God with His people, through the first true king set by God Himself, and not according to men. There were indeed other covenants between God and certain believers like Noah,

Abraham, and even Moses; but they were not to be compared to the eternal covenant with king David.

This explains to us the secret behind the disregard by the two books of the chronicles of the dissented Northern kingdom, despite its inclusion of ten tribes of the twelve, on account of that it was set to oppress the divine covenant with the house of David.

17- The form of the genealogies in general reveals the plan of God and His work with us, whether on the level of the church as a congregation, or the people of God or the believer as a member. **The genealogies pass**

through three stages:

The first stage: The choice: God chose Adam, and created him according to His image; chose Abraham to become a father of a multitude of nations; and chose the people to become a leaven to sanctify the world by the Messiah the Son of David. Every believer, therefore exults to hear the Lord Christ, say: "*You did not choose Me, but I chose you*" (John 15: 16); and to hear the apostle say: "*He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*" (Ephesians 1: 4).

+ By saying: "*He chose us in Him*"? He means that that happened by faith in Him; namely in Christ, who ordained that for us by a plan before we were born, and even before the foundation of the world. How beautiful is this word "foundation", as though the world has fallen down from a very huge altitude. Yes, the exaltation of God is extensively high in a way beyond description – not location-wise, but concerning the possibility of nature to talk about.

The second stage: The continuity: If God is the beginning, having chosen us, His work would not stop at choosing us; but our Christ, the Way along whom we set forth from the start until the finish with security.

The third stage: The reform: In **the continuity** we are exposed to faults and weaknesses; the way Israel and Judah were. God, in His longsuffering endured them, But through their persistence on doing wrong, they were corrupted and have fallen into captivity. However, God did not forsake them but brought them back from captivity, to become a people prepared for the kingdom of Christ the King of kings.

These **three stages** are the broad lines of the life of man from Adam till the return from captivity. It is as though the genealogies open before us the door of hope, whether at the start of the way, in its middle, or even close to its end.

18- If the genealogies disregarded the Northern kingdom, on account of that it set a kind of worship according to the human thought (mixing between paganism and the worship of God); and not according to the divine law; Yet, the return of the godly men among them to the Southern kingdom, and the joining together of all of them in their return from captivity, confirm that the Southern kingdom has not set a wall to exclude the other tribes; but by the wall it sets a holy building, with the hope that all the tribes would eventually come within the circle of the godly life, and the obedience of the law. The genealogies, therefore, would provoke us to have the width of heart and of love, even toward the non-believers; so that humanity would find its happiness in the gospel of Christ, and the enjoyment of the work of the Holy Trinity in it.

As the thought of the kingdom of Judah did not stop at the return to Jerusalem within the limits of the land of Judah, but went far beyond it, It is, as well, befitting of the believer to desire for the

whole earth to be for the Lord and His Christ; and to pray and work with the spirit of love and meekness for the sake of humanity.

- + See! It may be said that we love one another, when one of us has two friends; and another has three friends. Yet this is not love for God's sake, but for the sake of the beloved ones. The love for the sake of God is for man to love all men; to love those who have his faith, being true brethren; and to love even the heretics, the pagans, and the Jews, being brethren by nature, feeling sorry for them, weeping and laboring hard for their sake.

By that we would be in the likeness of God, if we love all men, even our enemies.

We marvel how God shows love for man, and is longsuffering toward him. If that make us admire God, How much more would we admire those who love all?

- + As the true love is to love all, In case you know that you hate even one man, You are committed to hasten to vomit that bitter morsel of food, to be prepared to receive the sweetness of the Love Himself.

19- These genealogies came to correct certain faulty concepts of some, concerning the origin of peoples and nations. For the 'Arcadians' believed that they existed before the moon; The people of 'Thessaly' believed that

they were created from stones; And the Athenians believed that they grew from the earth.

Problems concerning the genealogies:

1- It is befitting of us while meditating in the genealogies, to discern between the genealogies according to the flesh or nature, and those according to the Spirit or the divine grace. The family tree according to the flesh

reaches back to the fallen Adam; Whereas that according to the Spirit, brings me up to my Savior -- the second Adam. It is to be noticed that what preoccupies the book is to deal with the plan of God, and to reveal the grace of God working in the life of those who have the desire to be attached to Him. The genealogies, therefore, follow first the line of man according to the flesh, as

corruption has crawled through the human blood; but God's grace intervenes so that the believer would be bound to God's thought and counsel. Man gives birth to man according to his image after his falling, but God intervenes with His mercy to help man to rise. The apostle says: "*The spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual*" (1 Corinthians 15: 46). The spiritual does not come from the nature of the first Adam, but it is a gift from the second Adam, a gift enjoyed by men of faith in the old covenant through the symbol and shadow. But, with the coming of the second Adam, we are granted to enjoy His righteousness.

That is why we do not talk about the genealogies as like the records kept by the Jews to confirm man's belonging to his tribe, to Abraham, the father of believers, and finally to Adam; But they motivate us to get in touch with the work of the second Adam in us, to work according to our membership in His body.

2- In the genealogies within our hands, when it is said that someone is the son of this or that; that does not always mean that he is his directly a son according to the flesh; but it may mean one of the following:

a- He may be named after his father according to the flesh or according to nature, being his son, of his blood.

b- He may be named after his grandfather or after his great grandfather, if he was the one who raised him, or had an active influence on his personality more than his parents.

c- He may be named after the head of the tribe, particularly if he is revered by the society. In many Western societies. Like in the U.S.A., man is called by the family name -- his last name.

d- He may sometimes be named after someone who died with no offspring; and the widow got married to a kinsman-redeemer or to the nearest of kin; And according to the Mosaic law, the child born is counted as a son,

not to his biological father, but to the dead man; in order to inherit what belong to the dead, and that the house of the dead would not be closed.

e- sometimes even the name of the grandfather or the family disappears, and man is called after his place of birth.

f- Some people had two names, like 'Benjamin" (Ben Oni) and 'Reuel' (Jethro) (Exodus 2: 18; 3: 1); and 'Solomon' (Jedidia).

g- Sometimes genealogies are presented concisely, some names are omitted, so as not to distract the reader's mind.

h- Sometimes genealogy is omitted by purpose, and sometimes it is concentrated on a specific person. The Holy Book is not preoccupied with time sequence; like starting with the firstborn, or with the one who is godly

and faithful in his relationship to God.

Genealogies and the symbols of the Lord Christ:

We spoke about the importance of genealogies, and we know that many of the names that came in them we know nothing about; But, if we may say, when we encounter many of them on the great day of the Lord, we shall recognize them, not to enquire from them about the past events of their life on earth; but to look at them, rejoice to see the reflection of God's splendor on their faces, and praise God and glorify Him for the sake of His works with mankind, disregarded by many; and for transfiguring with His love, wisdom, compassion, and salvation, on the day all believers encounter Him in a joyful heavenly procession.

Now, even with the silence of the book of chronicles in the chapters of the genealogies, to talk about some whom we know to have things about them, from the other holy books; I wish to present some very light touches, so as to taste the sweetness of God's works with, and in them; on account of that some of them bore symbols of the Lord Christ, and some of them prophesied about Him and His salvation work; and to enjoy positive, and sometimes, negative lessons in their lives; for the sake of our repentance, edification, and warning ourselves against some faults or weaknesses they have fallen into.

1- On account of that we do not know much about some of the names that came in the genealogies, we shall only mention the meaning of the names, and what came about them in the Holy Book in the shortest possible way.

You can refer to those names in the “Dictionary of the Holy Book”, or “Encyclopedia of the Holy Scripture” in Arabic language, beside the dictionaries of the Holy Book in English language; and the chain of “Interpretations and meditations of the early fathers”; and the references that came in their margins.

2- You can pass quickly over the names on which no spiritual comments are presented; and could be omitted; but we decided to keep to have benefit of their mere study.



CHAPTER 1

THE GENEALOGIES FROM ADAM TO ISRAEL

The book starts with the genealogies from Adam, the first man; to let us perceive that they all belong to one father. If God has chosen His people of the seed of Abraham, yet all mankind are referred to one family, and one race; the salvation of whom God seeks.

Three repetitive verbs:

The reader may marvel to find the first chapter of the book almost include names not connected to any event; and to notice three repetitive verbs:

The first verb: “**born**”;

The second verb: “**reigned**”;

The third verb (mostly related to the second):”**died**” (a person dies for another to reign in his place).

Such a simple remark in the first chapter, even though it may seem boring to the beginners, yet it actually reveals the goal of this book, in that God grants man his existence, creation, or birth in this world, to live as a king of authority, as His ambassador; yet, through sin or isolation from God, the source of his existence, life, and authority, he dies, and will be in need of someone to restore him to life, and to make him enjoy again his royal authority; not in this temporal world, but on an eternal heavenly level.

In his work “The city of God”, St. Augustine often says that in the Holy Book there are no complete genealogies; as each genealogy serves a specific goal, whether on the theological aspect or the historical one. That is why the scholar of the Holy Book, should not be preoccupied with presenting conformity between the genealogies that came in it; but rather to recognize the goal of every genealogy for the sake of his own edification and that of the church.

This chapter presented a quick look on genealogies; starting from ‘Adam’, having been the father of all mankind; and ending with ‘Israel’, having been the father of the people chosen by God, or the chosen nation. And at the same time, it ended with the beginning of the Messianic line (the tribe of Judah).

1- From Adam to Abraham	1 - 28
a- From Adam to Noah	1 - 4
b- The genealogies of Noah’s three sons	5 – 23
c- From Shem to Abraham	24 – 28
2- From Abraham to Israel	29 – 54
a- The family of Ishmael	29 – 31
b- The family of Keturah	32 - 33
c- The family of Isaac	34 – 37
d- The family of Seir	38 – 42
e- The kings of Edom	43 – 54

1- FROM ADAM TO ABRAHAM:

The genealogies cared to connect Adam to Abraham. If Adam was the father of all mankind according to the flesh, Abraham was the father of all believers.

As Adam did not keep the covenant of purity and obedience to the Grantor of life and goodness, We, being his descendants, have naturally become a wild olive tree that bears nothing but death and corruption; and have all become in tribulation. But through our father Abraham's acceptance of the covenant of faith, by grace and obedience, we have become branches of a good olive tree. By faith we have become spiritual descendants of Abraham (Romans 4: 11-12). Although we are not naturally related to him, yet we came to be grafted in the fruitful olive tree, and partakers of its roots and fruits by our Savior Jesus Christ.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi presents to us the following magnificent talk about the relationship of the peoples and nations to Abraham, the father of fathers, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ:.

+ The wild olive tree grafted itself to the tree of Abraham, when the former was corrupted and without fruition.

From its root, faith gave oil to those foreign branches;

The blessed and sweet root of the fathers acquired extended branches of peoples;

The wild olive tree came to replace the original olive tree, and behold, it looks splendid on the root of Abraham;

Every day it bears the fruit of the new sweet praise, in place of the tree that cut itself from its root;

The peoples knew faith in God; and behold, they are set in it, to become heirs and the children of the promise.

They did not enter to God through the law; but entered through the door of faith without the law.

It so seems that the book of genesis is the source of the genealogies that came here:
(Genesis 5) the source of the genealogies from Adam to Noah (1 – 4); As, through the great flood, humanity came to have a new beginning that spread all over the earth.
(Genesis 10) presents to us the descendants of Noah
(Genesis 11) is the source of the descendants of Abraham.

a- From Adam to Noah:

Adam, Seth, Enosh (5)

If the main or the only source of that period is the book of Genesis; yet the genealogies here are distinguished by showing two important elements; namely, **the divine choice** of the men of God, and **the divine grace** in dealing with the genealogies.

The genealogies here run to serve the general goal of the book; namely, for God to choose for Himself a holy people: 'the literal Israel' in the old covenant, and 'the new Israel' ; namely the church, that embraces members of all nations.

Adam, a Hebrew name, linguistically meaning (red). According to some, the Acadian or Assyrian origin of the word is 'Adamo', meaning (work) or (produce); It is as though God created man to enjoy the happiness in work and production.

Although the two books of the chronicles were preoccupied with confirming the purity of the people of Israel, in contrast to the Samaritans whose blood is a mixture of that of the Jews and Gentiles; but, at the same time, the book starts by Adam, the father of all mankind. Salvation, now, realized through the Son of David, is presented to all the world.

The goal of the genealogies is not to present it complete; but rather to confirm two important theological facts:

- 1- The distinction of the old people as a chosen people sanctified to God; having their own special mission among all the peoples and nations of the world; and having separated themselves from the heathen idols, through their reference to the fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- 2- The kingdom of the Son of David is ecumenical, opening the door of salvation, hope, and heavenly glory, to all mankind; *“As there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, Barbarian, Scythian, slave, nor free, but Christ is all, and in all”* (Colossians 3: 11).

Do not marvel for disregarding Cain and his descendants (Genesis 4: 17-26) in those genealogies; as the book refrains to refer to all the generations coming from Cain; the way it did in disregarding the Northern Kingdom of Israel, on account of their rebellion against the house of David, of their non-commitment to the divine statutes; and of setting some kind of worship according to their human mind. For the book is preoccupied with the proclamation of the divine covenant between God and the faithful in their connection to God and in their fellowship with Him.

Starting by Adam the entire genealogies of humanity, yet it omitted the genealogies of all the peoples that do not lead to Israel; to proclaim that God had a plan and choice to realize the salvation of humanity through the Son of David from Israel.

The book of the chronicles did not fail to care for the divine call to Abraham, and for the covenant with Moses; but it was rather preoccupied with the temple and the covenant with David. Its author was preoccupied in the first degree with the promised land and the unity of the people, whatever the cost may be; to bring us forth to the Son of David, and to the enjoyment of the Higher Jerusalem.

Again we confirm that the goal of these genealogies is to show the line between Adam and Abraham; Adam being the common father of all mankind, who was created according to the image

and the likeness of God; And Abraham, who became father of mankind concerning faith; he who saw the incarnate Lord, crucified, and risen from the dead, to raise all the peoples; "*He saw it, and was glad*" (John 8: 56).

+ From the beginning, since God created Adam, He made him a priest to serve Him. He indeed set some limitation to Adam, saying: "*Eat, Adam, from all the fruits in the paradise, But do not come near the tree in its middle, lest you die*";

Envyng Adam for having the image of God, the devil seduced his wife, and made her pluck and eat the forbidden fruit.

She gave Adam who ate as well, disobeyng the divine commandment;

Death prevailed on Adam; he died; and behold, death crawled to all generations, and even, as a robber, came to Moses;

All the righteous, the prophets, and the kings, tasted the cup of Adam who disobeyed the commandment.

+ If from Adam, who, being a man, was not supposed to give birth, our mother Eve came forth; How much more should we believe that the daughter of Eve would give birth to a child without a man!

As the virgin earth bore Adam, the head on all earth;

Now, the virgin Mary bore the second Adam, the Head on all heavens.

“Seth”: a Semite name meaning (a Helper); was born after the murder of Abel, to become a helper and a comforter to his parents. The way a son needs his parents, full of love, compassion, and care; the parents, as well, need their son or daughter. According to Solomon the sage. *“A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother”* (Proverb 10: 1); *“A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him”* (Proverb 17: 25); and, *“A foolish son is the ruin of his father”* (Proverb 19: 13).

Concerning “Seth”, St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi partakes of the bitterness of soul of our early parents: Adam and Eve after the murder of their son Abel; and gets in touch with the amazing divine comforts that came on them by the birth of their son “Seth”. The secret of their comfort was not that God has granted them a son in place of Abel and Cain; having for the first time in their life seen death by their own eyes; and perceived how the body of dust returns to dust; and having seen how their second son Cain lived in immense horror, fearing even from his own shadow; But, that in “Seth”, they saw the exalted love of God, and the comfort of heaven; and perceived divine secrets that lifted their hearts up to heaven.

Seeing “Seth”, bearing the symbol of the Lord Christ, who attacked and destroyed the foundations of pain, and trampled upon grief with His feet, to deprive it of its authority, St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi saw how “Seth” took the depression away from his parents; became like a swift moving deer, before whom the serpents flee lest he tramples upon them with his feet and kill them. There was no more place for depression in the hearts of Adam and Eve, for God granted them a medication to cure them; It was said: *“Adam lived one hundred thirty years, he became a father of a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth”* (Genesis 5: 3). In this he was a symbol of the Son of God who is One with the Father, about whom it was said: *“Being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person; and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high”* (Hebrew 1: 3).. But what a great difference between the symbol and the symbolized.

+ *“Adam became a father of a son in his likeness, according to his image”* (Genesis 5: 3). What does “likeness” mean, so carefully written by Moses; unless it is a symbol of something that he intends to show us? ... Why did he write that “Seth” was in his father’s likeness?

He recorded the genealogy of all the families from Adam up to his time; yet he never said that any son was born in the likeness of his father!

There was a comfort for the family of Adam in the beautiful “Seth”, by whose birth they forgot their old tribulations.

How they saw in him of a glorified likeness, and they marveled at the splendor that reflected from his face, to forget their past grief.

Eve saw in her son the likeness to her man Adam. Comforting Adam by the beauty of his son, she said to him:

Come, look at his face, and forget your grief! ... Come, see yourself and be comforted by your likeness. ...; Behold, he bears your image; He is

wholly You; ... Come, O tree, look at your fruit, in your likeness! ... O, exalted eagle, your likeness is on your little chicks; ... O mighty man, O

head of the earth, O father of all races; Come and look at your son, see how he is like you in every thing; ...O plowman, Behold, the plantation of

your field bears your likeness; and the bouquet of flowers you gathered are as beautiful as you are.

“Enosh”, a Hebrew name, meaning (human), was the first man to teach humanity how to praise God; being said: *“To Seth also a son was born, and he named him ‘Enosh’. At that time people began to invoke the name of the Lord”* (Genesis 4: 26).

- + In his generation, “Enosh” was a distinctive example, he began to invoke the name of the Lord, to praise Him;
He taught his generation how to praise the Lord in tune; how to call the name of the Lord all the time.
His love for his Lord was distinct, he set fixed times to praise Him in righteousness;
He set fixed times in the morning and in the evening to call the name of the Lord, to weave his life on spiritual benefits.
He opened up the mouth of the earth, and taught it to call the name of the Lord every day and night.

‘Cainan’, ‘Mahalaleel’, ‘Jared’ (2)

“Cainan”, a Semite name, probably meaning (to possess), (to acquire), or (a forgerman or blacksmith). Two persons bore this name in the Old Testament:

- 1- According to some he is the forth ‘Patriarch’ before the great flood; the firstborn of ‘Enosh’, when he was 90 years old, and lived 70 years more at the birth of ‘Mahalaleel’, then died at 910 years of age (Genesis 5: 9-14).
According to the rabbinical tradition, he was the first to introduce idol-worship and astrology;
And St. Ephraim the Syrian confirms that the Chaldeans at the time of Tareh and Abraham his son. ‘; and his daughters were the first to make and play musical instruments.
- 2- The son of Arphaxad, father of ‘Methuselah’ (Luke 3: 35-36); called the second ‘Cainan’.

“Mahalaleel” (Genesis 5: 12-130; a Hebrew name, meaning (Thanks be to God). Two persons bore this name:

- 1- The son of 'Cainan' and the grandson of 'Seth'; at whose birth, his father was 70 years old; then fathered 'Jared', and died at 865 years of age (Genesis 5: 12-17; Luke 3: 27). According to 'Ewald', Mahalaleel worshipped the idol 'Cainan' the sun-god; his son 'Jared' worshipped the water-god 'Varunee'.
- 2- A man from Judah, a son of 'Perez' , a descendant of Athaiah' (Nehemiah 11: 4), who lived in Jerusalem after returning from captivity.

“Jared”, (Genesis 5: 15-20); a Semite name, probably meaning (coming down); father of 'Enoch'.

Two persons bore this name:

- 1- The son of 'Mahalaleel', and father of 'Enoch', who was 162 years old at the birth of his son 'Enoch' (Genesis 5: 15-20; Luke 3: 37).
- 2- The son of Ezrah of the tribe of Judah, of his wife 'Jehudiyah', the father of 'Gedor' (1 Chronicles 4: 18). The Rabinites present a symbolic interpretation of his name, as meaning (coming down); They see him as bearing the title (Moses-Jared), on account that it was Moses who caused the Manna to come down.

Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech (3):

“Enoch”: The Hebrew name is 'Hanuk', probably meaning (clever) or (dedicated).

It was said in the book of Genesis: *“When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah..... When Methuselah had lived 187 years he became the father of Lamech.*

Methuselah lived after the birth of Lamech 782 years, and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Methuselah were 969 years, and he died” (Genesis 5: 21-22; 25-27).

It was said about 'Enoch': *“Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah 300 years, and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, Then he was no more, because God took him”* (Genesis 5: 22-240. According to St Cyprian, 'Enoch' was a living example of those quickly headed toward God, having forsaken from themselves the love of temporal things, and got attached to the heavenly One.

- + To be like 'Enoch', who pleased God, if you become qualified to depart from the corruption of this world. The Holy Spirit taught Solomon that those who please God, will be taken early, and will be quickly set free, lest by leaving them longer in the world, they would probably be defiled by its corruption. It is said: "*There were some who pleased God, and were loved by Him; and while living among sinners were taken up; They were caught up so that evil might not change their understanding*" (Wisdom 4: 10, 11); And in the psalms, it is said: "*How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts. My soul longs, yes, even faints, for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God*" (Psalm 84: 1).
- + 'Enoch' abided in an exalted and splendid beauty; and purified himself by holiness. He was distinguished for the pure and splendid behavior; and pleased God by thoughts filled with love; He was raised on chastity and pure thoughts; and lived with purity, with no worries nor anger; He lived in the wilderness far from the defilements of the world; and pleased God by looking at Him daily for 300 years; No fault, nor slothful thought was ever found in him, neither in his sleep nor in his wake-up.)
- + Good are the wings of love; the true wings that hover on the mouths of the apostles; the wings of fire that utter the pure words. On such wings 'Enoch' flew, when he was taken up to heaven (Genesis 5: 24).
- + According to some, God took 'Enoch' up to paradise, to spare Adam of grief, to think that he was killed like 'Abel', to give him peace concerning that righteous son of his; and to let him know that paradise will be the fitting place for all who are like him, whether after their death, or in the resurrection.

"Methuselah": A Semite name meaning (Man of weapon), the son of 'Enoch', died in the year of the great flood, of 969 years of age – the longest age mentioned in the Holy Book. Yet, after such a long life, he ended up

dead; being said about him: “*All the days of Methuselah were 969 years, and he died*” (Genesis 5: 27).

- + Living a little less than 1000 years, Methuselah looked forward to the ‘Son’ who will make men heirs of unending eternal life.n)
- + Even if we live 900 years or more, like the people before the great flood; Even if we are granted the days of Methuselah; yet once this long life comes to an end, it will be counted as nothing. Whether man lives ten or a thousand years, once life comes to an end, and the inevitable death is realized, the past – long or short – will be the same, nothing. But the longer life is, the heavier will be the burden of sins he will take along with him.

“**Lamech**”: According to St. Jerome, ‘Lamech’ was the first man to marry two women (Genesis 4); a reference to the work of the heretics who divide the church into several churches perverting from faith. Anyway, if Cain committed the most horrible crime since the beginning of human history by killing his brother; the fruit of evil is heresy that corrupts the church of God, and perverts faith.

- + ‘Lamech’ looked forward to Him (to the Lord Christ) to come to grant him in love, comfort from the labor and strife of his hands, in the land, cursed by the Just God (Genesis 5: 29).

Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth (4)

“**Noah**” (Genesis 6); According to St. (Mar) Ephraim the Syrian, Noah has been a righteous man blameless in his generation; and his three sons took after him.

- + Noah, a righteous man, blameless in his generation, and his three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, who were like him, each of them had only one wife, despite what they saw of corruption all around them; They held fast to the law of God, natural in them since the beginning of creation; on account of that when God created Adam, he did not create together with him, more than one woman To do what contradict such a natural law, for man to

have more than wife; or the woman to have more than one man, that would be an oppression against nature.

God revealed to Noah, His righteous servant, what He was going to do, saying to him: "*I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; Now I am going to destroy them along with the earth*" (Genesis 6: 13).

God could have just told Noah about His intention to make an end to the earth and its inhabitants; But, being the Loving Friend who likes to debate with His servant, and to reveal to him His plan, wisdom, and secrets, according to the words of the Psalmist, saying: "*The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him; and He will show them His covenant*" (Psalm 25: 14); God revealed to Noah that He was going to destroy them together with the earth, for destruction is the natural fruit of the corruption they have chosen for themselves; It is as though He intended to say: [I would not like to do that, but they have chosen to bring perdition upon themselves, by their own free will. Now, if that was the choice of the wicked to bring perdition upon themselves and even upon the earth; yet God will never forsake His children to perish together with them; Hence He gave Noah a command to build an ark for his salvation. The Holy Book gave us a detailed and an elaborate description of that ark; because of what the ark bore of a symbolic work that touches our salvation by the cross.

When Noah was born, his father Lamech prophesied about him, saying: "*Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands*" (Genesis 5: 29). According to the scholar Origen, [That prophecy does not concern the old Noah, but the new Noah; namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. As the word 'Noah' means (comfort) and righteousness), It is only Jesus who gives comfort to humanity, and liberate the earth from the curse uttered by the Lord God].

+ In the great flood – in the days of Noah – every flesh perished, but the righteous Noah and his family were kept. The outer man will perish, but the inner man will be renewed. That happens, not only in baptism, but with repentance, by which the lusts of the body perish and the spirit grows; as the apostle teaches us, saying: *“I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, I have already judged, as though I were present, concerning him who has done this deed”* (1 Corinthians 5: 3, 5)

+ Yes, the ark that kept the creatures alive, looked forward, being a symbol, to our Lord who builds the holy church where souls would find a refuge..

The earth while drowned by the great flood, cried out in silence to its Lord.

He came down and opened up baptism, by which men are drawn up to heaven.

“Japheth” A Semite name, meaning (Let him be wide)

In the episode of ‘Noah’ when he drank wine and became naked, St Jerome saw a symbolic portrait of the Lord Christ, who drank the cup of passion; and for our sake, he became naked on the cross; and was ridiculed by the wicked, represented by Ham; while the Gentiles believed in Him, symbolized by Shem and Japheth; saying:

[That was said as a symbol of the Savior, who drank the cup of passion on the cross, saying: *“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me”* (Matthew 26: 39). He drank, became drunk, and naked ... There came ‘Ham’, namely, the Jews, to ridicule Him; while the Gentiles covered His nakedness..

The way the father (Noah) got drunk by his sufferings, the saints get drunk by the fragrance of their faith; they get drunk by the Holy Spirit. Yesterday, you have been collecting gold; Now, you throwing it away from you. Is this not counted as being drunk in the sight of those who do not understand?!

Finally, When the Holy Spirit dwelt upon the disciples, filled them, and made them speak in several tongues, they were accused of being drunk with new wine].

- + The two brothers (Shem and Japheth) who covered up the nakedness of their father Noah (Genesis 9: 23), looked forward to the only begotten Son, who will come and cover the nakedness of Adam, who got drunk by pride. The blessed Shem and Japheth looked forward to the blessed Son, who will come to liberate Canaan from the bondage of sin.

b- The genealogies of Noah's three sons::

“The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras” (5)

He started by the sons of Japheth who were born in the western parts of Europe, of whom he did not say much; on account of that the Jews, at that time, rarely dealt with them, or never did.

“Gomer”: probably means (end of perfection), the perfection of failure in particular. The wife of the prophet Hosea bore the same name: *“Gomer the daughter of Diblaim”* (Hosea 1: 3).

It is to be noticed that the sons of Japheth were mentioned first, followed by those of Ham, and finally of Shem – the only one whose genealogy was completed, to lead to Abraham; the sons of Abraham: Ishmael and his sons; Abraham's sons from Keturah; and finally Isaac; to be followed by the sons of Isaac, starting by those of Esau. But the line that leads to the Lord Christ is through Jacob the other son of Isaac.

“The sons of Gomer were: Ashkenaz, Diphath, and Togarmah” (Genesis 10: 2)

From them probably came the tribes called ‘the Hamerites’ by the Assyrians, and ‘Kermerites’ by the Greeks. .

The descendants of Gomer inhabited the North; and were called ‘The people of the far North’ by the Greek Historian ‘Homer’; According to the Historian ‘Herod’, they came during the seventh century

B.C. to Asia, settled down in 'Capadokia', and threatened the Assyrian empire; but were defeated. Heading toward the North, they occupied Asia Minor, and entered in more than one battle against 'Guges' king of Lydia, that ended up with him being killed. He is probably the one whom the Holy Book calls by the name of "Gog". They then retreated from Asia (Lydia) by the Alyattes.

Magog": A Hebrew word meaning (the land of God) (Genesis 10: 2). According to some, 'Ma' is of a Coptic origin, meaning (land). The names "Magog" and "Gog", were bound together, and became a symbol of the oppression against the Christian faith (Revelation 20: 7-9)

During the middle centuries, the Syrians called the lands of the 'Tatar', "Magog"; Whereas the Arabs gave this name to the land between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. But the majority counted the 'Scythians' as the people of 'Magog'. They are described by 'Herod' as Barbarians, who never bathe, used to drink the blood of the first enemy they kill; and used the head skins of their enemies as kerchiefs or towels, and their skulls as cups; and to offer the last captive every hundred as a sacrifice to their gods, among whom was a god called 'the drawn sword'. They were referred to by the apostle Paul as an example of barbarism (Colossians 3: 11).

Tobal and Meshech: The two names, often mentioned together (Genesis 10: 2); were traders of slaves and bronze in the Phoenician markets (Ezekiel 27: 13); were famed in the old as warriors (Ezekiel 32: 26); and were mentioned among the armies of 'Gog' (Ezekiel 38: 2; 39: 1).

According to Josephus, they are the 'Hbrrians' and the 'Capadokians'; and to others, they are the 'Tibareni', and the 'Moskians', who, according to Herod were part of the nineteenth state in the kingdom of Darius.

"Tiras"a Hebrew name meaning (fearsome). According to the early scholars like St. Jerome and the Historian Josephus, his descendants were the "Thracians"; While according to the contemporary scholars, they are the 'Tercenians' famed as pirates in the Aegean Sea, related to 'Atroscanians', the inhabitants of Italy in the early eras.

“The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah” (6)

‘Ashkenaz’: By his name a people were called, mentioned in Jeremiah 51: 27, together with ‘Ararat’ and ‘Minni’, probably in the region of ‘Ararat’ (Armenia). It so seems that they were the ‘Scythians’. Jews of the middle centuries called the Jews of East Europe ‘Ashkenaz’, on the assumption that ‘Ashkenaz’ is Germany.

‘Togarmah’ (Genesis 10: 3): According to some, is derived from two words: ‘Toka’, meaning (a tribe), and ‘Arma’, referring to (Armenia). It was most probably in South-East of Armenia; famed for horses, horsemen, and mules (Ezekiel 27: 13-14).

“The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshihah, Kittim, and Rodanim: (7)

Elishah: meaning (God saves) (Genesis 10: 4). A name called on a specific region, a source from which the people of ‘Tyre’ got the purple. According to Genesis 10: 5, his descendants were among the Greeks who settled down in the islands and the Mediterranean coast.

‘Tarshish’: According to some, is a Phoenician name, meaning (a refinery lab). And to others, ‘Tarshish’ was the grandfather of the Mediterranean peoples.

A city of ‘Tarshish’ is in South Spain, close to ‘Gibraltar’, by the name ‘Tertisus’, or it could be ‘Cartagene’, in North Africa. Where the 16 years old St. Augustine, was sent by his father to learn eloquence.

According to some the name ‘Tarshish’ bears the meaning of Metalurgy or melting metals; by which any land of metal mines could be called..

And according to some, “the ships of Tarshish”, are not bound to a specific place, but probably refers to a specific kind of ships, known for their luxury and sea-worthiness..

“Kittim”: (Some names of peoples, regions, or cities, mentioned in the genealogies, were called after the name of a specific person)

‘Kittim’ is probably ‘Cyprus’. And according to some, it was a name called on the islands and coasts west of Palestine, as well as on ‘Macedonia’ in the era of the Maccabees (Maccabees 1: 1).

“The sons of Ham were: Cush, Mizraim (Egypt), Put, and Canaan” (8):

After the descendants of Japheth, he spoke of those who bore a kind of animosity toward the Jews (the church of the old covenant), like the descendants of Ham who headed toward the south in Africa and toward Asia. Yet, the main interest has been concentrated on the Jews the descendants of Shem, from whom the Lord Christ will come incarnate for the salvation of all the nations of the world. On one aspect it is said: *“I gave Egypt for your ransom”* (Isaiah 43: 3); and at the same time it was said: *“Have we not all one father; Has not One God created us?”* (Malachi 2: 10). If it so seems that he gave a precedence to the Jews for some time, for the sake of the preparation for the incarnation of the Word of God from the descendants of David for the salvation of world. All humanity are the descendants of Adam; and after the great flood of Noah. And are all called to the adoption of *“One God and Father of all”* (Ephesians 4: 6); And, *“Now, O Lord, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You are the Potter, and all we are the work of Your hands”* (Isaiah 64: 8).

Some places and tribes were called as though persons; as it is said here: *“The descendants of Ham: Cush, Mesraim (Egypt), Put, and Canaan”* (1: 6); by which he means that the descendants of Ham are the Egyptians, the Canaanites, etc. The expression “son or sons of” in the Semite tongue has a wider meaning than a person born to another.

The descendants of Ham, having produced peoples and nations oppressive against the work of God and His people in the old covenant; the Old Testament came to proclaim the divine chastisement upon those peoples, being symbols of evil. ‘Cush’ referred to the darkness of ignorance, ‘Egypt’ to the love of the world that enslaves the soul; and ‘Canaan’ to the devilish work, etc. Yet, the prophecies in the Old Testament did not forsake those peoples without hope; but proclaimed the rejection of the people of God, and the entrance of those peoples into faith and to the divine covenant. That was how the nations that were under curse because of idol-worship,

abominations, and oppression against the faith in God, became the holy bride, prepared for the eternal life in the bosom of the heavenly Father.

“Cush”: Meaning in Hebrew (Black). ‘Cush’ was the firstborn of Ham, who got five sons that produced five peoples: **‘Saba’** (human). **‘Howeila’** (a province), **‘Septa’** or **‘Septka’** (striker), **‘Ramah’** (quivering). Those peoples inhabited in the midst and south of Arabia, on the Persian Gulf. But ‘Saba’ departed to Africa (Ethiopia). Hence ‘Cush’ in the Old Testament, refers to Ethiopia and Nubia (south of Egypt), and sometimes to Yemen or to south and middle of the Arabian Peninsula. In many dictionaries of the Holy Book, ‘Cush’ is considered as only Ethiopia.

The Son of David came to reconcile heaven with earth, and people with peoples, so that the believers from the Gentiles would become brethren who know nothing but love and unity.

Mizraim implying (twice or double) in Hebrew, made some assume that Egypt was so called because it includes ‘Upper and Lower Egypt’; or because the River Nile divides it into an Eastern and Western banks. But the most prominent view is that it is called ‘Misr’ in Arabic (after the Hebrew), after ‘Mesraim’ the son of Ham, where, he together with his sons, lived, even though his descendents extended to the neighboring countries.

“Put”: a people with relationship with the Egyptians (Genesis 10: 6). It was mentioned together with Egypt and other African countries, ‘Lubim’ in particular (Nahum 3: 9), and ‘Lud’ (Ezekiel 27: 10), between Cush and Lud. In the Septuagint version it came as ‘Lybion’. Considered by Josephus to be ‘Lybia’. Lybis, in the Babylonian inscriptions was named as ‘Futo’, probably ‘Cyprinaica’, the eastern part of Lybia nowadays.

Canaan: From his descendants the Canaanite tribes appeared; about some of which we talked in the introduction of the book of Joshua.

The book of Joshua is also considered as the book of the acceptance of the Gentiles. If it was imperative for the people of God to inherit Canaan after driving the heathens out; Yet God does not

reject the later, but rejects their heathenism and evil. When the Canaanite harlot 'Rahab' proclaimed her faith, she, together with her family, enjoyed salvation, and had the honor, denied to many Hebrew women, that from her seed, the Savior Messiah was to come; and to have her name included in the genealogy of the Lord Christ (Matthew 1: 25); something of which many of the heroes of faith and prophets were denied. God would never reject any man, but seeks the salvation of all, "*He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Timothy 2: 4),

The sons of 'Cush' were: Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raama, and Sabtecha.

The sons of Raama were: Sheba and Dedan (9).

"Raama": the grandson of Ham. There is a province south-west of Arabia, that traded with 'Tyre' for spices, precious stones and gold (Ezekiel 27: 22); its inhabitants are probably descendants of Raama.

Sheba and Dedan: Sons of Raama the son of Cush (Genesis 10: 7). According to some, 'Sheba' is the name of an Arabian tribe, namely, they were Semites. Saying that Sheba and Dedan are descendants of Cush, is on account of that some of those Semite tribes migrated to Ethiopia, and mixed with the descendants of Cush; and some others migrated North.. Some parts of the South of the Arabian Peninsula still carry the name 'Sheba' and those of some of his brothers, like Hadermot and Osal (Sanaa).

'Cush' begot 'Nimrod', he was the first on earth to become a mighty warrior (10)

'Nimrod' If the Holy Book presents a list of its work through the descendants of Shem, from whom the Word of God will come incarnate from the seed of Abraham; It also reveals the work of the devil, specially through the descendants of 'Cush' who fathered 'Nimrod'. And through the descendants of 'Canaan' who fathered the Canaanite peoples, oppressive to the work of God. As to 'Nimrod' the son of 'Cush', it was said, "*He was a mighty warrior before the Lord; therefore it is said, 'Like Nimrod' a mighty hunter before the Lord*" (Genesis 10: 8-9). Of his descendants were the governing dynasties in Babylon, Shenaar, and Akad; He, himself, might probably be 'Gelgamish' the Akadian or Babylonian. Any way, Babylon, later on, became a symbol of vain pride and the oppression

against God, as well as of the spiritual harlotry (Revelation 14: 8; 16: 19; 17: 1-5). According to St. Augustine, Babylon referred to the wicked peoples.

About '**Nimrod** it is said, "*He was a mighty warrior before the Lord*"; interpreted by St. Augustine and St. (Mar) Ephraim the Syrian, as [he was a mighty warrior (against) the Lord].

+ 'Nimrod' refers to the mighty and evil devil, whose kingdom was 'Babylon', interpreted as (confusion and dissension), which is actually the beginning of the kingdom of the devil.

(St. (Mar)

Ephraim the Syrian)

On another aspect, according to St. (Mar) Ephraim the Syrian, Nimrod, by his oppression against other nations, he was realizing the will of God. Saying "*Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord*" (Genesis 10: 8-9), was on account of that, according to the will of God, he fought against all those nations, drove them away from there, to settle down in other places set for them by God... In blessing a ruler or a governor, he was usually addressed by the words: [May you be like Nimrod who was a mighty warrior who conquered in the battles of the Lord].

According to St. John Chrysostom, while some believe that the expression "*before the Lord*", means (against the Lord), he, himself, believes that, on the contrary, it refers to that he was strong and brave. The expression "*before the Lord*" means (created by Him); and probably also mean that God makes us marvel that He has created such an outstanding man.

Mizraim begot Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim:

"**Ludim**": from whom the people of 'Lud', namely, the 'Ludites' came (different than the people of 'Lud' a descendant of Shem). The descendants of Mizraim inhabited west of the Nile River, toward Lybia.

"**Anamim**": The tribe of his descendants, probably inhabited Lybia.

“Lehabim”: It so seems that the tribe of ‘Lehabim’ is itself the tribe of ‘Lubim’ or the ‘Lubians’, Africans who originated from Egypt.

“Naphtuhim”: His descendants were the inhabitants of middle Egypt, near ‘Manph’, the center of the god ‘Batah’; some of whom migrated to Ethiopia.

And Pathrusim, Casluhim , and Caphtorim(12)

“Pathrusim” inhabited Lower Egypt. The word ‘Pathros’ means (the land of the south).

“Casluhim”: meaning (a stronghold). His descendants mostly inhabited ‘Casionis’, a mountainous region east of the ‘Balsam’, on the frontier of Egypt toward Palestine.

From ‘Casluhim’ came **‘Pheleshtim’** whose descendants migrated to Palestine, where the ancient ‘Philistines’ came. The word ‘Palestine’; is derived from ‘Pheleshtim’, meaning (a stranger or an immigrant).

The Philistines have been perpetual enemies of the children of Israel since the days of the Judges; who were conquered by David (1 Samuel 4: 1); They inhabited the western region of Canaan along the Mediterranean Sea coast; surpassed Israel in number, in their military expertise, and in their knowledge of the manufacture of iron weapons (1 Samuel 13: 19-22).

From ‘Casluhim’, came **‘Caphtorim’**, meaning (crowns); whose descendants inhabited ‘Cephtur’; thought by some to be ‘Capadokia’ in Asia Minor; While by others, it is the Island of Cyprus or Crete; and still others believe that it was in the Egyptian Delta close to ‘Manph, where there was a city by the name ‘Capet-Hur’.

‘Canaan’ became the father of ‘Sidon’, his firstborn, and ‘Heth’.

“Canaan”, The youngest son of Ham; and from whose descendants the Canaanite tribes appeared, we spoke concisely of them in the introduction to the book of Joshua.

Canaan was the great grandfather of the Canaanites who plunged deeply into evil. They were divided into several nations: The Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, etc. The children of Israel took over the whole region under the leadership of Joshua the son of Nun, and it was called the promised land. According to the scholar Origen, driving those nations away refers to getting rid of sin, so that the believer would enjoy the kingdom of God, under the leadership of the Lord Jesus, through the divine grace.

‘Sidon’ or Sida: A Semite name, meaning (place of fishing), an old and rich Phoenician port, extending as a 2-mile coast between the mountains of Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea, 22 miles north of Tyre. It was named after ‘Sidon’ the firstborn of Canaan the son of Ham the son of Noah.

It exported the engraved ivory, gold, silver, jewelries, and glassware. Being independent, the children of Israel failed to take it over; and the Sidonians continued to cause them trouble, before the two cultures merged together; and the Israelites worshipped the gods of the Sidonians: the Baal, and Ashtoreth.

When Ahab, king of Israel, married Isabel, daughter of one of the kings of Sidon, and the high priest of Baal, she strived to establish the worship of Baal in Israel, and to put an end to the worship of the living God.

Eventually, Sidon fell before Assyria; then Babylon, Persia, the Greeks, and the Romans. In the days of the Lord Christ, many of them were Greeks, who went to Galilee to encounter and hear the Lord Christ.

The Jebusites, the Amorites, and the Girgashites:

The names that came in verses Genesis 10: 14 – 17 are not of persons but of peoples; all of which were descendants of Canaan. Using the names of the peoples instead of persons who set those peoples, was to confirm that the human race that came out of one man “Adam”, has turned into a multitude of peoples and nations; and the genealogies end up into the anticipation of the coming of the Lord Christ, who is to gather together believers from all over the world, to become a great beautiful building; where the Asians, the Africans, the Europeans, are gathered together in the Son of David; and where the King of kings sits in the hearts of His people, to set His joyful kingdom that embraces all; to say: *“There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3: 28)

The **Girgashites**: are mentioned among the Canaanite tribes in the list of nations (Genesis 10: 16); as well as among the Canaanite tribes whose lands the Lord promised to give as an inheritance to the children of Israel (Genesis 15: 21; Deuteronomy 7: 1; Joshua 3: 1; 24: 11).

According to some, they are the descendants of “Guirgis” whose names came in the texts of ‘Ogarith’ in the thirteenth century B.C.

The Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites:

The **Hivites**: Some of them inhabited Shechem, named by ‘Hamor the Hivite’ in the days of Jacob (Genesis 33: 19; 34: 2).

They settled down in parts of Syria and Palestine; and were mentioned with the Canaanites , the Perizzites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites (Exodus 3: 8; 23: 18; Deuteronomy 7: 1).

As the perversion to idol-worship and practicing the heathen abominations were very attractive to many believers at that time, the divine commandment came very strict and firm, not to get attached to those peoples. Nevertheless, many have fallen into them, including even Solomon the Sage, himself; *“When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you: the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; seven nations greater and mightier than you; and when the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You*

shall make no covenant with them, nor show mercy to them" (Deuteronomy 7: 1, 2). The goal of this commandment is to create a pure church, a holy family, and a justified kingdom in the Lord; kept away from the heathen abominations.

We often fall into looking at what came in the Old Testament in a wrong way, disregarding the languages, the concepts, and the circumstances that prevailed on the people at the time, which are utterly different from what we live today in the era of grace, which made them need such a commandment to support their salvation. Those strict orders should be understood in our life as symbols:

a- "*To make no covenant with them*", means not to be easy on the sin; and not to open the door for a debate with it.

b- "*Nor shall you make marriages with them*" (Deuteronomy 7: 3). There is no fellowship between the believer and the non-believer in a marital life; nor between light and darkness; For if the believer consent to have a

union with the non-believer on the level of familial relationship, that would be at the expense of the salvation of the soul and the holiness of the family.

c- "*You shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images; and burn down their carve images with fire*" (Deuteronomy 7: 5), mean to purify the heart (the temple of the Lord)

from worshipping other gods, like selfishness, love of complement, or satisfying the lusts of the body.

d- "*Nor show mercy to them*" (Deuteronomy 7: 6). Let the word of God be like a two-edged sword (Hebrew 4: 12), to separate strongly, and with no softness, between the truth and the vanity.

e- "*You shall not be afraid of them*" (Deuteronomy 7: 18); for a spiritual man has authority; does not fear sin, nor the devil; trust in God, he Grantor of conquest (1 Corinthians 15: 57)

In our study of the writings of St. John Cassian, we saw how the scholar Origen believes that the main sins in the life of man are eight; a view quoted by St. Oghris, and became common in the writings of the eastern and the western fathers. The people of God conquered Pharaoh and his

army, namely the Egyptians; And now, they are conquering the seven nations mentioned here; God grants His church the spirit of conquest on the eight main sins.

The Arvadites, the Zimarites, and the Hamathites:

The **Arvadites** : means (maze) called nowadays 'Rowad'; a little island, two miles away from the Syrian coast, 30 miles north of Tripoli (Lebanon).

The **Zimarites**: A Canaanite tribe (Genesis 10: 18), that inhabited 'Homr' or 'Homrah' – 'Samrah' nowadays, on the coast between 'Rowad' and Tripoli.

The **Hamathites**; the same 'Amah' mentioned in Genesis 10: 18,

The sons of Shem were: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, , Aram, Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mashech(17):

'Aram'; meaning (High or great). Often mentioned in the Holy Book; as one of the five sons of Shem the son of Noah (Genesis 10: 22-23; 1 Chronicles 1: 170; One of the sons of 'Kemuel' the son of 'Nahor' the brother of Abraham (Genesis 22: 21); One of the sons of 'Shemer', a descendant of 'Asher' (1 Chronicles 7: 34); And father of 'Aminadab', and son of Hezron the son of Perez the son of Judah, The Greek pronunciation of the Hebrew name 'Ram'.

'Uz': Home of the righteous 'Job', probably in the land of 'Edom'.

'Hul': An Aramite name, meaning (a circle or a round-about) (Genesis 10: 23). The same 'Holiah' mentioned by Ashur Nazrabal in its relationship with Mount msius.

'Arphaxad begot 'Shelah'; and 'Shelah' begot 'Eber':

"Arphaxad" meaning (Stronghold of the Chaldeans); the grandfather of 'Eber'; assumed by some to be the grandfather after whom the 'Hebrews' are called; the first to be born two years after the great flood; died 438 years old (Genesis 11: 10-13).

Moses cared to mention the names of the sons of Arphaxad (Genesis 10: 24); on account of that he begot 'Shelah', who begot 'Eber', who begot 'Peleg' who begot 'Reu', who begot "Serug' who begot 'Nahor', who begot 'Tareh', who begot 'Abram', who married 'Sarai'. Now, by the appearance of 'Abram', the father of fathers, the Israeli people set forth. The prophet Moses also made clear that 'Lot' was the nephew of Abram from 'Haran' the son of 'Tareh'.

'Shelah'; a Semite name meaning (a blossom or a plant)

'Eber', a Hebrew name meaning (Passed on). Abram was the seventh of his descendants, and to him the Hebrews are referred ; He is, as well, the grandfather of the Arabs and the Aramites (Genesis 10: 21, 25; 11: 14-17).

'Eber' begot 'Peleg'; for in his days the land was divided; and his brother's name was 'Jactan' (19)

'Eber' and his son 'Peleg': According to St. Jerome: **'Eber'** from whose descendants the Hebrews came, presented a prophecy by calling his son 'Peleg', meaning (division), on account of that in his days, after all mankind spoke one language, the language was (confused) in Babylon. Having decided to build a tower in a challenge to God, who allowed for the great flood in the days of Noah, He confused their tongues; and every nation in the region came to have its own tongue and culture. Thus God turned the chastisement into a way for the edification and progress of the world.

In Genesis 11: 1-9, came how the tongue of the Babylonians was confused; Those who, in their challenge to God assumed that they are capable of building a tower whose top can reach heaven; so that God might not be able again to drown them with a great flood.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi spoke about the blessings which humanity enjoyed at that time, as well as in all generations, through that chastisement; for the people scattered over many regions; and together with the multitude of tongues, a multitude of cultures emerged for the edification of humanity; And spared the builders from the huge burden of building a tower of no benefit whatsoever.

'Joktan', a Semite name meaning (awake); a descendant of Shem who became a tribe, which developed into thirteen Arab tribes.

'Joktan' begot Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah (20)

'Almodad', meaning (the beloved), or (God the beloved), refers to an Arab tribe in the south.

'Sheleph', a Semite name, probably meaning (he who plows the earth); of the Semite peoples coming from 'Joktan', inhabited the southern part of the Arabian peninsula, a name still common in Jemen.

'Hazarmaveth' A Hebrew name, meaning (village of death), the name of a region in the southern part of the peninsula of Arabia, still bears the same name; of an unhealthy atmosphere; hence the name.

"Jerah"; a Semite name, meaning (moon).

Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah (21):

"Hadoram"; To him belongs one of the tribes that inhabited the Arabian Peninsula.

"Uzal"; Or 'Kahtan', considered as the grandfather of all Arabs. 'Uzal' is probably the name of a place, mentioned in (Ezekiel 27: 19).

"Diklah": A Semite name; probably meaning (Palm tree); was the name of certain descendants of 'Joktan' (Genesis 10: 27), who most probably inhabited the Arabian Peninsula.

Ebal, Abimael, Sheba (22):

“Ebal”; A son of ‘Joktan’, a descendent of ‘Eber’ (Genesis 10: 27); To him belongs the oldest tribes in the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in Yemen.

“Abimael”; meaning (God is my father); an Arab tribe that inhabited the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula.

Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab (23): All of them were the descendants of ‘Joktan’.

“Ophir”; It so seems that they settled down South of the Arabian Peninsula; for his name came together with those of ‘Sheba’ and ‘Havila’.(Genesis 10: 29).

“Jobab”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (screams); It is unknown where this Arab tribe dwelt.

c- From Shem to Abraham:

Shem, Arphaxad, and Shelah (24)

Eber, Peleg, Reu (25)

Serug, Nahor, Terah (26)

“Serug”; A Semite name, meaning (to aim; or a branch); There was a city by this name close to ‘Haran’.

“Nahor”; A Semite name, meaning (heavy breathing); one of the grandchildren of Shem the son of Noah; father of Terah, and grandfather of Abraham; lived 148 years (Genesis 11: 22-25).

“Terah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (wild goat); inhabited ‘Ur’ of the Chaldeans; worshipped the idols (Joshua 24: 2), particularly the moon. He accompanied Abraham in his journey to ‘Haran’ (Mesopotamia), where he died (Genesis 11: 31- 32).

Abram (Abraham) (27)

“**Abram (Abraham)**”; He was called ‘Abraham’ by God; meaning (Father of a multitude); his birth place was ‘Ur’ of the Chaldeans; its location nowadays is ‘Tel Ekmlir’, nine miles from El-Nasria, on the River Euphrates, South of Iraq. He departed together with his household and his father ‘Terah’ along 600 miles toward North-West of Jerusalem; settled down in ‘Haran’, on ‘El-Balkh’, a tributary of the Euphrates (Genesis 11: 26-32).

The Holy Book cared for the episode of Abraham; on account of that he was unique in his faith for God; and hence became worthy of enjoying the divine promise to become a blessing to several nations (Genesis 11-25). He was mentioned more than 70 times in the New Testament.

The Lord Christ called the kingdom of heaven “*Abraham’s bosom*’; saying: “*The beggar died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom*” (Luke 16: 22)

Many fathers of the church call the people of God “*daughter of Abraham*”; call St. Mary by the same name, and count the believers as “*the children of Abraham*”.

+ By the Holy Spirit (Genesis 12-25), Abraham perceived that the Son’s birth was still far away. But “*rejoiced to see His day; he saw it and was glad*” (John 8: 56)

(St. (Mar) Ephraim
the Syrian)

+ When our Lord – the Light – appeared in the darkness, the night that dwelt upon the whole world, fled away. He came down from the Father; shined on the Virgin, the daughter of Abraham; and started walking along the

path He paved for the world. The light dwelt in the Virgin’s womb; and from there, He physically started His way.

+ Through 'Lazarus' who was leaning in Abraham's bosom, courage was given to him who bowed under poverty (Luke 16: 19 – 21).

(St. (Mar)

Jacob El-Serougi)

Commenting on the parable of the laborers hired by the owner of the vineyard (Matthew 20: 1 – 16), El-Serougi includes Abraham's household among the righteous laborers; saying:

The laborers of the third hour are the household of Noah.

The laborers of the sixth hour are the household of Abraham.

The laborers of the ninth hour are Moses, and the prophets

The vineyard is the walk of righteousness.

The laborers of the eleventh hour are the peoples who, though with no work of righteousness, yet they were hired by the owner of the vineyard at the end of time; The congregation of the Jews, the owners of the prophets, the commandments, and the statutes, did not come to work in the vineyard, and the Gentiles came instead of them.

+ Meditating in this parable, you will recognize:

The laborers of the third hour were the household of Noah, whom He set on His work.

The laborers of the sixth hour were the household of Abraham in the land of Aram; who girdled, and clothed themselves with righteousness like the former ones (Genesis 12: 4 – 5; Genesis 22; Judges 19: 10).

The laborers of the ninth hour were the great Moses, Joshua the son of Nun, and the entire choir of the prophets.

All the laborers of God entered into His vineyard, which is the walk in righteousness.

And the procession of righteous proceeded from Adam, reached up to Noah, then came close to Abraham

Then it reached to the Great Moses (the laborer of the ninth hour), who kept it through the commandments of righteousness.

All the laborers worked actively in the vineyard of the Beloved (Isaiah 5: 1);

All of them sought and worked with righteousness (Genesis 4: 26): the household of Seth and Enoch, from the start of the great world.

The household of Noah were added, lived with righteousness; then came Abraham and Isaac who worked hard.

Then came Moses together with the divine prophets, to work as good laborers in the vineyard.

They were clothed with love for the new life; and labored actively in the vineyard of the spiritual fruits.

The Owner of the vineyard opened its gates before the peoples of the earth, and all creatures worked to the account of God

At the end of the world, at the end of all times, all peoples entered at the eleventh hour into the great house; actively started the procession of righteousness, and all of them physically weaved the righteousness.

(St. (Mr)

Jacob El-Serougi)

- + We are committed to interpret the episode of Abraham in a symbolic way; to make everything spiritual, starting by the divine command: "*Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you*" (Genesis 12: 1). For that command was given, not only to Abraham, but to everyone intending to become a son of Abraham.

(The

scholar Origen)

The two sons of Abraham were Isaac and Ishmael (28):

"Isaac"; Its origin is derived from the Semitic word (laughs, dances, flirts, or makes fun). He was counted as the son of the promise. His father was 100 years old, and his mother was 90 years old when he was born; was

counted the firstborn, in spite of the fact that he was born after Ishmael, begot by 'Hagar' the slave girl of Abraham and Sarah.

His marriage to Rebecca came as a symbol of the wedding between the Lord Christ and the church – His spiritual bride.

- + Isaac (Genesis 21-28), was born in beauty; and raised on the divine thoughts. He filled himself with faith and humility; and was armed with righteousness and uprightness. He hated controversy; never became angry if he lost what was his; loved peace, tranquility, and virtue.

(At. (Mar)

Jacob El-Serougi)

- + Isaac longed to see Him (the Lord); for he tasted the sweetness of His salvation (Hebrew 11: 19)

(St. (Mar)

Ephraim the Syrian)

“**Ishmael**”; meaning (God hears); son of Abraham from 'Hagar', his Egyptian slave girl; begot him from her according to a request from his wife Sarah (which was common for a barren wife; to whom the offspring is referred)

(Genesis 16: 2). Nevertheless, Hagar despised her mistress; and in some kind of play, Ishmael attempted to kill Isaac (Genesis 21: 19; Galatians 4: 29).

2- FROM ABRAHAM TO ISRAEL:

a- The family of Ishmael (Genesis 25: 12):

Nabajoth, the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar. Adbeel, Mibsam (29)

Talking about the genealogies of Ishmael, being the son of the slave girl, whose descendants are not allowed to inherit together with the children of the promise; They refer to the Jews, the non-believers, who became rejected (Galatians 4: 22 etc.)

The twelve sons of Ishmael were not mentioned except in this part of the Holy Book; as referring to the realization of God's promise to Abraham, in response of his prayer for the sake of Ishmael, saying: *"As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation"* (Genesis 17: 20)

"Nabajoth"; To him one of the Arab tribes was referred (Genesis 25: 13, 16; 28: 9; 36: 3); famed for the abundance of its livestock (Isaiah 60: 7); the brother of Mahlah and Basmah whom Esau married

"Kedar"; A Semite name, meaning (mighty or black); father of the most famous Arab tribe; whose land is also called 'Kedar'.(Isaiah 21: 16; Jeremiah 49: 28). They were mostly nomad shepherds of a multitude of livestock, who lived in black tent (Songs 1: 5). However, some of them were more civilized and lived in cities (Isaiah 42: 11); skilful as warriors, particularly with bows and arrows.

"Adbeel"; A Hebrew name, meaning (God's chastisement); was probably the first father of the Arab tribe 'Adabeel'; that lived North-West of the Arab desert during the eighteenth century B.C.; then settled down South-West of the Dead Sea. Was mentioned in the records of king of Assyria (Genesis 12: 1).

"Mibsam"; A Hebrew name, meaning (a sweet fragrance).

Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema (30)

“Mishma” (Genesis 25: 14): A Hebrew name, meaning (News); the son of Ishmael; probably the grandfather of the tribe of ‘Mishma’; probably dwelt in Mount ‘Mishma’, located between ‘El-Gof and Damascus.

“Dumah”; (Genesis 25: 14); A Hebrew name, meaning (silence)

“Massa”; (Genesis 25: 14); his descendants were probably the ‘Masoni’; put by Ptolomy East of Arabia, close to the frontier of Babylon.

“Hadad”; (or Hadar) (Genesis 25: 15); A Hebrew name, meaning (ferocity).

“Tema”; (Genesis 25: 15); a Hebrew name, meaning (the southern); an Ishmaeli tribe that dwelt in a region with the same name in Arabia.

Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael (31)

“Jetur”: (Genesis 25: 15); his descendants dwelt in ‘Jeturia’; fought against the tribes of Israel, East of the Jordan.

“Naphish”; (genesis 25: 15); the tribe that embraced his descendants dwelt East of the Jordan.

“Kademah” (or Kedemah) (Genesis 25: 15). A Hebrew name, meaning (Eastern); dwelt East of the Jordan (Genesis 25: 18).

b- The family of Keturah:

‘Keturah’, Abraham’s concubine bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. The sons of Dedan were: Asshurim, Letushim, and Leumim (Genesis 25: 1 – 3).

“Keturah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (incense); she bore six sons ; fathers of six Arabian tribes. The Arab Historians mentioned the tribe of “Ketur’ that dwelt close to Mecca. According to the scholar Origen, the word ‘Ketur’ means (incense, or sweet fragrance).

+ Like Paul, Abraham said: We are the sweet fragrance of Christ (2 Corinthians 2: 15).

Let us now see how man could be the sweet fragrance of Christ.

Sin is a repulsive corrupt thing. Sinners are truly compared to swine that live in mire. David – as a sinner, says: *“My wounds are foul and festering”* (Psalm 37 6 LXX).

(The scholar Origen)

According to the scholar Origen Abraham took Keturah in marriage when he was 137 years old; after Sarah died 127 years old (Abraham was 10 years older than Sarah) (Genesis 25: 1-2); Commenting on this, he says:

[What then? Do we assume that carnal motives have been replenished in such a great Patriarch at such an age? Could he be motivated by body lusts?

As we often say, the marriage of patriarchs refer to secret and holy things; according to the saying of Solomon the Sage: *“I determined to take her (the wisdom) to live with me; knowing that she would give me good counsel, and encouragement in cares and grief”* (Wisdom 8: 9). Abraham might have thought the same way. Although he was a wise man; yet, knowing that wisdom has no end; and not putting old age as limiting learning, ... he saw the divine inspiration call learning a wife].

“Zimran”; (Genesis 25: 2). A Semite name, probably meaning (wild cow). According to some, his descendants dwelt in Zibram, West of ‘Kelah’, close to the Red Sea. While according to others, they constituted the tribe of Zimrites in the center of Arabia.

“Jokshan”; (Genesis 25: 1-3): Son of Abraham from Keturah, from whom came ‘Shebah’ and ‘Dedan’.

“Medan”; (Genesis 25: 2); Son of Abraham from Keturah; probably dwelt in the valley of ‘Medan’, close to Dadan.

“Ishbak”; According to some, it means (skinny); From his descendants came a tribe North of Arabia.

“Shuah”; (Genesis 25: 2). A Semite name, meaning (Low); Son of Abraham from Keturah; From him came the Arab tribe, from which was ‘Bildad the Shuhite’; most probably in the land of ‘Uz’. (Job 2: 11).

The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hann\loch, Abida, and Eldaa. All these were the children of Keturah (33).

We have nothing to say more about Midian the son of Abraham from Keturah; other than that his descendants were counted as sons of the East; one of whom was probably ‘Job’. They were separated by Abraham from Isaac the son of the promise (genesis 25: 6); and were never mentioned in any other part of the Holy Book.

“Ephah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (darkness). Three persons bore that name, one of whom was the son of Median, the son of Abraham; and his descendants after him; (there was confusion of the name between the person and the tribe) (Genesis 25: 4), that dwelt in the Northern regions of the Arab Peninsula.

“Epher”; (or Ephro); (Genesis 25: 4) A Hebrew name, meaning (a little deer); son of Midian.

“Hanoach”; (Genesis 25: 4). A Hebrew name, meaning (learned, well trained, dedicated); son of Midian, a descendant of Abraham from Keturah.

“Abida”; Meaning (father of knowledge; and my father knows); the fourth son of Abraham from his concubine Keturah. Abraham gave gifts to his children from the concubines, and sent them away; so that they would not share the inheritance with Isaac, the son of the promise.

“Eldaa”; (Genesis 25: 4). A Hebrew name, meaning (a preacher of God); son of Midian.

Commenting on what Abraham did with the children of the concubines, like those of Keturah, giving preference to Isaac, son of the promise; encouraging us to perceive the truth of our inheritance as free children of God, St. Augustine says:

- + We, therefore, if we are the children of the free Jerusalem; let us then realize that some of the gifts given to those who will not inherit are different from the portions given to the heirs; quoting the words of the apostle Paul, saying: *“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father’”* (Romans 8: 15).

(St. Augustine)

c- The family of Isaac:

Isaac’s two sons were Esau and Israel (34)

Here he did not mention the name ‘Jacob’, but ‘Israel’, the name by which he was granted as a divine gift; For, out of his sons the heads of the tribes of the people of God were set.

“Israel”; The name given to ‘Jacob’; whose descendants came to be the nation of ‘the children of Israel’; and the descendants of ‘Esau became the nation of ‘Edom’, that has been in continuous animosity against the children of Israel (Genesis 21-36; 46-49).

“Esau”; It was not a plate of lentils, in itself, that caused Esau to fall (Genesis 25), as much as it was his looseness of character.

- + To show us that the fault is not in the creation of God, but rather in the stubborn rebellion, and the intense covetousness, the first man did not find death in the pork meet, but in a simple fruit (the Holy Book did not say it was an apple) (Genesis 3: 6); And Esau lost his firstbirth rights, not because of a meal of birds, but of a plate of lentils.

(St. Augustine)

d- The sons of Esau:

The sons of Esau (namely, Edom) were: Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jaalam, and Korah (35)

There was a continuous animosity between the descendants of Edom (Esau) and the children of Israel.

“Eliphaz”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God is pure gold)

The sons of ‘Eliphaz’ (the firstborn) were Teman, Omar, Zephi, Kenaz, Korah, Gatam, Timnah, and Amalek (31):

“Teman” (Genesis 36: 11): A Hebrew name, meaning (the right hand or the southern). The firstborn of Eliphaz. A tribe was called after his name, at the northern part of Edom, called ‘the land of the children of the East’ or ‘Teman’ (Ezekiel 25: 13); its inhabitants were known for their wisdom (Jeremiah 49: 17; Obadiah 9)

“Omar”; a name, most probably derived from the Hebrew word (he ordered or spoke); he is called a prince or ruler in (Genesis 36: 15).

“Zepho” (or Zephi) (Genesis 36: 11, 15); A Hebrew name, meaning (watching or guarding); he established a tribe.

“Getam” Genesis 36: 11); A Hebrew name, meaning (weak); Esau’s grandson, and one of the princes of Edom; An emirate was named after him (Genesis 36: 16).

“Kenaz”; A Semite name, probably meaning (a catch).

“Timnah”; A Hebrew name, of one of the princes of Edom ; and of a daughter of ‘Seir’ also called ‘Lotan’, who became a concubine of ‘Eliphaz the son of Esau.

“Amalek”; If the descendants of Esau, called ‘Edom’, entered into continuous animosity, and persistent oppression against the children of Israel; ‘Amalek’, Esau’s grandson, the grandfather of the Amalek tribe, a son to his father from a concubine (Genesis 35: 12), his descendants were famed for their big body stature, together with violence and ferocity. They lived in the desert around the Dead Sea, robbing the livestock of the other tribes as spoil for themselves. They were the first to attack the children of Israel directly after their exodus from Egypt, on their way to the promised land, under the leadership of the prophet Moses (Exodus 17: 8). In that battle, Amalek did not expect to be defeated by Israel who, then, had no military experience.

The sons of ‘Reuel’, were: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah (37):

“Nahath”; A Hebrew name, meaning (rest); Three persons bore this name:

1- The grandson of Esau and Basmah, the son of Reuel; a prince in the land of ‘Edom’ (Genesis 36: 13).

2- A Levite of the Kohathites; the son of ‘Zophai’, and brother-in-law of the prophet Samuel (1 Chronicles 6: 26)

3- A Levite appointed by king Hezekiah as one of the guards on the offerings to the temple, under the supervision of Cononiah the Levite and Shimei his brother (2 Chronicles 31: 13).

e- The family of Seir:

The sons of Seir the Horite, were Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan (38):

“Lotan”; (Genesis 36: 20); An Edomite name, was probably the name of ‘Lot’, by which a tribe of the Horites were called, lived in Mount ‘Seir’.

“Shobal”; (Genesis 36: 20); He was probably the head of the Horites.

“Zibeon”; (Genesis 36: 20); A Horite name, meaning (a leopard); a Horite prince who, together with his family immigrated to Mount ‘Seir’. To establish the tribe of the Horites

“Anah”; (Genesis 36: 24); A Semite name, probably meaning (listening). Among those who bore this name was a Horite prince (38); who found springs in the wilderness, as he pastured the donkeys of his father Zibeon.(Genesis 36: 24)

“Dishon”; (Genesis 36: 21). A Semite name, meaning (a deer).

“Ezer”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a help); a Seir prince in Edom.

“Dishan”; (Genesis 36: 21); A Semite name.

The two sons of Lotan were: Hori and Homan; and Lotan’s sister Timna (Genesis 36: 22):

“Hori”; (Genesis 36: 22, 30). Probably an Egyptian name, derived from the name of the god ‘Horus’. Many bore this name, beside one of the family of ‘Hori’ of the children of ‘Gad’ (1 Chronicles 5: 14); ‘Seir’ was also called ‘Hur’.

“Homan or Himam”; (Genesis 36: 22); An Edomite name, meaning (Disturbance or riot).

“Timna”; (Genesis 36: 40); A Hebrew name, meaning (a counterattack); Seir’s daughter, sister of Lotan; became a concubine of Eliphaz the son of Esau, and mother of Amalek; There was another, a prince of Edom, who bore this name.

The sons of Shobal were: Alian, Manahath, Ebal, Shephi, and Onam.

And the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah

“Alvan”, or “Alwan”; (Genesis 36: 23); meaning (high); one of the grandchildren of Seir the Horite.

“Manahath”; (Genesis 36: 23); A Hebrew name, meaning (rest).

“Ebal”; (Genesis 36: 23); a descendant of ‘Seir’ the Horite; and there was another man who bore this name (1 Chronicles 1: 22); called ‘Obal’ (Genesis 10: 28).

“Shephi” or “Shefo” (Genesis 36: 23); A Hebrew name, meaning (nakedness) .

“Onam”; A Hebrew name, meaning (strong).

The sons of Zibeon were: Ajah and Anah.

“Ajah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (A hawk); father of one of the wives of Esau, son of Isaac (Genesis 36: 24).

The sons of Anah: Dishon, and the sons of Dishon were: Hemran, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran (41).

“Hemran”; A Hebrew name, meaning (red); Also called (Hemdan), a Hebrew name, meaning (pleasant).

“Eshban”; probably means (a thinker or smart) one of the princes of Mount Seir (Genesis 36: 26).

Ithran"; (Genesis 36: 26); A Hebrew name, meaning (a favor); A Horite prince.

"Cheran"; (Genesis 36: 26)A Semite name, probably meaning (like a lamb).

The sons of Ezer were: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Jaakan

And the sons of Dishan were: Uz, and Aran (42).

"Zaavan"; (Genesis 36: 20-21); A Hebrew name, meaning (disturbed, and not calm).; A Horite prince. At the time of Exodus the children of Zaavan formed a tribe that occupied a province at the frontier of Edom, close to Mount 'Hor', where Aaron died; The Israelites took over some of their wells (Number 20: 21-23).

"Uz"; (Genesis 10: 23); To him the tribe of the Aramites belong; a tribe that also belonged to 'Nahor' (Genesis 22: 20), and to Dishan the Horite (Genesis 36: 28). The righteous 'Job' lived in the land of 'Uz' (Job 1: 1).

"Aran"; meaning (a wild kid goat) ; He is probably 'Ram' one of the descendants of Jerahmeel (1 Chronicles 2: 25). It was the custom among the Arabs to call someone or a family by the name of an animal; as it is still followed in Syria, like the family of 'Asaad (lion), Nimr (tiger), and Gazaal (deer). More than one third of the Horites (the descendants of Seir), and some of the Edomites, bear the names of animals. The name 'Seir', itself. means, (a kid goat); and 'Dishon means (deer).

f- The kings of Edom:

These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites. 'Bela, son of Beor'; the name of his city being 'Dinhabah' (43)

This book recorded for us the descendants of 'Edom' (Esau), who were enemies of Israel. 'Esau' was the firstborn of Isaac the son of Abraham, the man of faith; But having married heathen women, who were bitterness to the life of Rebekah, Isaac's wife, and mother of Esau and Jacob, the Edomite nation, idol-worshippers, and enemies of the truth, was established.

“Bela, son of Beor”; (Genesis 36: 32); A Hebrew name, meaning (swallowing); He was a king over Edom.

“Dinhabah”; (Genesis 36: 32); An Edomite name, probably meaning (he who gives a judgment); Its location nowadays is probably ‘Kherbet (ruins) of El-Den’, a town in Moab, south of ‘Arnon’.

Bela died, and Jobab son of Zerah of Bozrah succeeded him as king (44).

“Jobab”; (Genesis 36: 33); a Hebrew name, probably meaning (screams); the son of Joktan’ (23); The location where that Arab tribe inhabited is unknown. One of the kings of Moab carried the same name (Genesis 36: 23-34; 1 Chronicles 1: 14-15).

Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites succeeded him as king (45)

“Husham”; (Genesis 36: 34); A Hebrew name, meaning (haste or excitement).

Husham died, and Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, succeeded him as king, the name of his city being Avith (46)

“Hadad” or “Hadar”; (Genesis 36: 35-36); A Semite name, meaning (brave). There was another Edomite king by the same name (Genesis 36: 39); the name of his city was ‘fahi’ or ‘Faho’.

“Avith”; (Genesis 36: 35); An Edomite name, meaning (ruins); an Edomite province; birthplace of king Hadad; probably ‘Place of the corpse’ nowadays, close to ‘Maan’.

Hadad dies, and Samlah of Masrekah succeeded him as king (47)

“Samlah”; (Genesis 36: 36); A Hebrew name, meaning (a garment); he reigned long before there was any king of Israel; the name of his capital was Mesrekah.

“Masrekah”; (Genesis 36: 36); An Edomite name, probably meaning (a vineyard); an Edomite city, the birthplace of ‘Samleh’ king of Edom, located at Mount Meshrak. 22 miles South of ‘Massan’.

Samleh died, and Saul of Rehoboth-by-the River succeeded him as king (48)

“Saul” of Rehoboth; (Genesis 36: 37); Saul a Hebrew name, meaning (asked from God).

Saul died, and Baal-Hanan son of Achbor succeeded him as king (49)

“Ashbor”; (Genesis 36: 38); A Semite name, meaning (rat).

Baal-Hanan son of Achbor died, and Hadad succeeded him as king; the name of his city being Pai; his wife’s name was Mehetabel the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab (50)

“Mehetabel daughter of Matred”; (Genesis 36: 39); A Semite name, meaning (to whom God does good); wife of Hadad king of Edom.

Hadad died; These are the names of the princes of Edom, according to their names and their localities: Timna; Aliah; Jetheth; Oholibamah; Elah; Pinon (51)

“Oholibamah”; (Genesis 36: 41); A Hebrew name, meaning (My tent is on a high place); Esau’s wife bore the same name, she was daughter of Anah the Horite (Genesis 36: 2); and was also called ‘Judith’

“Elah”; (or **Elath**); A Hebrew name, meaning (Oak tree).

“Pinon”; (Genesis 36: 41) An Edomite prince, probably lived in the city of ‘Ponon’, on the West side of ‘Araba’, 5 ½ miles on the East side of ‘Kherbet Nahas’.

The princes Kenaz; Teman; Mibzar (52)

“**Kenaz**”; (Genesis 36: 42); A Semite name, probably meaning (a catch); name of the son of ‘Eliphaz, son of ‘Esau’.

“**Teman**”; (Genesis 36: 42); A Hebrew name, meaning (the right-hand or the southern); the name of the firstborn of Eliphaz son of Esau.

“**Mibzar**”; (Genesis 36: 42); A Hebrew name, meaning (a stronghold).

The princes Magdiel and Iram; These were the princes of Edom (53)

“**Magdiel**”; (Genesis 36: 43); An Edomite name, meaning (the glory of God)

“**Iram**”; (Genesis 36: 43); A Hebrew name, meaning (cautious).

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 1

A GENEALOGY, OR A JOURNEY WITH GOD?!

- + By Your Holy Spirit, Open my eyes;
To enjoy the sweetness of the joyful journey of living together with You;
I stand in awe and amazement before the works of Your love;
In the genealogies (1 Chronicles 1-9), I see an enjoyable journey together with You;
I shall not start it unless I cast myself in Your bosoms;
And I feel Your company with me;
For I see You, the start and the end of the journey;
Being the Bearer of my depths, I rest on Your shoulders all along the way.

- + The Jews cared to record the genealogies; For every believer to know to which tribe he belongs;

And to know his portion in the promised land in Canaan;
As for me, I count myself as though belong to the tribe of the heavenlies;
I do not look forward, except toward the heavenly Canaan; my eternal inheritance;
You are my Portion, riches, treasure, joy, and crown;
Grant me to encounter some of my fathers;
To enter into an open talk of love;
To enjoy the journey of my life;
Encountering Adam, I see him exultant and happy;
I hear him say: My God granted me another son – Seth – to comfort me;
Whom I see almost having my image before I corrupt;
Whom I see a symbol of the new Adam; My Savior, and Savior of my descendants;
I was so comforted, together with my wife; that we remembered ‘Cain; his brother’s killer, no
more;
I no longer saw him fearful and trembling; as though the whole creation is against him;
I no longer grieve for Abel, whose blood cries out to heaven;
I rejoiced, O my Savior, to see my descendants attached to You;
By Your blood, O Lover of mankind, You reformed what I corrupted in the life of all my
descendants.

+ I set forth from Adam and Eve, to their grandson Enoch;
I exulted to see him; and perceived what the prophet Moses wrote about him;
“Enoch started to call the name of the Lord” (Genesis 4: 26);
I saw how he was distinguished, on account of that he was the first to praise God
unceasingly;
I saw how his heart was ablaze with Your love, to praise You day and night;
I saw how he became the first teacher of the life of praise
I wish to see all the descendants of Adam, partake of the praise by the heavenlies.

+ I was drawn to the personality of his grandson Mahalalel
Whose life was in harmony with his name; who did not cease to exult in You;
Whose heart knew nothing but thanksgiving to the Lord;

Among his descendants he presented to us 'Enoch', who was worthy of being "taken away" by the Lord;

Let me say together with Solomon the Sage: "*The Lord took him up, lest evil may probably change his mind*"

God "took him away" because he was living among the sinners (Wisdom 4: 10-11);

When he was "taken away" to heaven, 'Enoch' flew on the wings of love (Genesis 5: 24).

+ 'Enoch' swiftly passed his days of sojourn, and the Lord "took him away" from the face of evil;
Then came his son Methoselah, although his life was too long, yet it ended up by death;
The years of his life passed like a moment;
We are not preoccupied with the number of years he lived.

+ His son 'Lamech' opened up a serious door in human life;
He did not commit himself to one wife, like his grandfather Adam;
'Lamech' was the first to marry two women;
By that he corrupted the concept of the marital love, and the purity of the family;
We may say, together with St. (Mar) Ephraim, that by so doing, his life was filled with trouble;
He looked forward to the Messiah, born by a virgin, to grant him comfort and righteousness

+ I quickly passed to the righteous 'Noah', in the midst of a dark and pervert generation;
Whom God commanded to build an ark, before He drowns the whole world;
Noah and his three sons, together with their women, began a new world;
It was as though Noah and his family got baptized in the water of the great flood;
The ark kept them safe; as though they enjoyed a symbol of the church of the new covenant;
The outer world was renewed; to renew our inner life.

+ When Noah got himself naked, his wicked son 'Ham' mocked him;
Whereas Shem and Japheth reverently covered him up;
I saw in Noah Your image, Who got drunk by Your love for us;
Who got naked on the cross to carry our reproach;
The Jews, Your crucifiers mocked You;

But the Gentiles believed in You, and became members in Your Holy body.

- + I exulted to encounter with the father of all believers – Abraham;
For, while Adam was the general father of all mankind; Abraham was the general father of all believers;

While Adam tore off the garment of purity and of obedience to the Grantor of goodness;
And while in Adam, we became branches in the wild olive tree;
By faith we spiritually became the descendants of Abraham;
We became grafted in the olive tree, fruitful through the work of the Holy Spirit.

- + By Isaac, the son of the promise, we reached our sonhood in God;
Isaac filled his father's heart with joy and gladness;
And we, by the Holy Spirit of God became the object of pleasure to the Father.

- + Isaac, the son of obedience, begot Jacob, father of all the tribes;
For my sake, O my Savior, You came, not to let me belong to any of the tribes;
Nor to inherit a portion in the promised land;
But to grant me Yourself, a portion for myself; to exult in You forever;
You are everything to Me, O the desire of my heart.

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CHAPTER 2

THE TRIBE OF JUDAH

In the first chapter, the author presented the two sons of Isaac: Esau and Israel (1: 34). Very concisely he presented the descendants of Esau (1: 35-54). Starting here with the descendants of Israel, he refers to the twelve sons to follow up their genealogies; in which it is to be noticed:

1- He disregarded the genealogies of the two tribes: Dan and Zebulun.

2- He did not start by the tribe of Reuben, the firstborn according to the flesh; on account of that he lost his firstborn right, for defiling his father's bed (Genesis 35; 22;; 49: 4). By that he lost two privileges: the first to be the foremost among his brothers; and the second to get a double portion of inheritance. The tribe of Judah became the foremost in blessing; and Joseph got the double portion: one to his son Ephraim and the other to Manasseh.

3- He concentrated clearly on the genealogies of Judah, the foremost in blessing, representing the royal line chosen by God; from which will come David the son of Jesse; and the King of kings will come incarnate as his descendant.

4- The tribe of Judah occupied a greater part than all the other tribes (2: 3-4; 4: 23); 19 chapters were dedicated for David (Chapters 10 to 29), of the tribe of Judah; And the entire second book of the chronicles was

dedicated for David's household, starting by his son Solomon (Chapters 1 to 9); up to the Babylonian captivity, then the return from captivity (Chapters 10 to 36); when the kingdom of Judah embraced the two tribes Judah and Benjamin, together with the godly men and the Levites who departed from the Northern kingdom Israel, and

joined the southern kingdom. Judah has been the prominent among the tribes (Ezra 4: 4, 6); And from them the Israelites were called “Jews”, as derived from the word: ‘Judah’.

Judah had two genealogies, one from ‘Caleb’, (not Caleb, mentioned in Numbers 13); and the other from David (3: 1-24).

General remarks:

Through the genealogies came scattered significant remarks; among which were God’s dealings with three persons: two wicked, and one godly:

The first wicked man was “Er”: *“Er, the firstborn of Judah was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and He killed him”* (2: 3). And the second wicked man was: *“Achar” or “Achan”, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the accursed thing* (2: 7). The godly man was *“Janez” who was more honorable than his brothers; his mother so called him, saying: Because I bore him in pain* (4: 9).

With the will of God, we shall go back to those remarks in their places.

1- The sons of Jacob (Israel)	1 -- 2
2- From Judah to David	3 - 17
3- The family of Hezron	18 -- 24
4- The family of Jerahmeel	25 -- 41
5- The family of Caleb	42 – 55

1- THE SONS OF JACOB (ISRAEL):

“These are the sons of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher” (1, 2).

He starts with the sons of Jacob, called 'Israel' by God; yet not according to the order of their birth.

The names of the sons of Jacob, and the names of the twelve tribes, came more than 20 times in the Holy Book; in different order every time, according to the goal of mentioning them. It came three times in the first book of the chronicles (2: 1-2; 2: 3-8: 34; 12: 23-27). I intend to write an annex concerning the order of those tribes as they came in the important locations of the Holy Book.

The book here, does not refer to any event in the life of Jacob, but is preoccupied with recording his name granted to him by God "*Israel*"; as it refers to the bond by which the twelve tribes are connected to him.

In the midst of anguish, Jacob "*put his head on a stone, and lay down in that place to see the heavens open, and a heaven ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching the heavens*" (Genesis 28: 12 – 15). On that location, Jacob got a divine promise for him and his descendants: "*All the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go; And will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you*" (Genesis 28: 14- 15).. What is the secret of the blessing in him and in his offspring, other than in his backbone is Judah who will beget David, from whose descendants the Word of God will incarnate, He who will bless all the tribes of the earth by His crucifixion and resurrection?!

- + The (rock) underneath his head is Christ. He had no rock underneath his head before the time he fled from his persecutor. When he was living in comfort and peace in his father's house he did not enjoy having a rock underneath his head. He departed from home alone and poor; he had nothing but his staff; But in the same evening he found a rock to put underneath his head that also found comfort in the vision he saw.

(St. Jerome)

In the following chapters he talked about the genealogies of the twelve tribes. It so seems that the author is in a great hurry to reach the rising up of the kingdom of David, with which the two books of the chronicles are preoccupied. He intends to talk about the household of David sitting on the throne, to bring our mind forth to the Son of David, the King of kings.

We notice that, in mentioning the sons of Jacob (Israel), he did not follow the order of birth; but started by the sons of 'Leah'; then the two sons of Rachel (Joseph and Benjamin), between Dan and Naphtali, the sons of Bilhah; and ends by the sons of Zilpah the slave girl of Leah (Gad and Asher).

And we also notice, in the genealogies, that he cared for those of the two tribes (Judah and Levi); the royal tribe, and the priesthood tribe. The genealogy of Judah occupied 102 verses; of Levi 81 verses; while those of all the other tribes together 126 verses.

He intended to show the cooperation between the tribes, despite the differences between them. Every tribe consummates the rest of the tribes, and in need of them, and they need it, and could not do without it; in particular the royal tribe and the priesthood tribe. We shall see this practically and clearly, when all the tribes met together in Hebron around David to make him a king over all of them. Every tribe evaluates what it has of possibilities and talents, not by a spirit of competition, jealousy, pride, or haughtiness; but as it is said: *"All these men of war, came to Hebron with a loyal heart to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest of Israel were of one mind to make David king; For there was joy in Israel"* (1 Chronicles 12: 38-40).

The following are an example of the privilege of some of the tribes:

- a- The tribe of **Judah**: The most prominent and the royal tribe,
- b- The tribe of **Levi**: From them came the priests, sons of Kohath and the Levites with there diverse roles in ministry, guarding, and praise.
- c- The tribe of **Benjamin**: Who always were in the company of the tribe of Judah, wherever they went; They were ahead of the others in choosing David a king; although they were brothers of Saul, the oppressor of David.
- d- **Joseph**, who got two portions; the only one to become two tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh).

With the will of God, we shall go back to talk about all the tribes, particularly Judah and Levi. But here, we wish to confirm that the sons of Jacob or Israel, have found in David, the king and the leader who embraces all together, and who works for the glory of God.

The sons of Jacob carry symbols; Joseph in particular, beloved by his father; and was, according to the fathers, a symbol of the Lord Christ:

+ Jacob loved his son; for the Father loves His only begotten Son, saying: "*This is My beloved Son*" (Matthew 3: 17).

(Father Caesarius, bishop of Arle)

+ Joseph was persecuted by his own brothers. Joseph was glorified, his persecutors prostrated themselves before him; and his dreams and visions were fulfilled.

Joseph was clothed by his father with a multi-colored robe; And Jesus was clothed by a body from the Virgin by His Father.

Joseph was beloved by his father more than his brothers; And Jesus was the dear beloved by His Father.

Joseph saw visions and dreamt dreams; which were fulfilled in Jesus.

Joseph was a shepherd, together with his brothers; And Jesus was the Shepherd of shepherds.

Joseph was sent by his father to visit his brothers; When they saw him coming, they planned to kill him; And when the Father sent Jesus to visit His brethren, they said: "*This is the Heir. Come, let us kill Him*" (Matthew 21: 38).

Joseph's brothers cast him in a well; And Jesus was cast by His brethren to dwell among the dead.

Joseph ascended from the well; And Jesus resurrected from among the dead.

After getting out of the well, Joseph came to be of authority over his brothers; And Jesus, after dwelling among the dead, was given by His Father, a great and glorified name (Philippians 2: 9); to be served by His brethren, and to have His enemies submit under His feet.

Joseph after his brothers recognized him, were ashamed, feared, and were astonished before his greatness; And when Jesus, comes at the end of time, and proclaims His greatness, His brethren will be ashamed, fear, and tremble before Him, for having crucified Him.

Joseph was sold to Egypt, according to the counsel of Judah; And Jesus was delivered to the Jews by the hand of Judas Iscariot.

When Joseph was sold, he did not say a single word to his brothers; And Jesus, as well, did not utter a word to the judges who tried Him.

Joseph was unjustly put in prison by his master; And Jesus was unjustly condemned by His own people.

Joseph delivered his two garments: one into the hands of his brothers, and the other in the hand of his master's wife; And Jesus' garments were divided among the soldiers.

When Joseph was 30 years old, he stood before Pharaoh; and came to be the master of Egypt; And when Jesus was 30 years old, He came to the Jordan to be baptized, received the Spirit, and came to preach.

Joseph sustained Egypt with bread; And Jesus sustained all the world with the bread of life.

Joseph was married to the daughter of the evil and defiled priest; And Jesus betrothed for Himself the church from the defiled Gentiles.

Joseph died and was buried in Egypt; And Jesus died and was buried in Jerusalem.

Joseph's bones were taken up by his brothers from Egypt; And Jesus was risen by His Father from the dwelling place of the dead, put on His body, and ascended with it, uncorrupted, to heaven.

(St. Aphrahat the wise Persian)

2- FROM JUDAH TO DAVID:

"The sons of Judah were: Er, Onan, and Shelah. These three were born to him by the daughter of Shua, the Canaanitess. Er, the firstborn of Judah was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and He killed him" (3)

The first book of the chronicles concentrates around the tribe of Judah, despite the fact that Judah is the fourth son of Jacob, to hasten to bring the believer to encounter the prophet David; And to get to know, in the second book of the chronicles, the household of David, particularly the kings among them, whether Solomon before the dissension, or his son Rehoboam and all the other kings of Judah after the dissension up till their fall under the Babylonian captivation, then the return to Jerusalem. The goal of these two book is to bring every soul forth to the enjoyment of the Son of David, the incarnate Word, who set His kingdom in the heart of the true believer.

Judah was the prominent among his brothers, for from him the Messiah will come; having been blessed by his father, saying: *"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and the obedience of the people is his"* (Genesis 48: 10).

Despite all that, about Judah, he who occupied the position of the firstborn, for his tribe to become the royal tribe, the leader of Israel, the Holy Book reveals the weaknesses of Judah, among which are:

A- His marriage to a Canaanite girl (the daughter of Shua) (Genesis 38: 1-3). The Holy Book did not attempt to conceal this fact, but repeated it in (1 Chronicles 2: 3); to confirm that choosing Judah as a royal tribe, from whose descendants the Word of God will incarnate, is not set upon human righteousness, nor self-worthiness; but through the amazing grace of God. Concerning that wrong decision of his marriage to a Canaanite girl, he has opened the door of hope before the Gentiles; proclaiming that salvation is presented to all: to the Jew, as well as to the Gentile.

The word “Shua”, a Semite name, meaning (rich). Whether Judah married her for the sake of the riches of her Canaanite father, or of her beauty; God, with His grace, granted him to have from his descendants the Creator of heaven and earth, the Source of the true riches and beauty.

B- The daughter of ‘Shua’ gave birth to the three sons of Judah: Er, Onan, and Shelah. About his firstborn, it was written: *“He was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and He killed him”*. “Er” is a Hebrew name, meaning (cautious). Neither the book of Genesis nor the first book of the chronicles mentioned the sin of “Er”.

c- Dying childless, his brother Onan married ‘Tamar’, his brother ‘Er’s widow to get a son, to be referred to his deceased brother. Yet, when Onan died childless, as well, Judah, for fear that his third son ‘Shelah too would die like his brothers; he did not let him marry her (Genesis 38: 6-11). Tamar, resorting to a trick to have a child, she put off her widow’s garments, put on a veil, wrapped herself up, and sat down at the entrance of the city. Thinking that she was a harlot, Judah sought to sleep with her, and when she conceived of him, and he commanded to have

her burned, she proclaimed that what she has in her womb is his. Here, Judah confessed that Tamar, wife of his wicked son 'Er' was more righteous than him..

That is Judah whose tribe, has become later on the royal tribe. God's choice to incarnate from that tribe, headed by Judah, and to have in His genealogy 'Tamar' the widow of the wicked 'Er', confirms that His coming was for the sake of the sinners, and all the Gentiles, to open up the gates of heaven before every man who gets attached to Him, whatever his past, family, or race. He is the Lover of all mankind.

Despite the fact that Reuben is the firstborn of Jacob, yet the genealogies here, start with Judah, the fourth son of Jacob; on account of that the tribe of Judah is the royal tribe, and the Lord Christ, the incarnate Word will come from its descendants (Genesis 38: 2-10, 13-30); And from it, as well, came king David, and St. Mary, in whose womb the King of kings incarnated.

Although the tribe of Judah had the prominence, yet the Lord killed the firstborn of Judah for his wickedness in His sight.

The horrible sin of Reuben, for which the Holy Book did not mention that he ever repented, has cost him much:

- 1- Loss of his firstborn rights.
- 2- Loss of any possibility that the Messiah would ever come from his descendants.
- 3- Loss of his life.

His name became a reproach in the record of his tribe; according to the words of the Psalmist: *"For evildoers shall be cut off ; but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth"* (Psalm 37: 9).

+ According to the testimony of the Psalmist, the tongue of those evildoers, is a sharp sword, and their teeth are spears and arrows (Psalm 57: 4). Yet it is amazing that while attacking others, they do them no harm as

much as they are torn by their own tongues, on account of that they bear within themselves the anger, hate, envy, deception, and bitterness. ... According to the Psalmist: "Their sword enters their own hearts"; And according to Solomon the Sage: : "*His own iniquities entrap the wicked man; and he is caught in the cords of his sin*" (Proverb 5: 22)

(Pope St. Athanasius the Apostolic)

We may wonder why has God chosen the tribe of Judah to be the royal tribe, despite of the already mentioned shortcomings?!

It so seem to me that David, a descendant of Judah, has been chosen to have the incarnate Word of God come of his descendants, for the following reasons:

- 1- For the sake of the purity of his heart; about whom, God Himself testified that he is according to God's heart (Acts 13: 22).
- 2- For he exalted up to the commandment of the new covenant, while being under the shadow of the law; when he loved 'Saul' who bore bitter animosity toward him, and who tried with all his possibilities and might to have him killed.
- 3- He did not preoccupy himself with receiving the throne, despite God's promise to him when he was still a young boy; but he was only preoccupied with the kingdom of heaven.
- 4- He was the first man of praise, even in the midst of his tribulations.
- 5- In many circumstances, he was a symbol of the Lord Christ, as we shall see in the annex of the tenth chapter.
- 6- With every fall into sin, he drenched his bed with his tears all night long.

- 7- He dedicated his zeal and energies to prepare the materials and systems for building the house of the Lord, although God rejected his request to build it himself, and promised him that his son will be the one to do it.

So, it is for the sake of David, who was in the backbone of his grandfather Judah, that tribe was chosen to have this privilege. If the tribe of Judah had their faults, and so had David himself, Yet that did not deny David the testimony of God Himself concerning him. That is why we should not marvel to hear about the Lord Christ as being the Son of David, despite his shortcomings; up to this very day; and as the Son of Judah, nor even of Abraham.

How amazing is the love of God! The blessing of the purity of David's heart, and of the tears of his true repentance, had their activity on his ancestors, even on Judah the son of Jacob, and his tribe; and extended to his descendants, as we shall see in our study of the second book of the chronicles.

- + Some may marvel to see how St. Matthew the Evangelist, mentioned among the genealogy of the Lord Christ, the name of 'Tamar', that acted like a harlot, of 'Ruth', and to the wife of Uriah the Hittite, whom David married after killing her man; when he did not mention the names of saintly women like Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel!

Proclaiming that the Lord, born according to the flesh, He who became sin for the sake of all, and who was subjected to reproach and crucifixion; Matthew believed that it would not be fitting of him to show Him as though He defends Himself for having sinners among His ancestors.... The same way, the church is not ashamed to proclaim that she was chosen from among the sinners!

(St. Ambrose)

“**Onan**”, the second son of Judah (1 Chronicles 2: 3)

“**Shelah**”; a Hebrew name, meaning (a request); the third son of Judah (1 Chronicles 2: 3)

•
And “Tamar” his daughter-in law, bore him Perez and Zerah; All the sons of Judah were five” (4)

“**Tamar**”: We have already spoken about her in our commentary on the last verse; and saw how she, like any Hebrew woman, desired to have a son, even from her own father-in-law; on account of that she desired to have the Savior Messiah come from her descendants; a request fulfilled by God.

Consenting to subject her life to the danger of getting stoned as a harlot, she put off the garments of her widowhood, and put on a veil on her face; was not ashamed to appear as a harlot, not for the sake of the lust of the body, but for that of having a son. She attached herself to her father-in-law, an elderly man ... And to show her purity, having revealed the truth, she did not seek to marry her husband’s brother, but chose to live with her father-in law; and it is written: “*He did not lie with her again*”(Genesis 38: 26)

For the sake of her faith, she desired to have a son; When Judah, in his advanced age, committed adultery ... He says: “*She is more on the right than me*” (Genesis 38: 26). ... ‘Tamar’ became for us a living example that keeps us from judgment, whatever are the obvious signs of sin. St. Ambrose commented much on this phrase “*She is more on the right than me*”, in his talk about the repentance, asking everyone – even a bishop – not to judge anyone , but to show compassion and mercy upon the sinners. Of his words:

+ O Lord, Grant me to have the falls of all men before my eyes; to carry them together with them, Grant me not to rebuke them in pride; but to grieve and weep; As in weeping for the sake of others, I weep on myself, saying: “*She is more on the right than me*”.

Let us assume that a certain girl fell into sin; being deceived and swayed along by certain circumstances that stir up sins. Well! We, the more aged may fall as well; for *“another law in our members is warring against the law of our mind, and bringing us into captivity of the law of sin which is in our members”* (Romans 7: 23) to do what we do not intend to do. She, with her young age, may have an excuse; But what is my excuse?! She has to learn by her faults; But, as far as I am concerned, I am committed to know that *“She is more on the right than me”*.

I wish we would not be ashamed to confess that our sins are more horrible than those by whom we see as worthy of rebuke. For that what Judah did, who intended to rebuke ‘Tamar’, but remembering his sin, he said: *“She is more on the right than me”*. He accused himself before being accused by others.

(St.. Ambrose)

By such a positive action, ‘Tamar’ became worthy of being a grandmother of the Lord Christ; of having her blood run in His veins; that St. Matthew the Evangelist included her name in the genealogy of the Lord Christ (Matthew 1: 23); when he did not include those of Sarah, Rebecca, or Rachel, nor any of the other blessed mothers.

‘Tamar’ was a symbol of the congregation of the Gentiles, who became to be a holy church of the Lord; who has been fruitless like ‘Tamar’, a deserted widow, with no one to support nor to sustain; whose first kinsman ‘Shelah’ did not marry, and she attached herself to her second kinsman ‘Judah’. The same way, the congregation of the Gentiles did not attach themselves to the first (kinsman) namely to the Mosaic law, nor was committed to circumcision and Judaism, but attached themselves to the second (Kinsman), namely the true Judah, our Lord Jesus Christ, who comes from the tribe of Judah.

It is amazing how the behavior of Tamar, as mentioned in chapter 38 of the book of Genesis, bears many symbols that conform to what the mother church has enjoyed; of which are:

a- Tamar put off her widow's garments to attach herself to Judah (Genesis 38: 14); And the Gentiles put off the garments of the old man to put on the new man who befits her union with the eternal Groom; Or let us say that the

Lord Christ Himself has become her new garment.

b- Tamar put on a veil on her face (Genesis 38: 15); And the Gentiles, accepting faith, are living here as though looking dimly in a mirror, until they encounter the Groom face to face, to see Him in the perfection of His glory,

and the greatness of His splendor; and to recognize His exalted secrets.

c- Tamar sat down at the entrance of Enaim (Genesis 38: 14), namely, the entrance of (the two springs); As though she is the church of the Gentiles that came to enjoy not only the spring of the old covenant, but of the new as

well.

d- Tamar enjoyed taking the signet, the cord, and the staff of Judah (Genesis 38: 18); And the church of the Gentiles enjoyed the signet of adoption to God, the heavenly crown, together with the life-giving tree of the cross.

e- The signs of pregnancy appeared after three months (Genesis 38: 24); as though she is the church of the Gentiles that bore spiritual fruits through her faith in the Holy Trinity, and her enjoyment of the resurrected life in

Christ Jesus, who was risen on the third day.

+ Tamar desired to have children from her father-in-law, when she saw that her mother-in-law died That was not out of impurity on her part – far from it – but to avoid being without remembrance. ... What happened

was actually through a divine plan, through which her own plan was realized.

I wish whoever listen to this, refrain from blaming Tamar; for as I said, she was consummating a divine plan; Judah, himself, did not charge her of Prostitution..

You should notice here that the genealogy of the Lord Christ carries her two sons. In particular, who symbolize the two peoples and the two lives, namely, the Jewish life and the spiritual life.

+ For fear that Judah would probably have her killed in revenge for being the cause of the death of his two sons to whom she was married, she sought a pledge from him ...While seeking it from God, Judah came out and saw her; Her prayers to God, made him, against his regular nature, go over to a harlot on the roadside, and by his own tongue, said to her: "Come now, let me sleep with you". Once she realized that God was not angry with what she did, she removed her veil, and sought the reward from the Lord of rewards.

(St. (Mar) Ephraim the Syrian)

Commenting on that issue, St. Cyril the Great says: [The goal of the Holy Book is not to narrate the life of saints, but rather to present to us the knowledge of the secret of Christ through those facts, that make our talk about Him true and clear].

God, by His grace, included Tamar among the ancestress of David, and subsequently of the Lord Christ

Perez and Zerah:

The Lord Christ came as a descendant of Perez to whom Tamar gave birth. Perez, while still in his mother's womb, at the time of delivery, breached his way against his twin brother Zerah, and took the firstbirth status from him (Genesis 38: 27-30). "*When the time of her delivery came, there were twins in her womb. While she was in labor,*

one put out a hand, and the midwife took and bound on his hand a crimson thread, saying: 'This one came out first'. But just then he drew back his hand, and out came his brother; and she said, 'What a breach you have made for yourself'. Therefore he was named Perez. Afterward, his brother came out with the crimson thread on his hand, and he was named Zerah”.

According to some fathers, Zerah symbolizes the Jewish people, who should have been the firstborn; who put out his hand and received the law, concentrated around the sacrifice (the crimson blood); but through their disbelief, Perez came out, as a representative of the Gentiles, who came to have the firstbirth status of the Spirit, instead of Zerah (the Jews).

The sons of Perez were Hezrun and Hamul (5):

The first and the second sons of Judah died childless; and the genealogies of their third son were only mentioned (Genesis 46: 12; Numbers 26: 21).

“**Hezrun**”; a Hebrew name, meaning (a siege or a livestock fold). The firstborn of Perez, and the founder of a family in Judah (1 Chronicles 2: 5). Among the list of the grandchildren of Judah (5-6), special care was given to ‘Hezrun’, and to his third son ‘Caleb’ (18-20, 42-55); yet it was the second son of Perez who occupied the first place, for from his descendants came the family of David. (2: 10-17).

“**Hamul**”; a Hebrew name, meaning (to be lamented, or to endure); the youngest son of Perez, and the founder of a family in Judah (1 Chronicles 2: 5).

The sons of Zerah were: Zemri, Ethan, Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, five in all (6):

“**Zemri**”, came as ‘Zabdi’ in (Joshua 7: 1), and in (1 Kings 4: 31). According to some, Zerah was their grandfather and not their father.

Those five were called 'the sons of Mahol' (1 Kings 4: 31), and were to them being famed for their wisdom, which was not surpassed except by that of Solomon who was said to be "*wiser than all men, from Ethan, Heman, Chalcul, and Darda, the sons of Mahol*"; As there is the word 'Mahol' among the musical instruments (Psalm 149: 3; 150: 4), and also used in dancing, some believe that those wise man were musicians, whose wisdom was shown more in composing songs of praise.

Ethan and Heman: Who became composers of inspired psalms (Psalm 88-89); They are others than the musicians set by David: 'Heman, Asaph, and Ethan' (1 Chronicles 15: 19), who were from the tribe of Levi, and not from the tribe of Judah (1 Chronicles 6: 33-44)

And the son of Carmi was Achar, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the accursed thing (7).

From Joshua 7: 1 it appears that 'Carmi' was the son of 'Zabdi' or 'Zemri'; and 'Achar' was 'Achan' the troubler of Israel, whose name in Hebrew means (the troubler or a calamity). The story of his treason came in (Joshua 7): "*The children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah took of the accursed things, so the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel*" (Joshua 7: 1); He said: "*When I saw among the spoil a Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent with the silver under it*" (Joshua 7: 21).

It is befitting of us To be aware lest the enemy would crawl into us through the little things; For, according to St. Mark the Hermit: [The devil presents to us little sins that may seem in our eyes as of no great weight; because without this he would not be able to lead us to the great sins].

Because 'Achan' sinned, God's wrath came down upon all the children of Israel. Commenting on the wedge (or the tongue) of gold stolen, the scholar origin says: [It is befitting of us not to disregard the phrase saying that "when one man commits a sin, the anger of God would come upon the whole people". ... How could such a calamity happen? When a priest intends to appear as forgiving with the sinners, because they actually fear their (tongues) lest they would stir them up against his person; forgetting the firmness befitting to his priesthood; he, by such action would not follow the inspired written instruction, saying: "*Those who are sinning, rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear*" (1 Timothy 5: 20); and, "*Put away from yourselves that wicked person*" (1 Corinthians 5: 13). Such a priest is not kindled with jealousy for the Lord, and does not follow the command of the apostle, saying: "*Deliver such one to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, but his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*" (1 Corinthians 5: 5). He disregards the counsel of the Holy Book concerning the sinners, saying: "*If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother; but if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church, But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector*" (Matthew 18: 15-17).

+ Great was their punishment (because of Achan). But a greater punishment will come on us if we do not learn a lesson from what happened to them..

(St. John Chrysostom)

The son of Ethan was Azariah (8)

"Azariah"; a Hebrew name, meaning (whom Jehovah helped). More than one bore this name; among whom were:

1- The son of Ethan, of the sons of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah (1 Chronicles 2: 8); And,

2- The son of Jehu, the son of Obed, of the family of Jerahmeel (1 Chronicles 2: 38-39).

Also the sons of Heron who were born to him were: Jerahmeel, Ram, and Chelubai (9)

What came in verses 8 to 10 here, are quoted from (Ruth 4: 19-22).

“Jerahmeel”; a Hebrew name, meaning (God has mercy). He is the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, of the tribe of Judah (1 Chronicles 2: 4-9, 25, 26, 33, 42).

“Ram”: a Hebrew name, meaning (high or exalted), More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- One of the tribe of Judah, a son of ‘Hezron’ (1 Chronicles 2: 9-10).
- 2- One of the tribe of Judah, one of the sons of Jerahmeel (1 Chronicles 2: 25, 27).

“Chelubai”: the son of Hezron, who is ‘Caleb’ (1 Chronicles 2: 9, 18, 42).

Ram begot Amminadab, and Amminadab begot Nashon, leader of the children of Judah (10).

This list is surely not complete; as between ram the son of Hezron, and Nashon the son of Amminadab, there were three generations. For Nashon the son of Amminadab was the head of the tribe of Judah in the wilderness in the days of the prophet Moses (Exodus 6: 23; Numbers 1: 7; 2: 3).. His son ‘Salmo’ married ‘Rahab’ the harlot after the fall of ‘Hebron’ (Matthew 1: 5)

Nashon begot Salmo, and Salmo begot Boaz (11)

Here there are, as well, three generations missing, before reaching to ‘Boaz’ the husband of ‘Ruth’, grandfather of ‘Jesse’, father of ‘David’.

“Salmo” (11) is “Salmon” (Ruth 4: 20).

“Boaz”: was distinguished being simple, yet wise. When he discovered the truth about ‘Ruth’ the Moabite, the poor foreign widow, holding fast to the living God, and her faithfulness to her mother-in-law, he took positive action, embraced ‘Ruth’ despite being a Moabite; which qualified them to have among their descendants David the king, and Jesus Christ the Son of David, the Savior of the world (See the book of Ruth).

Boaz begot Obed, and Obed begot Jesse (12)

“Obed”; a Hebrew name, meaning (a slave). More than one bore this name, among whom were:

1-The son of Ruth and Boaz, the father of Jesse, the father of David (1 Chronicles 2: 12). In the genealogies of Judah, special care was given to ‘Jesse’ the father of ‘David’ (10-12), then for his descendants (13-15)

2- The son of ‘Ephlal’, a descendant of ‘Sheshan’ of the tribe of Judah (1 Chronicles 2: 37).

“Jesse”; a Hebrew name, probably meaning (a man). The son of ‘Obed’, father of ‘David’, the grandson of ‘Ruth’ and ‘Boaz’, and father of seven sons with descendants (1 Chronicles 2: 15); and an eighth son who died childless. Jesse begot two daughters from a wife other than David’s mother (1 Chronicles 2: 16)

Jesse begot Eliab his firstborn, Abinadab the second, Shimea the third (13)

“Eliab”; a Hebrew name, meaning (God is a Father).

“Abinadab”; a Hebrew name, meaning (The father is generous).

“Shimea”; a Hebrew name, meaning (God listens) or (Jehovah listens)

Nethanel the fourth, Raddai the fifth (14);;

“**Nethanel**”; a Hebrew name, meaning (God has given); the fourth son of Jesse, namely, David’s brother. (1 Chronicles 2: 14)

“**Raddai**”; a Hebrew name, probably meaning (Jehovah has submitted); the fifth son of Jesse; namely, David’s brother (1 Chronicles 2: 14).

Ozem the sixth, and David the seventh (15)

“**Ozem**”; a Hebrew name, probably meaning (angry). More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- The son of Jesse, David’s brother, of the tribe of Judah.
- 2- The son of Jerahmeel, of the tribe of Judah (1 Chronicles 2: 25).

“**David**”: Although the youngest of Jesse’s sons, yet he was chosen by God to start by him the royal line along the generations, until it reached its climax by the coming of the Son of David. He could be the most famous personality of the Old Testament. Men of faith have anticipated the coming of the Messiah the Son of David. David, the king and the prophet has been a magnificent example of the purity of heart, holy love, humility, courage, ove for singing praise of God, trust in God, jealousy on the glory of God, love and faithfulness for the people of God, and His longing to build a house for God. He might had his bitter falls; Yet with every fall he got up by the spirit of true repentance, in utter compliance to God’s chastisements on his person. That so lifted him up in the sight of God; that Jesus Christ came from his descendants; and he became a great role model of repentance (Acts 13: 22; 1 Kings 16, etc.; 1 Chronicles 19 etc.).

In the first book of Samuel, it came that Jesse had eight sons (1 Samuel 16: 6-11), While here he mentions only seven; because the eighth was unmarried, or married and died childless; hence was not included in the genealogies.

“Now their sisters were Zeruah and Abigail. And the sons of Zeruah were Abishai, Joab, and Asahel – three in all” (16)

“Zeruah and Abigail”. The genealogies cared, not only for David the king, but even for his sisters.

“Zeruah”; a Hebrew name, probably means (perfumed with aloes); And **“Abigail”**: a Hebrew name, meaning (My father rejoiced); they are two sisters, daughters of ‘Nahash’ (2 Samuel 17: 25). ‘Nahash might be another name of ‘Jesse’; or of Jesse’s wife; or after the death of Nahash, Jesse married his widow, and she bore him David and his brothers. Hence Zeruah and Abigail were their sisters from their mother and not from their father.

Abishai or Abshai:

Together with his brothers Joab, Asahel, he was among the prominent heroes of their uncle David. He was brave, yet impulsive; he rescued David’s life ; and, by his spear, he killed 300 men at one time (See 2 Samuel 23: 18-23). When he counseled his uncle to kill Saul while asleep at night; .he said to him: *“Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless?”* (1 Samuel 36: 9). He was characterized by his faithfulness and loyalty to David; and accompanied him when he fled from the face of Absalom. And when Shimei the son of Gera, of Saul’s household, cursed David, Abishai intended to kill him on the spot, but David did not let him do it (2 Samuel 16: 5-14).

“Joab”; a Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is Father). The firstborn of Zeruah sister of David; the leader of his armies; an outstanding planner, and a brave warrior. He helped to reconcile David with his son Absalom. But being a stubborn avenger; he executed David’s plot to have Uria the Hittite killed; killed Absalom despite an order to the contrary by David; joined Adonijah against David and Solomon; and killed Abnir, in retaliation to the killing of his brother Asahel.

“Asahel”: A Hebrew name, meaning (God has done); the son of Zeruah (David’s sister), brother of Joab and Abishai. He was known for running like a deer; and was one of the heroes in David’s army; took part in the battle of Gibeon; chased his enemy Abnir, and tried to kill him; but was killed by Abnir; That was before David was enthroned (1 Chronicles 2: 16).

Abigail bore Amasa, and the father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmaelite (17):

“Amasa”; a Hebrew name, short of ‘Amasai’, cousin of ‘Moab’. (1 Chronicles 2: 17).

“Jether the Ishmaelite”: ‘Jether’, a Hebrew name, meaning (favor). It came in 2 Samuel 17: 25 as ‘Jether the Israelite’; And the Septuagint version as ‘Jether the Jezreelite’ Is he now an Israelite or Ishmaelite? The Telmud presents to us two views:

- 1- As proclaimed by R. Samuel bar-Nachmami. ‘Jether was Ishmaelite by birth, then entered into the Jewish faith as a proselyte.
- 2- Jether father of Amasa was an Israelite, and was called an Ishmaelite on account of that he lived in the land of Ishmael. The same way ‘Obad-Edom’ was called a Gittite (2 Samuel 6: 11).

‘David Kimshi’ presents to us a suggestion that the Israelites in the land of Ishmael used to call Jether an ‘Israelite’ because of his origin; whereas in Israel, they used to call him an Ishmaelite because of his residence in the land of Ishmael.

3- THE FAMILY OF HEZRON:

“Caleb the son of Hezron begot children by Azubah, his wife, and by Jerioth. Now these were her sons: Jether, Shobab, and Ardon” (18)

“Caleb, the son of Hezron”(18): (or ‘Chelubai’ in verse 9) is not the famous ‘Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, one of the twelve sent by the prophet Moses to spy the land of Canaan (Numbers 13: 6; Joshua 14: 6-7). He was very close to ‘Hur’, Aaron’s companion; And ‘Bezaleel’ his grandson was one of the skillful craftsmen. And according to some, each of them had a daughter by the name of ‘Aksah’.

“Azubah”; a Hebrew name, meaning (forsaken or deserted); was the wife of Caleb the son of Hezron (1 Chronicles 2: 18-19). Caleb had other wives; but the sons here are by her, and not by ‘Jerioth’, his concubine (a Hebrew name, meaning (upright).

“Ardon”; a Hebrew name, meaning (a hunchback), (1 Chronicles 2: 18)

“When Azubah died, Caleb took Ephrath as his wife, who bore him Hur” (19)

“Hur”: is not the other ‘Hur’ who was his contemporary as well, who, together with Aaron supported the hands of Moses in (Exodus 17: 10, 12; 24: 14).

“And Hur begot Uri, and Uri begot Bezaleel”(20)

“Uri”; a Hebrew name, short of ‘Uriah; of the tribe of Judah, father of Bezaleel, who was among those who worked to build and adorn the tabernacle of meeting.

“Bezaleel”; a Hebrew name, meaning (in the shadow of God); about whom God said to Moses: *“See, I have called by name ‘Bezaleel the son of Uri’, the son of ‘Hur’, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship”* (Exodus 31: 2, 3).

Now afterward Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir the father of Gilead, whom he married when he was 60 years old, and she bore him Segub” (21)

“The daughter of Machir the father of Gilead” (21); who is Abijah (24). The Gileadites were the greatest family of the tribe of Manasseh; and in (Numbers 32:41), he was called ‘Jair’ the son of Manasseh; namely, he was a descendant of Manasseh through his mother, and from Judah through his father.

“Segub”; a Hebrew name, meaning (high), of the tribe of Judah; a son of Hezron born by the daughter of Machir; And Segub begot Jair.

“Segub begot Jair, who had 23 towns in the land of Gilead” (22)

“Jair”: a Hebrew name, meaning (illuminates); one of the conquerors after crossing over the Jordan River. The 23 towns were in the region East of the Jordan; which, according to some, are a part of the 60 towns mentioned in verse 23; whereas, according to others they are not.

“Geshur and Syria took from them the towns of Jair, with Kenath and its towns – 60 towns). All these belonged to the sons of Machir the father of Gilead” (23).

The 60 towns here, probably included the 23 towns (22), beside the 27 towns in Kenath (Numbers 32: 42).

“Geshur”; a Hebrew name, meaning (a bridge); a province between Hermon and Bashan, close to Argob; located East of Maaka within the portion of Manasseh.

“Geshur and Syria”: Namely that Jair took the towns of the Geshurites and the Aramites, which became ‘Havoth Jair’; namely (the towns of Jair) (Deuteronomy 3: 14).

“Aram Havoth”: Aram, pronounced as ‘Aramo’ in Achadian, probably means the (high land).”**Kenath”:** the canals of ‘Haditha’ in Horan.

“Machir father of Gilead”; a Hebrew name, meaning (purchased)

“After Hezron died in Caleb Ephrathah, Hezron’s wife ‘Abijah bore him Ashur the father of ‘Tekoa’ (24):

“Ashur father of Tekoa; a Hebrew name, probably meaning (blackness); the son of Hezron of the tribe of Judah; his mother’s name was ‘Abijah’ (1 Chronicles 2: 24); He was called (father of Tekoa), namely (the builder of Tekoa); South of Judah (2 Smuel 14: 2, 4, 9), whose inhabitants were probably his descendants.

4- THE FAMILY OF JERAHMEEL:

“The sons of Jerahmeel, the firstborn of Herzon, were Ram, the firstborn, and Bunah, Oren, Ozem, and Ahijah” (25)

The children of Jerahmeel occupied the region of Negeb, a desert South of Judah.

“Bunah: a Hebrew name, meaning (brightness) (1 Chronicles 2: 25)

“Oren or Orna”; a Hebrew name, probably meaning the tree of Eucalyptus, known in Latin as (Laurus nobilis)

“Ozem”; a Hebrew name, meaning (angry). More than one bore this name, among whom were:

1-The name of Jesse’s son, brother of David, of the tribe of Judah (1 Chronicles 2: 15)

2- The son of Jerahmeel of the tribe of Judah (1 Chronicles 2: 25)

“Ahijah”; a Hebrew name, meaning (My brother).

“Jerahmeel had another wife whose name was Atarah, she was the mother of Onam” (26)

“Atarah”; a Hebrew name, meaning (a crown).

“The sons of Ram, the firstborn of Jeahmeel were Maaz, Jamin, and Eker” (27)

“Maaz”; a Hebrew name, meaning (anger)(1 Chronicles 2: 27)

“Jamin”; a Hebrew name, meaning (success) of the tribe of Judah.

“Aker”; a Hebrew name, meaning (cutting off) (1 Chronicles 2: 27).

“The sons of Onam were Shammai and Jada. The sons of Shammai were Nadab and Abishur” (28)

“Shammai or Shammati: were a family from Kiriath Jearim (1 Chronicles 2: 53)

“Jada”; a Hebrew name, meaning (a savant), of the tribe of Judah, of the family of Hezron, of Jerahmeel household (1 Chronicles 2: 28, 32)

“Nadab”; a Hebrew name, meaning (generous).

“Abishur”; a Hebrew name, meaning (wall or stronghold) (1 Chronicles 2: 28, 29).

“The name of the wife of Abishur was Abihail, and she bore him Ahban and Molid (29)

“Abihail (or Abigail); a Hebrew name, meaning (my father rejoiced); She was the mother of Amasa (1 Chronicles 2: 17)

“Ahban”; a Hebrew name, meaning (one of understanding)..

“Molid”; a Hebrew name, meaning (born) (1 Chronicles 2: 29)

“The sons of Nadab were Seled and Appaim; Seled died without children” (30)

“Seled”; a Hebrew name, meaning (gladness) (1 Chronicles 2: 30)

“The son of Appaim was Ishi; The son of Ishi was Sheshan; and Sheshan’s child was Ahlai” (31)

“Sheshan”; a Hebrew name, probably means (whitened) (1 Chronicles 2: 31, 34, 35);

“Ahlai”; a Hebrew name, meaning (Ah, I wish ...); (1 Chronicles 2: 31, 34)

The sons of Jad the brother of Shammai, were Jether and Jonathan; Jether died without children” (32)

“Jonathan”; a Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah gave);

“Jether”; a Hebrew name, meaning (favor); died without children.

“The sons of Jonathan were Peleth and Zaza. These were the sons of Jerahmeel” (33)

“Peleth”; a Hebrew name, meaning “haste); (1 Chronicles 2: 33)..

“Zaza”; a Hebrew name, meaning (fast); (1 Chronicles 2: 33).

“Now, Sheshan had no sons, only daughters; Sheshan had an Egyptian servant, whose name was Jarha” (34)

“Sheshan had no sons”, while in verse 31, he mentions that **“Sheshan’s child was Ahlai”**. Ahlai probably died childless before his father gave his daughter to his servant ‘Jarha’.

According to some, the reference to Sheshan’s action of giving his only daughter in marriage to his Egyptian slave is considered as a commendation to his person; and may indicate that that slave has received faith in the living God, and was characterized by wisdom and virtue. Namely, his Egyptian (heathen) origin, and his position as a slave, did not cause him to lose his honor, nor to be an obstacle to his exultation.

“Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant as wife, and she bore him Attai” (35)

According to the Mosaic law, Hebrew women are not allowed to marry outside the tribe to which they belong, for the sake of keeping the inheritance in the tribe. Hence, what Sheshan did seems against the law (Numbers 36).

Yet according to ‘Harmer’, Even though Sheshan’s action seemed against the law, yet it was a common custom in the East that a person, in certain circumstances, has to give his daughter in marriage to one of his favorite slaves, to keep the inheritance in the family.

“Attai”; a Hebrew name, meaning (Convenient), whom her father gave in marriage to his Egyptian slave (1 Chronicles 2: 34-36).

Attai begot Nathan; and Nathan begot Zabad” (36)

“Nathan”; a Hebrew name, meaning (God gave), a descendant of Caleb.

Zabad”; a Hebrew name, meaning (God granted; or a grant).

Zabad begot Ephlal; and Ephlal begot Obed” (37)

“**Ephlal**”; a Hebrew name, meaning (smart) (1 Chronicles 2: 37)

“**Obed**”; a Hebrew name, meaning (slave). More than one bore that name, among whom were:

- 1- The son of Ruth and Boaz, the father of Jesse, the father of David (1 Chronicles 2: 12)
- 2- The son of Ephlal, a descendant of Sheshan, of the tribe of Judah (1 Chronicles 2: 37)

Obed begot Jehu; and Jehu begot Azariah” (38)

“**Jehu**”; a Hebrew name, meaning (He is Jehovah); (1 Chronicles 2: 38)

“**Azariah**”; a Hebrew name, meaning (helped by Jehovah); More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- The son of Ethan, of the descendants of Zerah, (1 Chronicles 2: 8)
- 2- The son of Jehu, the son of Obed, a descendant of Jerahmeel (1 Chronicles 2: 38-39).

Azariah begot Helez; and Helez begot Eleasah” (39)

“**Helez**”; a Hebrew name, meaning (Power of God saved); a descendant of Hezron (1 Chronicles 2: 39).

“**Eleasah**”; a Hebrew name, meaning (God has made); (1 Chronicles 2: 39)

Eleasah begot Sismai; and Sismai begot Shallum” (40)

“**Sismai**”; Of the tribe of Judah; a descendant of Hezron (1 Chronicles 2: 40)

“Shallum”; a Hebrew name, meaning (a reward); (1 Chronicles 2: 40).

“Shallum begot Jekamiah; and Jekamiah begot Elishama” (41)

“Jekemiah”; a Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah arises), of royal descent

“Elishamah”; a Hebrew name, meaning (God heard); (1 Chronicles 2: 41).

5- THE FAMILY OF CALEB:

“The descendants of Caleb, the brother of Jerahmeel, were Mesha, his firstborn, who was the father of Ziph, and the sons of Mareshah, the father of Hebron” (42)

“The sons of Caleb”(42). He is the same ‘Caleb’ mentioned in verse 18-19. Here his genealogies are given in more detail; probably his sons from Jerimoth his concubine, who were not mentioned before.

“Mesha”; a Hebrew name, meaning (salvation) (1 Chronicles 2: 42)

“Maresha”; a Hebrew name, probably meaning (The position of head or top); the name of the father of Hebron (1 Chronicles 2; 42)

“The sons of Hebron were Korah, Tappuah, Reckem, and Shema” (43)

“Korah”; a Hebrew name, meaning (squash); (1 Chronicles 2: 43)

“Tappuah”; a Hebrew name, meaning (an apple); (1 Chronicles 2: 43)

“Reckem”; a Hebrew name, meaning (formation; or coloration); (1 Chronicles 2: 43)

“Shema”; a Hebrew name, meaning (news).

“Shema begot Raham, the father of Jorkeam; and Rekem begot shammai” (44)

“Jorkeam”; a Hebrew name, probably meaning (giving width to the people); a village in the portion of Judah, probably (Rapha, close to Zipha);

“Shemmai”; a Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah Jesus); More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- The son of ‘Onam’, of the family of Jerahmeel (1 Chronicles 2: 28)
- 2- The son of ‘Reckem’, of the household of Caleb (1 Chronicles 2: 44).

“The son of Shammai was Moan, and Moan was the father of Beth Zur” (45)

“Moan”; A Semite name, meaning (a dwelling place); the founder of ‘Beth (the household) of Zur’

“Ephah, Caleb’s concubine bore Haran, Moza, and Gazez; and Haran begot Gazez” (46)

“Ephah”; a Hebrew name, meaning (darkness). More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- Caleb’s concubine (1 Chronicles 2: 46)
- 2- The son of ‘Jahdai’; of the family of Caleb; (1 Chronicles 2: 47)

“Haran”; a name, probably of Achadian origin, meaning (a way, or a caravan); the first son of Caleb and Ephah (1 Chronicles 2: 46)

“Moza”; a Hebrew name, meaning (Exodus); the name of Caleb’s second son from Ephah (1 Chronicles 2: 46)

“Gazez”; a Hebrew name, meaning (A Shearer)

“And the sons of Jahdai were Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah, and Shaph” (47)

“Jahdai”; a Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah guides); a ruler of the descendants of Judah; mentioned together with the descendants of Caleb (1 Chronicles 2: 47)

“Regem”; a Hebrew name, meaning (a friend); (1 Chronicles 2: 47)

“Jotham”; a Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is perfect); (1 Chronicles 2: 47)

“Geshan”; a Hebrew name (1 Chronicles 2: 47).

“Pelet”; a Hebrew name, meaning (God liberated); (1 Chronicles 2: 47)

“Shaph” an Aramite word, meaning (balsam); More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- One of Jahdai’s sons (1 Chronicles 2: 47)
- 2- ‘Caleb’s son from his concubine ‘Maachah’ (1 Chronicles 2: 48)

Maachah, Caleb’s concubine bore Sheber, and Tirhanah” (48)

“Sheber”; a Hebrew name, probably meaning (a lion) (1 Chronicles 2: 48)

“Tirhanah”; a Hebrew name; the son of Caleb, the son of Hezron, the brother of Jerahmeel from Maachah.

“She also bore Shaaph, the father of Madmannah; Sheva, the father of Machbenah; and the father of Gibeah; and the daughter of Caleb was Achsah” (49)

“Madmannah”; a Hebrew name, meaning (trash place)

“Sheva”; a Hebrew name, meaning (a hero); or probably close to the Arabic word (whether); to mean (like); a son of Hezron, of Caleb’s household;(1 Chronicles 2: 49)

“Machbenah”; a name of an unknown city; in the portion of Judah, founded by ‘Sheva’ (1 Chronicles 2: 49)

“Gibea”; a Hebrew name, meaning (a hill) (1 Chronicles 2: 49)

“Achsah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Anklet) Caleb’s daughter, the son of Hezron (1 Chronicles 2: 18).

“These were the descendants of Caleb; the son of Hur; the firstborn of Ephrathah, were Shobal, the father of Keriath Jearim” (50)

“Caleb the son of Hur”; According to some, this Caleb is the third of three Calebs: the first is the son of Hezron(18, the second is the son Jephunneh.

“Ephrathah”; another pronunciation of Caleb’s wife (19)

“Salma the father of Bethlehem, and Hareph the father of Beth Gader” (51)

The author cared for the genealogies of Caleb, on account of the importance of Bethlehem the birth place of the Lord Christ. Salma was a descendent of Caleb; the founder of Bethlehem.

“Salma”; a Hebrew name, meaning (clothed); the son of Hur, a descendant of Caleb; and the father of Bethlehem. According to some he is the Salmon (1 Chronicles 2: 51)

“Hareph”; a Hebrew name, meaning (Autumn; of Autumn; or harvest).

“And Shobal, the father of Keriath Jearim had descendants: Haroeh, , and half of the families of Manuhoth” (52)

“Shobal”; of the household of Caleb, Of His descendants came the inhabitants of Keriath Jearim (1 Chronicles 2: 52)

“Haroeh”; a Hebrew name, meaning (the Seer);

“Manuhoth”; a Hebrew name, meaning (place of rest) (1 Chronicles 2: 52).

“The families of Keriath Jearim were the Ithrites, the Puthites, the Shumathites, and the Mishraites. From these came the Zorathites, and the Eshtaorites” (53)

“The Ithrites”: A family that inhabited Keriath Jearim ; the Puthites, the Shumathites, and the Mishraites were of this family..

“The Zoathites”; from Zorah And **“The Eshtaorites from Eshtaol** ; a Hebrew name, probably meaning (the request). Those two were located south of Judah on the frontier of the Philistines; mentioned in the talk about ‘Samson’ (Judges 13: 25).

“The sons of Salma were Bethlehem the Netophathites, Atroth Beth Joab; half of the Manahethites and the Zorites” (54)

“The Netophathites”; Netopha is a Hebrew name, after a town in Judah, close to Bethlehem.

“Atroth”; a town in Judea (1 Chronicles 2: 54), close to Bethlehem.

“And the families of the scribes who dwelt at Jabez were the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and the Sucathites. Those were the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab” (55)

According to some, the author of this book was a scribe, hence his great care for the genealogies and families of the scribes; like those who inhabited ‘Jabez’, bound to their place of residence, for they, themselves, were unknown. They were Kenites who joined Israel through Moses’ marriage to a Kenite. Sometimes they are referred to as Midianites (Judges 3: 11).

“The families of the scribes”; Those were different from the scribes from the Levites. It so seem that it was a profession among some families handed from fathers to sons.

“The Tirathites”; **One of the three Kenite families of the scribes, the inhabitants of Jabez.**

“The Shimeathites”; **a family of scribes (1 Chronicles 2: 55).**

“The Socathites”; a family of scribes, of ‘Jabez’, a place unknown to us now.

“Hammath”; a Hebrew name, meaning (a hot spring); the founder of the house of ‘Rechab’, the family of Kenites.

“The Kenites”; They were not originally of Judah; but were among those whose land was given to the children of Israel (Genesis 15: 19). But they united with Israel through friendship and marriage; were mentioned in the genealogies of Judah; on account of that they were connected to ‘Rechab’, the Kenite scribe, the founder of the Israelite line who cared for the obedience to their fathers (Jeremiah 35: 1-9).

‘Hobab’, Moses’ father-in-law, has been with the children of Israel during their journey in the wilderness; then dwelt South of Judah. So was ‘Jael’ the wife of Heber the Kenite,

who killed 'Sisera', the commander of the army of 'Jabin' king of Canaan, who fought against the children of Israel in the days of the judges (Judges 4)

The house of Rechab"; mentioned in (2 Kings 10: 15; Jeremiah 35).

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 2

AN ENJOYABLE JOURNEY WITH JUDAH AND HIS BROTHERS

- + Grant me, O Lord, to flee away together with my father Jacob;
Where shall I go;
When my father and my mother are unable to protect me?
Let Esau spit all his venom;
It will never harm me, as long as I am in Your bosom;
I shall set forth together with Jacob;
Deprived of every possession;
But You are the Way;
When I walk along it, the gates of heaven will be open before me.
I shall not be in need of a pillow;
But, like Jacob, I shall use a rock to rest my head on;
You are the Rock, to support my head, and to sanctify my mind;
I shall not need a ladder to reach up to heaven;
For Your cross will carry me into the bosom of Your Father.

- + You opened the gates of heaven before my father Jacob;
To see the angels going up and down;
By Your Holy Spirit, You set Your kingdom in me; Heaven came to be in my
depths;
The angels exult to see Your kingdom You set in me;

And I exult by the heavenly hosts, who rejoice for my salvation

- + The soul of Jacob exulted to hear Your voice, saying:
*"In You and in your descendants, all the families of the earth will be blessed;
I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you"* (Genesis 28: 14-15)
So my depths shall exult by Your true promises to me;
"Behold, the kingdom of God is in you" Luke 17: 21)
I shall rejoice in Your kingdom that embraces the nations and peoples;
By You, my heart will become wide enough to accommodate all humanity;
I see You in me; embracing by Your love, all mankind.

- + You granted my father Jacob twelve sons;
To set tribes with one exultant heart (1 Chronicles 12: 28-40)
Allow me to attach myself to those attached to You;
No tribe is without its weaknesses; Yet Your grace lifted all up to You.

- + The tribe of Reuben, the firstborn;
Having fallen in adultery with His father's concubine,
Having defiled his father's bed. He lost his firstbirth rights, and the blessing; he
destroyed himself by himself;
Your grace allowed for chastening him; yet of his descendants there were men of
valor;
Who attached themselves to king David, and worked with him.

- + Benjamin went down, and was almost destroyed;
Among them there were wicked men, called the sons of Belial (Judges 19: 22)
They did such a deed that was never done or seen from the day the children of
Israel came up from the land of Egypt (Judges 19" 30)
Benjamin was almost destroyed by the hands of all the other tribes (Judges: 21)
From Benjamin came Saul the first king of Israel;
He betrayed the Lord his God; and resorted to the medium instead.

Yet, You showed compassion to that tribe; and from them appeared men of valor;

They forsook their wicked brother Saul, and attached themselves to David wherever he went;

And that tribe stayed faithful to Judah until the end;

In the tribe of Benjamin, there were men more faithful than Absalom, David's own son;

Your grace lifts the fallen up; and raises the contrite of heart;

Embrace me, O Son of David, to attach myself to You, and never to forsake You;

Grant me to be faithful to You; O who is eternally faithful;

Let me not be preoccupied with belonging to any tribe;

As, in the water of Baptism; You have granted me the spirit of adoption to the Father.

+ If You count me a son of the righteous Joseph, the son of Jacob;
Grant me a portion, together with Ephraim and Manasseh'
For many faithful among these two tribes have attached themselves to David;
Do not deny me to be among the heirs of God;
Heirs with, by, and for You
For You are our eternal inheritance, and consistent portion.

+ I shall not dare to count myself from the tribe of Judah, or that of Levi;
You have set out of me a king of authority;
Who trample upon the scorpions and the serpents, and all the enemy power;
I challenge the devil, sin, and death;
For You are the Holy One, the Resurrection, and the Grantor of victory;
In the water of Baptism, You set me a priest for God Your Father;
You receive every thanksgiving or praise as a sacrifice before You.

+ I shall not count the tribes, to get to belong to any of them;
For You made me a member of Your body, O Holy One;

You have become for me righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1: 30).

+ How amazing You are, O Lord, in Your compassion;
Many Hebrew women desired to give birth;
To get the blessing of having You incarnate from their descendants;
Tamar, the Canaanite, her soul was bitter for she was childless;
Her husband 'Er' the son of Judah, died childless;
She got married to his brother Onan to bear a son to his deceased brother;
When through the shadow, she heard about Your incarnation,
She longed to get the blessing of You incarnate from her descendants;
Her father-in-law denied her marriage to 'Shelah' his third son;
On the assumption of that she was the cause of the death of his two sons 'Er'
and 'Onan'.

By a trick, she bore the image of reproach, and pretended to be a harlot;
She slept with her father-in-law, when he knew nothing of her true identity;
She conceived, and gave birth, and got her heart desire;
That Canaanite woman surpassed many Hebrew women;
She gave birth to twins, representing the peoples who received faith in the
Messiah;

She begot Zerah, who lost his birth rights, as a representative of the Jews, who
rejected faith in the Savior;

And begot Perez, who took the firstbirth by force, while still in his mother's womb;
And became a representative of the Gentiles who believed in the Savior of the
world;

Kindle my heart with longing, and fill it with hope, to be on Your right hand side;
Your voice rings in my depths, saying: "*O come, You blessed of My Father*"

+ Grant me the simple heart of Boaz, the servant of the needy;
He who did not despise Ruth, because she was a Moabite; nor because she was
poor;

Because he cared for her and for her mother-in-law; he got an exalted honor;
He became the grandfather of David, the great among the prophets and the
kings;

Grant me a loving heart for every needy;

To satisfy my need, and to grant me the fellowship of Your glories.

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AN ANNEX TO 1 CHRONICLES 2

THE ORDER OF THE TRIBES IN THE HOLY BOOK

The Holy Book presents to us the tribes in diverse order according to the situation; for the sake of our edification. In every situation, the believer gets in touch with the order for the edification of his own soul; and with the proclamation of God's love and care for him. I hope to be able to present a portrait of that diversity, which would exhort us to set forth with the spirit of power and hope, in our journey in the company of Christ.

(1) The natural order of the tribes according to the order of birth of the children of Jacob (Genesis 29-30):

Laban gave his two daughters in marriage to Jacob: Leah and Rachel. There was jealousy between them, and a competition who would manage to draw the heart of Jacob toward her: Rachel depended upon her beauty and the soundness of her eyesight; Whereas Leah, lacked both. Each of them let Jacob sleep with her slave girl to increase the number of children under her name.

The Holy Book presented to us the order of the tribes according to nature, and not according to God's plan with the children of Jacob; revealing to us that man could never have any benefit through his mere thoughts.

+ For the ignorant and the sensual, the vain things seem more beautiful than the teachings of truth.

(2) The order of Jacob's sons on their way, together with their father, back to his father's home (Genesis 35: 23):

(The scholar Origen)

The mother's name	The number of children	The names of children
1- Leah	4	Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah (Genesis 29: 32-35)
2- Bilhah, Rachel's maid	2	Dan and Naphtali (Genesis 30: 6, 8)
3- Zilpah, Leah's maid	2	Gad and Asher (Genesis 30: 11, 13)
4- Leah	2	Issachar and Zebulun (Genesis 30: 18, 20)
5- Rachel	2	Joseph and Benjamin (Genesis 30: 24, 35, 18)

We should not wonder how the three sons, guilty of atrocities are put on the top of the lost; namely:

- a- Reuben; who committed a horrible sin: *"While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilha, his father's concubine; and Israel heard of it"* (Genesis

35: 22). The sin of adultery is horrible, it deprives man of his purity and self-respect; losing his will and authority over his senses and emotions, it makes him a slave of carnal lust;. What made it even worse, is that he defiled his father's bed (Genesis 49: 4); by which he lost the respect of his family, particularly of his father; who admonished him, saying: "*Reuben, You are my firstborn, my might, and the first fruit of my vigor*" (Genesis 49: 3)

b and c- The two killer brothers: Simeon and Levi (Genesis 35: 25-26). "*Dinah, their sister, went out to visit the women of the region, when Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the region saw her, he seized her and lay with her by force*". Stirred up by anger, her two brothers killed many men, robbed, and captivated women and children of the city. Being very upset, Jacob said to Simeon and Levi: "*You have brought trouble on me by making me odious to the inhabitants of the land*"

The goal of putting the three of them on top of the list, is to show that many sinners, by repentance, can return to God, and occupy an exalted position in the church of the Lord Christ, and may even surpass those preceding them; as it happened with the robber who was crucified on right-hand of the Lord, and with Saul of Tarsus, who calls himself "*the chief of sinners*" (1 Timothy 1: 15).

If those three have sinned, and were unfaithful; Yet, God is faithful in his promise to His servant Abraham, to give the promised land to his children.

This list, then, exhorts us to life of repentance, that would transfer us to an almost heavenly rank; and would open before us the gates of hope and trust in the true promises of God; as according to the apostle: "*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself*" (2 Timothy 2: 13).

+ O Sinner, How great will be your work, if you repent!
By, it you give your creation a new face, and an unsurpassable honor

By your repentance you set aright the creation that was destroyed; By your repentance, you can rebuild the goodness of the soul;

Your great person, which is the image of God; and was destroyed by sin, Support it to stand aright by repentance;

Receive the grace of God; for by your own free will, you corrupted in yourself what you have taken; Without you that corruption would not be so great.

- + For the sake of our salvation, the 'Son of God' became the 'Son of Man'. He lived nine months in the Virgin's womb; and was clothed in ragged swaddles. He, who holds the whole world in His hand, accepted to be born in a narrow, lowly manger. He lived thirty years in poverty; As a young boy, *"he came with his parents; Mary and Joseph to Nazareth; was subject to them; but His mother kept all these things in her heart; And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men"* (Luke 2: 51, 52). When He was scourged he kept silent; When He was crucified He prayed for the sake of His crucifiers! ... How shall I pay the Lord back for all the things He granted me?... *"by getting the cup of salvation, and by calling the name of the Lord"; "Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of His saints"* (Psalm 116: 15). The befitting work we could do, to pay back what He did for us, is to present blood for blood. Having been redeemed by the blood of Christ; it is befitting of us to present our life to our Redeemer.

(St. Ironimus)

(2) The order of the tribes when they set forth to Egypt to encounter with the brother Joseph: (Genesis 46: 8-25):

If Joseph has gone ahead of his brothers, entered Egypt as a slave, became a prisoner, then became a ruler over all Egypt and the surrounding nations, providing them with wheat during the famine; Yet his name was included in the list as one of them with no distinction. Saying *"These are the names of the Israelites, Jacob and his offspring, who came to Egypt"* (Genesis 46L 8), the Holy Book did not start by Joseph, being the one who rescued them and sustained them during a famine that would have destroyed

them; In which He was a symbol of the Lord Christ who “*came down to our land, and dwelt among us*” John 1: 14); as one of us, like us in every respect, except in sin; so did Joseph who was like his brothers in every respect, except in their hate; he who loved them despite the evil they did him.

The order came as such:

The six sons of Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun (8-14)

The two sons of Zilpah: Gad and Asher (16-17)

The two sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin (19)

The two sons of Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali (23-24)

(3) The order of the tribes according to the symbolic and prophetic order (Genesis 49):

Before his departure, “*Jacob called his sons and said: ‘Gather around, and I will tell you what will happen to you in days to come’*” (Genesis 49: 1). After a life full of strife, during which Jacob took the blessing and the firstbirth by force; And was worthy, despite his repeated weaknesses, to get the promise that the Messiah will come from his descendants, and that in him all nations will be blessed. He looked at his sons as being the tribes from which the people of God will emerge, to enjoy the promised land; and from which the Savior Christ will come. His tongue opened up to utter, through the spirit of prophecy, or through the shadows; as though he is Moses who ascended a mountain to look at the promised land from afar, to rejoice for the sake of the people who will enjoy the fulfillment of the divine promise, that he, himself was denied.

In **Reuben**, the firstborn, and the natural fruit from Leah, he saw the man who leans upon the firstbirth of the body, namely upon the works of the law; to come to lose the firstbirth of the Spirit. By defiling his father’s bed, he counted him as defiled the church, the bride of the Lord Christ, through his self righteousness.

In **Simeon and Levi**, from whom came the scribes and the priests, he saw those who opposed the Lord Christ, the Word of God; those who refer to the sin of evil plotting, the seating of iniquity, that corrupt the ministry and the work of God.

As to **Judah**, he saw him represent the crucified Lamb, and at the same time, the Lion who conquers by the cross. He saw the Lord Christ who comes from the tribe of Judah, to grant His power to His believers. It is not enough for us to forsake the self-righteousness (Reuben); to reject the evil seatings (Simeon and Levi); but we are committed to attach ourselves to the true Judah, to enjoy the power of His resurrection working in us.

He saw **Zebulun**, refer to setting forth toward the sea, namely toward preaching the Gentiles. He who bears in himself the resurrected Judah, would not endure to see the Gentiles in disbelief; but will seek the salvation of all mankind.

After that he spoke about **Gad**, as being attacked by an army, yet goes back to conquer; a reference to the believer who is often attacked, but will finally conquer. Hence, he was followed by **Asher**, with his fat bread, namely his abundant grains. For the spiritual wars, even if they reveal our weaknesses, yet they give power to the soul, and make her more fruitful.

After Asher he talked about **Naphtali** as a 'she-camel', quick in motion; with his sweet talk to everyone. The about **Joseph** who carries in his backbone the two tribes: **Ephraim and Manasseh**. Joseph means 'growth', through forgetting about the worries of the world (Manasseh), and the enjoyment of increasing fruition (Ephraim).

Finally, he talked about **Benjamin** (the son of the right hand), who enjoys the fellowship of the eternal glory.

We could say in short that Jacob, by the spirit of prophecy, has seen in his sons, a living portrait of the church, striving in Christ Jesus through:

1- Reuben	Keeping away from self-righteousness
2 & 3- Simeon and Levi	Keeping away from evil plotting
4- Judah	Getting attached to Christ
5- Zebulun	Setting forth to preaching
6- Issachar	Enduring the troubles of others
7- Dan	Resistance against the devil
8- Gad	The spiritual strife
9- Asher	The fruits of strife
10- Naphtali	The sweet talk
11- Joseph	The continuous growth
12 Benjamin	The enjoyment of the right hand of God

(4) The order of the tribes while sojourning in Egypt (Genesis 1: 2-3):

a- Presented their order on their arrival to Egypt (Genesis 46: 8-25); the divine inspiration persisted upon not separating Joseph from his brothers; God let him precede them by several years, to prepare him to receive and

support his father and brothers. Now, having already arrived to Egypt, and Joseph came out to receive them; He now separate Joseph from them in the order. For, being a symbol of the Lord Christ, our Savior and

Shepherd; even though He dwelt among us as one of us, yet He is the eternal Word of God and Creator; who granted us to be members of His body; His creation beloved by Him.

b- Gad and Asher, the sons of Zilpah, came at the bottom of the list.

(5) The order of the tribes in the census: (Numbers 1: 5-16):

The first census of the children of Israel, we heard of, took place in the wilderness after the exodus; in which we notice the following:

a- He did not mention the tribe of **Levi**, on account of that they were dedicated to serve the tabernacle of meeting, then the temple, to organize the worship in both; etc. That tribe were not required to serve in the military; nor

inherit a portion of the land once they enter into the promised land. Considered as the tithes of the people, presented to God to minister to His house; they were not preoccupied by anything except with worship, and prayer

to the account of the whole people.

b- Asher and Gad were moved from their place.

c- Joseph's two sons: Ephraim and Manasseh, replaced their father; and Ephraim took the priority over his older brother Manasseh; in a confirmation that honor is not given according to age, nor to physical seniority of

firstborn; which was proclaimed by Jacob when he blessed them, and put his right hand over the head of the younger brother, and his left hand over the head of the older one; on purpose and not by mistake as Joseph

thought he did, and did not like it (Genesis 48: 14-22).

(6) The order of the tribes during the preparation for war (Numbers 1: 20-56):

In it, it is noticed that the position of the tribe of 'Gad' was again moved to replace that of 'Levi', who was not included in the census.

(7) The order of the positions of the tribes around the tabernacle of meeting (Numbers 2)

In our study of the second chapter of the book of the Numbers, we talked on how the scholar Origen saw the camp like a cross under the leadership of Judah, the tribe from which St. Mary the mother of God came, in whose womb the Word of God incarnated.

And how, in the center of that large cross, there was another smaller cross formed by the priests, the prophet Moses, and the three families of the Levites. This is to proclaim that it is befitting of the church to walk in the wilderness of this world, carrying the cross, and to be crucified together with her Groom.

(8) The order of the heads of the tribes during the dedication of the altar (Numbers 7):

That order of the position of the tribes, except for the tribe of 'Levi', which was naturally exempted, was as follows:

On the first day: A leader of the tribe of Judah presented an offering

On the second day: A leader of the tribe of Issachar presented an offering

On the third day: A leader of the tribe of Zebulun presented an offering

On the fourth day: A leader of the tribe of Reuben presented an offering

On the fifth day: A leader of the tribe of Gad presented an offering

On the seventh day: A leader of the tribe of Ephraim presented an offering

On the eighth day: A leader of the tribe of Manasseh presented an offering

On the ninth day: A leader of the tribe of Benjamin presented an offering

On the tenth day: A leader of the tribe of Dan presented an offering

On the eleventh day: A leader of the tribe of Asher presented an offering

On the twelfth day: A leader of the tribe of Naphtali presented an offering.

(9) The order of the tribes to spy the promised land (Numbers 13: 5-7)

With some grumbling against Moses and Aaron, 12 spies were chosen, one from each tribe. Here there was no apparent order of the tribes, which indicates the extent of confusion of the hearts of the people, which have lost their peace in the Lord.

(10) The order of the tribes in the census done by David, not according to the will of God (Numbers 6):

It is almost the same as the order of the tribes in preparation for the war (6); except for that the tribe of Manasseh has occupied priority over Ephraim, according to the dates of birth. For, in case of war, when the people seek the grace of God, the priority is given to Ephraim; But in case of such a census, which was not according to the will of God, but to a whim by David, the priority was to Manasseh.

(11) The order of the tribes for dividing the promised land (Numbers 34: 18 – 29):

As Israel came to be at the frontier of the promised land, the order of the tribes this time came totally different from the previous orders:

- a- The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh, became one unit. Having chosen their portion East of the Jordan, they were omitted.
- b- So far, the prophet Moses has been the leader of the people. But now, as he consummated his mission by reaching to the frontier of the promised land, the two new leaders became 'Joshua', the symbol of Christ Jesus, who is capable to carry us forth to the heavenly Canaan; and Eleazar the high priest, whose name means (God Helped); referring to the priesthood of the Lord Christ, the Grantor of the eternal inheritance.

The Lord appointed the board who will carry out the division by name as follows: Eleazar the high priest; Joshua the son of Nun the great leader; Then a chief of each of the tribes to inherit the land, by name. 'Caleb the son of Jephuneh had to be among them, as for him, together with Joshua the son of Nun, the land was familiar to their eyes, for they was there before, have already tasted its fruits, and testified to it; by presenting a bunch of grapes as a proof of it fruition.... This is the work of a true Christian, to enter into the kingdom, to live it, and to enjoy its fruition; presenting a deposit thereof to his brethren; so that, with the coming of

the great day of the Lord, his name would glitter as a luminous star, and would enter with daring into the bosom of God, for he has already enjoyed it, and is not a foreigner from it.

We have already said that Joshua is a symbol of Jesus Christ; and Eleazar, his name means (God helped); Now Caleb's name, derived from (heart), refers to the faithfulness of heart, and its jealousy to enjoy the eternal inheritance. So are the rest of names of the chiefs from each of the tribes; they carry some meaning, and reveal something about the features of those to enjoy the inheritance, who will support their brethren to enjoy it:

'Shemuel', meaning (God heard); 'Elidad', meaning (whom my God loves); 'Bukki', meaning (whom God tests); 'Hanniel', meaning (God is compassionate); 'Kemuel', meaning (God's assembly); 'Elizaphan', meaning (Hidden by God); 'Paltiel', meaning (rescued by God); 'Ahihud', meaning (my brother is great); and 'Pedahel', meaning (God redeemed).

In short, those names reveal the features of the eternal kingdom, being the work of God the Redeemer; the fruit of God's listening to us in His Son; the secret of His love for us; His compassion on us; He who saves us. In the congregation of the saints in God, the congregation hidden in Him, in which each of us, seeing his brother great, will rejoice, and be glad with the glories of the others.

(12) The order of the tribes on Mount Gerzim and Mount Ebal (Deuteronomy 27):

Six tribes stood on Mount Gerzim to utter blessings; And six tribes stood on Mount Ebal to utter curses (27: 12 – 13).

The tribes chosen to utter the blessings on Mount Gerzim, were the sons of Leah and Rachel; Whereas those chosen to utter the curses on Mount Ebal, were the tribes of Gad and Asher, the sons of Zilpah, Leah's slave girl; Dan, and Naphtali, the sons of

Belhah, Rachel's slave girl; And Zebulun and Reuben, the sons of Leah. Whereas the Levites (those assigned for that specific task, and not all the tribe of Levi), were mostly in between the two Mounts (Joshua 8: 23); to re-proclaim the blessings and the curses with loud voice, to be heard by all.

Here he did not mention the blessings, but only the curses. According to the Jews, the curse was proclaimed, then its opposite of blessing. Some may assume that it would be impossible for the voice with the blessings and the curses to be heard by the whole people; but by recent evidence, it was possible to hear the voice clearly; specially that it was shouted by a huge crowd..

The curses concerning the disobedience, or breaking one of the commandments, and the blessings concerning the obedience to them; came as a key for the people to enjoy the land, and to be filled with hope in heaven itself.

The curses started by the sins directly directed to God Himself, like idol-worship (15); followed by those against the parents (16), against the social justice (17); then against the broken and the needy (18, 19). Namely, he started by God, then the parents, then the society in general; then the needy. The curses to follow were those against purity and chastity (20 – 22); then the murder (24 – 25); and ended by presenting a general commandment concerning keeping the law.

+ I may say that the whole people were under those curses; for no one could be consistent on keeping the entire law. But the Lord Christ followed those curses by another, saying: "*He who is hanged is accursed by God*" (Deuteronomy 21: 23; Galatians 3: 13). by which, anyone hanged on a tree, and who disobeys the law has become cursed. As it was necessary for him, who intends to liberate others from the curse to be, himself free from it; the Lord Christ took the curse upon Himself to liberate us from it. It is like somebody innocent consents to receive the sentence of death instead of someone else, to relieve him of the punishment. Yet Christ took upon himself, not the curse of disobedience, but the

other curse, to take away the curse from the others; for He “*committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth*” (Isaiah 51: 9; 1 Peter 2: 22); By His death, He saved the mortals from death; And by bearing the curse He liberated them from it.

(St. John Chrysostom)

**(13) The order of the tribes in Moses’ final blessing upon them
(Deuteronomy 33):**

Having approached his last moments on earth, the prophet Moses not only delivered the leadership to Joshua and supporting him; and presented to the people a final commandment, etc. But he blessed the people a tribe after another, the same way Jacob did when he blessed his sons before his departure. In that blessing it is to be noticed:

a- He started by the tribe of Reuben; for although he has lost his firstborn rights through defiling his father’s bed, beside the fact that he was the son of Leah, the less beloved; Yet he was not forsaken by God, for Moses confirms: “*Let Reuben live, and not die, nor let his men be few*” (Deuteronomy 33: 6)

b- The tribe of Judah, becoming the royal tribe, gets a promise that David’s house will reign forever.

c- He blesses the tribe Of Levi, being the priestly tribe, responsible for leading all in worshipping God, and for presenting the teaching and preaching with no perversion. The author cared to bind between the work of the royal leadership, and that of priesthood; on account of that the Lord of glory is the King of kings, and the heavenly High Priest.

d- In blessing Joseph, he presented the blessing to Ephraim, giving him “tens of thousands”; and to Manasseh, giving him “thousands”.

e- We notice that Simeon is omitted.

(14) The order of the tribes when dividing the promised land West of the Jordan (Joshua 15 – 21):

After the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, were given the East bank of the River Jordan (Joshua 13: 15 – 29), Now a lot was done to know the will of God in the division of the land. The order of the tribes in that division was as follows:

- a- He started the lot by the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15: 1), being the royal tribe.
- b- The plot for Manasseh and Ephraim; on account of that to Joseph, who confronted the hate of his brothers by love, opened his heart to them, and sustained them in their sojourn, two tribes were given in the names of his two sons: Manasseh the firstborn (half a tribe), and Ephraim (Joshua 16: 41; 17: 1, 17-18).
- c- The rest of the land was divided into seven portions for the seven remaining tribes who were slothful to go and possess the land which the Lord God of their fathers has given them (Joshua 18: 2-5). For their sake, Joshua cast lots in Shiloh before the Lord; and there he divided the land among them (Joshua 18: 10). Their order came as such: Benjamin; Simeon (Joshua 19: 1); Zebulun (Joshua 19: 10); Issachar (Joshua 19: 17); Asher (Joshua 19: 24); Naphtali (Joshua 19: 32); and Dan (Joshua 19: 40).

(15) The order of the tribes in the first book of the chronicles (2: 1 – 2):

The author was not committed to the natural order of the date of birth; Although it may even look as being written without a natural order; yet it was certainly according to the

divine grace and the will of God; as we have seen in our interpretation of the first chapter of the chronicles.

(16) The order of the tribes in the heavenly church of the New Covenant (Ezekiel 48):

In it, it is to be noticed:

- a- No specific tribe (or nation) is to be dedicated to the ministry of priesthood; but it is to be enjoyed by priests from all peoples and nations in Christ Jesus. That is beside the general laic priesthood in the water of baptism.
- b- The Levites in the center of the Sanctuary.
- c- The sons of the legal wives are close to the Sanctuary; while those of the concubines are at its far end.

Judah and **Benjamin**; Namely, (the king) and (the son of the right hand); one to the north, and the other to the south.

Reuben and **Simeon**; who lost their rights according to nature; on one side, and on the other.

Issachar and **Zebulon**; the sons of Leah, to the south.

Manasseh and **Ephraim**; the sons of Rachel, to the north. Ephraim closer to the Sanctuary than Manasseh.

Gad, the son of Zilpah, to the south; And **Naphtali**, the son of Belha, to the north.

Dan will have his portion in the land, after all the other tribes, to the north; the farthest from the Sanctuary.

Asher after Gad, to the south

(17) The order of the tribes in talking about eternity (Revelation 7):

The following are to be noticed:

- a- All distinction between the tribes are taken away, with the exception of Judah, who occupies the first place; where the Son of David embraces the whole church to Himself as a heavenly bride.
- b- 'Dan' was completely omitted, as they refer to the antichrist.
- c- Levi is sealed together with all the other tribes; for all enjoy the Lord as his portion; And there is no land to be distributed on the tribes.
- d- The tribe of Manasseh is not divided into a half east of the Jordan, and a half west of it; on account of that, in heaven, there is no division; but there will be the one and only catholic church.



CHAPTER 3

THE DESCENDANTS OF DAVID

The genealogies continue concerning Judah. But now, he dedicate them to David, then to his son Solomon, followed by the chain of kings of the household of David.

None of the families of Israel was equal to the family of David. This chapter presented to us a list of all the sons of David, and the kings who succeeded him on the throne until the collapse of the kingdom. He talked about his family, whether in captivity or after the return from it. ... The secret of the greatness of this family was the incarnation of the Word of God from St. Mary the daughter of David.

This genealogy presents to us 19 names of David's sons: six of whom were born in Hebron; four sons from Bathsheba, plus nine others. Of the nineteen, who undoubtedly set honorable families, history referred only to one of David's sons, who was chosen to inherit the throne – Solomon – through whose descendants came kings to reign over Judah; and some were carried into captivity.

Talking about the sons of David from Bathsheba, the chapter did not refer to his sin with her; But referred to his sons from her as the sons of Bathsheba. In the whole chapter there was no reference to his sins, except the one concerning the census of the people.

In the books written after the return from captivity, having referred to the divine promise to raise up the fallen tabernacle of David (Amos 9: 11), it was not appropriate to talk about the sins of those chosen by God as tools to realize the divine goal; but the only concern was the work of God through those tools or channels.

The house of David and the return from captivity:

We may say that the last two chapters were to prepare us to cross over from Adam to Noah; from Noah to Abraham; from Abraham to Israel; and from Israel to Judah, to talk about king David; the center of the two books of the chronicles; on account of that from his descendents, will come He who will raise up the fallen tabernacle of David, and who will reign forever. Hence, this chapter brings forth the genealogies of David up to few generations before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This chapter came restricted to the royal line of David, along almost five centuries from the enthronement of David until the return of Israel from captivity without a king. The prophecy came clear that there will be no more king from the house of David to reign in Judah; for, according to Jeremiah: *“Is this man, Coniah a despised broken idol? Is he a vessel in which is no pleasure? Why are they cast out, he and his descendants, and cast into a land which they do not know? O earth, earth, earth, Hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord: ‘Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah’”* (Jeremiah 22: 28-30)

Sending the Jewish congregation back from Babylon in the year 538 BC, the Persians allowed for the existence of rulers and leaders among the Jews, like Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, beside religious leaders like Ezra the priest; Yet they did not set on them a Jewish king, a descendant of David. Although Zerubbabel was a descendant of David, yet he was not a king, nor was the intention of the Persians to make him one; And the people in Jerusalem, as well, did not intend to set a king of the house of David, nor of any other family.

The hope of the prophets, both before, during, or after the captivity, was concentrated on raising up the fallen tabernacle of David, through the coming of the Son of David, the King of kings. On the tongue of the prophet Zechariah, the Lord says: *“I will pour on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son”* (Zechariah 12: 10). He is the crucified King pierced with the spear, to reign over the minds, and grant them His grace and righteousness!

This chapter records the house of David; and we find in it names of certain sons of David, not mentioned in the books of Samuel nor of the kings. For example the first three mentioned in verse 5, saying: *“And these were born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon – four by Bathua the daughter of Ammiel”* (2 Chronicles 3: 5).

Referring to the genealogy of our Lord Jesus, as recorded in the gospel according to St. Luke, we find Him take on the blood title of the throne of David, as a sacrifice through Nathan, and not through Solomon. As St. Mary, mother of God, is referred to Nathan. ... While in the gospel according to St. Mathew, we find our Lord Jesus take the canonical title of the throne of David, as a King, through Solomon; As St. Joseph is referred to Solomon.

That is very significant to us; for in the genealogy of Solomon, ‘Jeconiah’ appears (Matthew 1: 11); whom God called ‘Coniah’ (Jeremiah 22: 28); as, according to the divine inspiration: *“Thus says the Lord, ‘Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days, for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah”* (Jeremiah 22: 30)

That man, alone, was the cause of cutting off the chain of genealogy to the Messiah; another evidence of the virgin birth from the Virgin Mary.

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| 1- The descendants of David in Hebron | 1 - 4 |
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1- THE DESCENDANTS OF DAVID IN HEBRON:

“Now these were the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron: The firstborn was Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; the second, Daniel, by Abigail the Carmelitess”
(1)

In his talk about the descendants of David, he started with ‘Amnon’, the firstborn (1), and ended with ‘Tamar’ (9). Amnon was the firstborn according to the flesh; yet, on account of that he was the reproach of his father’s house, he was taken out of the genealogies.

All David’s sons who were born before the establishment of royalty, were under the general judgment; like Amnon and Absalom, because of their corruption, rebellion, and pride. Royalty had to reach literally to Jerusalem, where the choice will be according to the grace (Psalm 132: 13).

Although ‘Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon’ (5) were mentioned as from ‘Bathsheba’, Yet they disappear from the genealogy for Solomon, the youngest son to come; So were all the other sons who came after Solomon, all of whom had no right in the throne.

In the Septuagint version, the list of the royal tribe, extends up to the year 250 BC; the time of the version itself.

The text refers to mothers of six of David's sons, who were born in Hebron, before moving his capital to Jerusalem (993 BC). ... Here he begins with David's sons born in Hebron.

“Hebron”; an important city. Several men were called by this name. There is a little town, by this name, although differently written; 18 miles South of Jerusalem, and the same distance North of Beersheba; It is still there up to this day.

Why would the descendants of David start here by his sons in Hebron?

a- As the two books of the chronicles concentrate on the joyful kingdom of God, realized by the salvation presented by the Son of David; the first book of the chronicles presents the person of David, and his holy sons as

symbols of the Lord Christ. We should not then marvel to notice how the book omits the glorious events in David's life since his youth; as God chose him a king, while still a young boy shepherding his father's sheep; in secret in his father Jesse's house; And how the book disregards the troubles that chased David, from king Saul in particular; on account of that its main concern was setting David a king by all the tribes in Hebron, to reign over all Israel.

“Hebron”; A Hebrew name, meaning (congregation, company, bond, union, or marriage). As a start, the book intends to present the setting forth of the kingdom of Israel under the leadership of king David; in that he, as a symbol of the Lord Christ, the King of kings, is that all believers should become one holy congregation, bound by love and sanctification, in a perpetual company together in Christ Jesus. ... We shall see later on, particularly in chapter 12, that *“there was joy in Israel”* (12: 40); the secret of that joy was the attachment of all the tribes to David, even the tribe of Benjamin, from which king Saul came; he who was an oppressor of David; They got, and remained attached to David and to Judah, even after the division of the kingdom.

As the kingdom of the Lord Christ is set upon love, unity, and company; it is befitting of the believer, in order to enjoy the divine kingdom, to have his heart wide open to all mankind.

The name 'Hebron', therefore, presents to us a practical reference to the true way to the royal heavenly wedding.

- + All the souls of men and women are defined as "the bride of Christ", in case they keep the carnal chastity, and the virginity of heart; and understand that Christ is the Groom of their souls, and not of their bodies.

(Father Caesarius Bishop of Arle)

b- Hebron had its fame because of the events that happened there in the time of the Patriarchs. As an example, when Sarah died in Hebron, her husband Abraham purchased the field of Ephron' the Hittites in Machpelah, where he buried her in a cave in the field, that became, as well the burial place of all the family (Genesis 23: 2); and is still there to this day. A city was built in the valley. Where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob spent long time, and the three of them were buried in Hebron. ... If Hebron, then, is the place of death and tombs, there is need for a King, who raises from the dead, and challenges death.

The Son of David proclaims His glory by raising up those who have fallen asleep in the tombs of sins, to experience the deposit of eternity; to receive the Son of David, being the Door, the Way, the Life, the Resurrection, The Crown, the Treasure, and the Source of heavenly joy..

- + He tasted death for the sake of all; While being, Himself, Life and resurrection by nature, He, nevertheless, surrounded Himself with death. And by His might, He trampled on death in His body, to become the Firstborn among the dead, and the Firstborn of those who have fallen asleep ... If the resurrection from the dead is said to take place through a man; and the Man whom we know through it is The Word, born from God; Through Him the power of death is destroyed.

(St. Cyril the Great)

- c- From Hebron, Joseph, rejected by his brothers, set forth to search for his brothers (Genesis 37: 14). He, therefore, became a symbol of the Lord Christ, who, while being the Lord of all, did not despise being a firstborn brother of mankind; to take what is theirs (humanity), and to grant them what is His; namely to make them fellows in the divine nature (2 Peter 1: 4).
- + Calling the Christian Corinthians his brethren, Paul sets a greater confirmed foundation; As we have become brethren through the work of Christ during His work on earth and His death. What is the gospel but the message that God became Man, was crucified, and was risen? That was what the angel proclaimed to the Virgin St. Mary (Luke 1: 26 – 38); what the prophets have preached to the world; and what the apostles declared of the truth.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- d- Hebron became a 'city of refuge' (Joshua 20: 7), to protect the slayer, who kills any person accidentally or unintentionally, from the avenger of blood; where he dwells in complete freedom until the death of the one who is

the high priest in those days. It is as though Hebron refers to the cross of the Lord Christ.

In the statute of 'the city of refuge', it came that the slayer accidentally or unintentionally, has to hasten to resort to the nearest 'city of refuge', where he pleads his case before the elders of the city, who will embrace him if

they find him confess that he did kill, yet they are satisfied that he did it accidentally and unintentionally, and not through premeditation. He is then allowed to dwell within the walls of that city; where the blood avenger has no

right to do him harm; until the death of the one who is the high priest in those days; after which he could get out from the city, and nobody would have the right to approach him.

The death of the high priest refers to the death of the Lord Christ, by which He liberated us from the wages of sin; and granted us freedom, complete in Him. As the 'city of refuge' refers to the Lord Christ, the repentant man will be safe as long as he stays in the Lord; but in case he forsakes Him, he will be the object of death.

+ Tell me why, when the high priest dies, all prisoners may return to their territories.

That is the secret of the Highest Priest who died on the 'Golgotha'; and through His death, those who were driven out of paradise return

(St. (Mar) Jacob el-Serougi)

e- Hebron was the dwelling place of the priests, sons of Aaron, until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly High Priest, according to the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110: 4); He, who did not offer animal sacrifices; but offered His own conscience and heart; offered bread and wine, as a symbol of what the Lord of glory Jesus, offers; transforming the bread and wine into His given body and blood.

+ Having clearly recognized those (priests) in his prophecy, David did not liken any of them to the 'Son';
He saw them all, offer to God, sacrifices that do not concern them, that are out of their persons.
He saw how, the Lord Christ, intending to be Priest, did not offer to His Father anything outside Himself;
Distinguishing between who liken the Son of God, and who does not, David found out that Melchizedek, has become a priest with no sacrifices; that he did not pour the blood of animals before God;
That He did not offer the firstfruit, like what Abel did; And did not present a burnt offering of clean animals like Noah;
That He did not slay three-year old animals like Abraham (Genesis 15: 9); And did not offer bulls nor sheep like the Levites;
That He did not pour the blood of turtledoves nor young pigeons; nor offered bulls and calves (Exodus 24; Leviticus 21: 8; Luke 2: 24).
But He stood before God with a pure heart and mind, that were more exalted than any sacrifice;
He intended to become pure like the 'corban'; and to slay his mind and not animals before God;
He intended to offer to the Lord, nothing but Himself; His conscience, pure without defilement;
He said: I shall not bring flesh to offer before the Lord; for He does not eat from the sacrifices offered to Him;

Assuming it to be an insult to offer animal sacrifices before the Lord; he intended to purify himself, and slay his mind to Him;
By such pure and exalted spiritual movements, Melchizedek became a priest;
He became a priest by the passions of his own soul, without sacrifices;
Hence he likened the Son of God.

(St. (Mar) Jacob el-Serougi)

f- The city of Hebron was known even before Damascus, by the name 'Kiriath Arba' (Joshua 14: 15; 15: 3; 21: 11; Judges 1: 10). In the fourteenth chapter of Joshua, it came that 'Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite sought his right, promised by the Lord on the tongue of Moses; namely, to possess the mountain where fortified cities were, and Hebron, meaning (wedding, union, or congregation). Having got Hebron, Caleb drove away from it the three sons of 'Anak': Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi (Joshua 15: 14). ...Caleb son of Jephunneh, who refers to the heart that turned away from despise, and entered into glory, has got 'Hebron' as a reward; by which he entered into a holy and spiritual wedding, by which the soul unites forever with her Groom. 'Hebron', on another aspect, is called 'Keriath Arba' (village of four); the figure 4 refers to the world with its four directions: East, West, North, and South; And refers, as well, to the body, taken from this earth, or from this world. The one with the holy heart, who turned to his eternal Groom, will reign over his body, driving away the three sons of 'Anak', for the Lord to reign forever in it. It is not enough to have our hearts or our inner life, holy; but we are committed to look at our bodies with a holy look. As we offer to the Groom our inner life, so we should offer Him our bodies as well; for man to work in his wholeness with harmony... According to St. Gregory of Nyssa: [Man, in his wholeness, is like a guitar that bears different strings, but offers by the spirit a harmonious piece of music, that brings pleasure to God].

It is as though the old name of Hebron, namely 'Keriath Arba', calls us to be sanctified with our whole being, as well as with our bodies, to the account of the Son of David, the King of kings.

In short, we may say that the two books of the chronicles exhort us to recognize Christ – the Redeemer and the Savior – the Bearer of the sins of the world; particularly confirming His royalty.

g- 'Hebron', referring to unity of the soul with the Lord Christ; becoming a bride attached to her Groom, the soul, together with David, forgets her whole life, with all David's conquests, like overcoming the mighty Goliath; the women receiving him with songs for saving his country; managing to appease the evil spirit in king Saul by playing praises to God on the guitar; Saul's persistent attempts to kill him, etc. the believer will only be preoccupied with getting attached to the King of kings, to see all the tribes coming to enthrone him over Israel. The believer, together with David in Hebron, by the spirit of humility, will look with awe at how the Lord would draw all the mighty talents to work to the account of the kingdom of God.

In Hebron, David grows more humble, perceiving that setting him a king, is nothing but a free divine gift, not for anything good in him, as much as it is the work of the Lord of hosts, for the glory of His holy name, for the sake of mankind, the subject of His exalted love.

“Daniel”; meaning (God judges); David's son from 'Abigail'; born in Hebron' (1 Chronicles 3: 1). His name came as 'Chileab' (2 Samuel 3: 3).

“Abigail”; Her story came in (1 Samuel 25-26); a beautiful and virtuous wife; who, beside her beauty, she was characterized by her wisdom; by which she gave a good counsel to 'Nabal' her foolish husband, as well as to David, having

kept him from avenging himself against Nabal'. Not preoccupied with her husband huge wealth, nor with her inheritance from him, she gave herself up with her whole possessions to David, when she realized that he was the man of God. The psalmist David said to her: "*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel who sent you this day to meet me; and blessed is your advise, and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand*" (1 Samuel 25: 32-33).

"The third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Gishur; the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah by Abital; the sixth Ithream, by his wife Eglah" (2, 3)

"Absalom, the son of Maachah"; Nothing was said about him in the chronicles, other than that he was good looking, long-haired, well beloved by his father and the people. When Amnon his brother – from his father and not from his mother – raped his sister Tamar, and was not punished by his father, Absalom got so angry that he had Amnon killed by his servants. He then fled from his father's face to take refuge with the king of Gishur the father of his mother (2 Samuel 3: 3; 13: 27), where he stayed three years; and when he returned to Jerusalem, David abstained from seeing him.

Using every possible way to draw the people to himself, he declared his rebellion against his father, and his intent to take the throne from him. In a battle between his army and that of his father, Absalom, riding on a mule, the mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and with his head caught in the terebinth, he was left hanging between heaven and earth, and the mule which was under him went on (2 Samuel 18: 6-9). Joab took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart; contrary to David's command to the leaders of his army to deal gently with Absalom for his sake. Ten young men who bore Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, struck and killed him, cast him into a pit

in the woods, and laid a large heap of stones over him, as is usually done with the rebels and criminals.

David grieved intensively for the death of his son Absalom, and lamented him; Yet, he had to encounter the returning victorious army, for fear that the people would otherwise rebel against him.

If David has been enthroned a king over all Israel in Hebron (1 Samuel 2: 1-4, 11), and made it the center of His kingdom; Yet, his own son Absalom, unfortunately rebelled against him in Hebron.

“Talmai, king of Gishur”; A Semite name, meaning (the plower); most probably derived from the Horite word ‘Talma’, meaning (Great).

“Shephatiah son of Abital”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah judged); David’s fifth son (1 Chronicles 3: 3), born in Hebron by Abital.

“Adonijah the son of Haggith”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is the Lord).

“Ithream”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the uncle is generous); David’s son, born in Hebron (1 Chronicles 3: 3)

These six were born to him in Hebron; there he reigned seven years and six months; and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years” (4)

2- THE DESCENDANTS OF DAVID IN JERUSALEM:

The book sets forth with us from ‘Hebron’, being the beginning of David’s kingdom over all Israel, to ‘Jerusalem’, being the city of God, or the holy city (Nehemiah 11: 1, 16; Matthew 4: 5); called ‘El-Kods’ by the Arabs; but the

Hebrew origin of its name is disputed. According to some, it means (the possession of peace) or (the foundation of peace). Heaven itself was called 'Jerusalem above' (Galatians 4: 26).

If the beginning of the way for the enjoyment of the kingdom of Christ is the unity and company of God and men (Hebron); its end will be the enjoyment of eternal heavenly peace. That is the way symbolized by the two books of the chronicles.

The most prominent things to preoccupy us in Jerusalem are the following:

- A- Jerusalem in the old was called "Salem", whose king was "Melchizedek", according to whose order (or rank), the Lord Christ, the heavenly High Priest, appeared, by whose blood He brings us forth justified to the bosom of the Father.
- B- Jerusalem is bound to Mount "Moriah", to which Abraham reached on the third day after setting forth from Beersheba, together with his son Isaac, to offer him a sacrifice to God (Genesis 22); then returned with him alive. The figure 3 refers to the resurrection of the Lord Christ from the dead.
- C- In Jerusalem, Solomon built the temple, as a reference to the perpetual divine presence among His people Jerusalem, therefore, exhorts us to enjoy the Lord Christ, being the King, the Priest, (according to the order of Melchizedek), and the sacrifice, Grantor of the righteousness and the resurrection; and the enjoyment of the fellowship with God.

"And these were born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon – four by Bathshua the daughter of Ammiel"
(5)

Those were born in Jerusalem, and were mentioned in (2 Samuel 5: 14-16; 1 Chronicles 14: 4-7). Yet we notice certain differences in their names: as for example, 'Shimea', came in Samuel 1: 14, as 'Shammua'. And in the book of

Samuel, 'Eliphelet' 96), and 'Nogah' (7) were not mentioned; they probably died young.

“Shobab”; A Hebrew name, meaning (apostate).

“Nathan”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God gave).

“Bath-shua”, a derivative from 'Bathsheba'; A Hebrew name, meaning (Daughter of the oath or of the seventh day). Her episode came in (2 Samuel 11-12; 1 Kings); when David fell with her into sin, then in an attempt to cover it up, he called her husband -- Uriah the Hittite, who was a leader in the army, faithful to David and to Israel, and sought from him to go home; but, when he refrained to sleep with his wife while the army was engaged in a battle, David plotted to have him killed. God sent the prophet Nathan to rebuke him, and to proclaim His chastisements against him. His son Solomon from Bathsheba succeeded his father David on the throne, and took over the task of building the temple (1 Kings 1 to 11; 2 Chronicles 2 to 9).

“Ammiel”; He was also called 'Eliam' (2 Samuel 11: 3).

*“Also there were Ibhar, Elishama,
Eliphelet” (6)*

“Ibhar”; A Hebrew name, meaning (chooses).

“Elishama”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God heard); More than one person were called by this name. Beside the one mentioned here, there was another son of David, mentioned in (1 Chronicles 3: 8).

“Eliphelet”; A Hebrew name, meaning (rescued by God). More than one person were called by this name. Beside the one mentioned here, there was another son of David also born in Jerusalem, probably after the first one died.

“Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia”

(7)

“Nogah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (glittering)

“Japhia”; A Hebrew name, meaning (illuminating).

“Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet; nine

in all” (8)

“Eliada or Eliadah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (he who knows God).

“Eliphelet”; Another son of David, most probably after the death of his brother with the same name.

“These were all sons of David, beside the sons of the concubines, and ‘Tamar’ their sister” (9)

David had concubines, whose sons were not mentioned; probably on account of that those concubines have committed a king of treason during the rebellion of Absalom.

“Tamar”; David had other daughters beside ‘Tamar’, But ‘Tamar’ was mentioned because, being very beautiful, her brother ‘Amnon’ (from her father); as much as he loved her, he hated her exceedingly after raping her, and put her out, away from him, with her shame (2 Samuel 13-14).

3- THE DESCENDANTS OF SOLOMON:

Unfortunately, among David's sons, there were those who caused him a great bitterness, like Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah; None of his sons were like him in godliness, except for Solomon, although he eventually perverted because of his marriage to pagan wives.

Solomon was enthroned, although he was the fourth among those born to David by Bathsheba in Jerusalem; And his descendants came conforming with what are mentioned in the first and the second books of the kings, and what came during, and after the return from captivity.

“Solomon's son was Rehoboam, Abijah was his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son” (10)

“Rehoboam”; Succeeded his father on the throne after he died; his narrow mind caused the division of the kingdom; when he violently responded to ‘Jeroboam’ and those who sought from him to lighten the burdensome heavy yoke which his father put on them; listening to the counsel of the young men who had grown up with him, and rejecting that of the elders who stood up before his father Solomon while he still lived (1 Kings 12). ‘Jeroboam’ used the situation to gather together around him ten tribes to form the kingdom of Israel; leaving only two tribes: Judah and Benjamin with ‘Rehoboam’ the king of Judah.

There was war between the two kings for a long time; during which each of them joined forces with foreign nations like Aram or Assyria. Many of the descendants of Solomon sat on the throne in the kingdom of Judah, all mentioned in the second book of the Kings, and the second book of the chronicles.

“Abijah”; was ‘Abijam’ mentioned in 1 Kings 14: 31

“Jehoshaphat” (2 Chronicles 17-20); Although he learned much from his father ‘Asa’, and followed his lead in his positive works; yet, in several occasions, he followed his lead in evil. as well. He succeeded when he returned to God to ask His counsel; But, he allowed his son to marry ‘Athaliah’, daughter of Ahab, the evil king of Israel, who was a mirror image of her evil mother Isabel.

“Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son” (11)

“Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jothan his son” (12)

“Azariah”; (Uzziah) (2 Chronicles 26); Although he was a successful king in war and peace, made many achievements, constructions, and sound planning; Yet, he failed to take away the heathen symbols in the land; And his covetousness provoked him, not to give thanks to God, but to fall into pride, to the extent of taking the priestly task by force; for which he was inflicted with leprosy.

“Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son”
(13)

“Amon his son, and Josiah his son” (14)

“The sons of Josiah were Johanan the firstborn, the second Jehoiakin, the third Zedekiah, and the fourth Shallum” (15)

“Hezekiah, the king”; We already spoke about him in (2 Kings 18-20).

Josiah, the king; We already spoke about him in (2 Kings 22-23)

From verse 15 onward, following the reign of Josiah, the faithful and believer king, we find a chain of kings who caused the desolation of Judah; and brought the kingdom forth to captivity.

In the genealogies concerning Jesus Christ (Matthew 1), there is no mention of several names. According to some, the rulers of Babylon have altered those names to blot every trace of royalty from the spirit of the Jewish captives (Daniel 1: 6-7).

“Johanán”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is compassionate); More than one person were called by this name, among whom were:

- 1- Although he was the firstborn of Josiah, yet he did not sit on the throne; and was mentioned nowhere else; probably died in his childhood.
- 2- The son of ‘Elioenai’, a descendant of David (1 Chronicles 3: 24).

“Jehoiakin” (Jehoiakim or Eliakim) (2 Kings 23: 34) (See also Jeremiah 22-28, 35-36).

“Zedekiah”; The fourth brother; his name was ‘Mataniah’ (2 Kings 24: 17) (See also Jeremiah 21-39)

“Shallum” (or Jehoahaz) (2 Kings 23: 30); the third brother, although he came here the last.

“The sons of Jehoiakim were Jeconiah and Zedekiah his son” (16)

“Jeconiah” (or Coniah) in (Jeremiah 22: 24, 28; 37: 1); meaning (the Lord sets up)

“Zedekiah”; According to some, the words *“his son”* here, means (his successor). ‘Zedekiah here is Josiah’s son, the king who succeeded Jehoiakin, mentioned here because he did not go into captivity.

“The sons of Jeconiah were Assir,

Shaltiel his son” (17)

“Assir”; A Hebrew word, meaning (a Captive). While some assumed that this name is a description of Jeconiah as a captive; Yet, according to the Hebrew text, and to old translations, it is not a description, but a name.

“Shaltiel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (I asked God); son of ‘Neri’ (Luke 3: 27); adopted by Jeconiah after his delayed captivation in 597 BC.

*“And Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jecamiah,
Hoshama, and Nedabiah” (18)*

“Melchiram”; A Hebrew name, meaning (The king is exalted); the son of Jeconiah, king of Judah

“Pedaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah redeemed); brother of Shaltiel, and father of Zerubbabel

“Shenazzar”; a descendant of Jeconiah; analogous to ‘Sheshbazzar’, prince of Judah, on the return from Babylon in the year 538/537 BC (Ezra 1: 8); both names are short of the Acadian word ‘Sin-aba-usur’, meaning (Protect me, O god moon – Basar); He succeeded his nephew Zerubbabel,, the natural son of the elder son ‘Pedaiah’, yet was referred to the older son ‘Shaltiel (Ezra 3: 2; Haggai 1: 1, 12; Matthew 1: 12; Luke 3: 27), who most probably died childless; hence, his brother set a descendant to be referred to him according to the law (Deuteronomy 25: 5-10).

“Jecamiah” (or Jecmiah); A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah rises up); a man from Judah of royal descent.

“Hoshama”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah heard).

“Nedabiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is generous); son of king Jeconiah.

“The sons of Pedaiah were Zerubbabel and Shimei”; and the sons of Zerubbabel were Meshullam, Hananiah, Shelomith, their sister” (19)

“Zerubbabel”; An Acadian name, meaning (born in Babylon), son of Shaltiel, who died childless, and his brother Pedaiah probably took his widow and set a descendant to his brother according to the law; and Zerubbabel was referred to him.

‘Zerubbabel’ was the leader of the first batch of those who returned from the captivity of Babylon to Jerusalem, according to the decree, sent and financed by Cyrus in the sixth century BC, and with them, he sent the golden and silver vessels, confiscated from the temple by Nebuchadnezer. In Jerusalem he started by building the altar to worship God, and laid some of the foundations of the temple. Then he confronted two problems: the first was that some elders grieved when comparing the new temple built by Zerubbabel to the original one built by Solomon. And the second problem was that certain enemies managed to stop the work by political pressure. In the meantime, people got preoccupied with building their own houses, claiming that it was not yet the time to build the house of the Lord. God sent two prophets: Haggai and Zechariah to encourage Zerubbabel; and the work was resumed anew after stopping for 16 years, and the temple was completed in four years. Zerubbabel was not like ‘Nehemiah’ who did not let any problem to stop him from building the house of the Lord.

The message from God to Zerubbabel on the tongue of the prophet Zechariah was: *“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts. Who*

are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of 'Grace, grace to it'" (Zechariah 4: 6, 7)

In verse 19 two sons and their sister were mentioned; and five in verse 21. Those five were most probably from another mother; or were born after the return from captivity.

“**Shimei**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah hears); brother of Zerubbabel.

“**Meshullam**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (who got his reward); a son of Zerubbabel (1 Chronicles 3: 19)

“**Hananiah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah granted; is compassionate); a son of Zerubbabel, and father of Pedaiah and Jeshaiiah.

“**Shelomith**”; (or Shelomiah); feminine of ‘Shelomy’ or ‘Solomon’; a daughter of Zerubbabel (1 Chronicles 3: 19)

“And Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah, and Joshab-Hased – five in all” (20)

“**Hashubah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (counted); a son of Zerubbabel (1 Chronicles 3: 20).

“**Ohel**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (tent); a son of Zerubbabel.)1 Chronicles 3: 20)

“**Berachiah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (blessed by God); a son of Zerubbabel, a descendant of David (1 Chronicles 3: 20)

“Hasadiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (The Lord granted); a son of Zerubbabel; a royal descendant of David

“Joshab” (or Joshab-Hasad); A Hebrew name, meaning (Compassion will be rewarded); a son of Zerubbabel, a descendant of David

“The sons of Hananiah were Pelatiah and Jeshaiiah; the sons of Rephaiah, the sons of Arnan, the sons of Obadiah, and the sons of Shechaniah” (21)

“Pelatiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah liberated); son of Hananiah and grandson of Zerubbabel

“Jeshaiiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah saved); (1 Chronicles 3: 21)

“Raphaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah healed) (1 Chronicles 20).

“Arnan” (or Arona); A Hebrew name of unknown meaning.

“Obadiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (slave of Jehovah); a prince of a house of the descendants of David (1 Chronicles 3: 21).

“Shechaniah”; An Aramite word, meaning (Jehovah dwells); a descendant of David; founder of a family.

“The son of Shechaniah was Shemaiah; The sons of Shemaiah were Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat -- six in all” (22)

“Shemaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God hears); son of David from Bathshua.

“Hattush”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a society); a man of Judah, son of Shemaiah, and of the family of Jeconiah.

“Igal; A Hebrew name, meaning (redeems); (1 Chronicles 3: 22)

“Bariah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (an escapee or a fugitive)

“Neariah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (bearer of Jehovah’s shield); father of Eloeai, Hezekiah, and Azrikam; one of six sons of Shemaiah (1 Chronicles 3: 22-23).

“Shaphat”; A Hebrew name, meaning (He judged);

“The sons of Neariah were Elioelai, Hezekiah, and Azrikam – three in all” (23)

“Elioelai”; A Hebrew name, meaning (my sight is toward Jehovah).

“Hezekiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (The Lord is mighty); son of Neariah, a relative of the royal family of Judah (1 Chronicles 3: 23).

“Azrikam”; A Hebrew name, meaning (My Helper sets up); (1 Chronicles 3: 23).

“The sons of Elioelai were Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiiah, and Anani – seven in all” (24)

Hud; A Hebrew name, meaning (glory); ‘Hodaviah’ means (glory to Jehovah) (1 Chronicles 3: 24)

“Eliashib”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Whom God brings back); son of Elioelai, a descendant of Zerubbabel.

“**Pelaiah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is amazing).

“**Akkub**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (follows or chases).

“**Dalaiah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (liberated by the Lord).

“**Anani**”; A Hebrew name, short of ‘Ananiah’.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 3

BRING ME FORTH, O LORD, INTO THE ETERNAL WEDDING, TO ENJOY THE FELLOWSHIP OF YOUR GLORIES

+ Let Your Holy Spirit carries me, together with David to Hebron;
Where I would stand in awe to see David in the shadow of the law;
Setting forth to Hebron, the symbol of wedding, unity, and attachment to
You;

He is not preoccupied with the events of his past;
But remembers his glorious work by You; his weaknesses, and his bitter
temptations;

He no more remembers king Saul's persistent oppression.
His spiritual wedding, and his enjoyment of the splendor of Your glory in
him, draw all his feelings.

+ As he used to do, He did not admonish You;
To say: [Where is Your promise to me, when I was a young man, to
become the king over all Israel?

He was only preoccupied with enjoying You, O King of kings;

By the spirit of prophecy he saw You a King on the cross;
All his thoughts, emotions, and senses, were drawn by Your love and
glory;

It was enough for him to see You, O Savior of the world;
Who joins the heavenlies and the earthlies together;

+ His encounter with You, did wonder in all the men of valor;
The brothers of the wicked Saul, and the leaders of his army, joined you;
They turned into energies working to the account of Your kingdom;
They saw in You the amazing King in the bosom of the King of kings;
They saw in You fatherhood in the shadow of God, full of compassion.

+ In Hebron, there is the tombs of Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
In it they smell the sweet fragrance of Your beautiful resurrection;
Instead of the smell of corruption and death;
All the tribes saw You, while they were coming forth to David;
They enjoyed You, O who shined with Your resurrection on David's heart;
Hebron is no more the center of visiting the tombs of the great men of
God;

But became a shadow of the heavenly wedding;
The living and the dead enjoy You in the fellowship of the heavenlies;
No, but in the fellowship and the enjoyment of the Holy Trinity.

+ Hebron is no more the dwelling place of the priests and the Levites;
But became a shadow of the secret place of the heavenly High Priest, and
of the throne of the King of kings;

They saw You as though in the heavenly sanctuaries, interceding with
Your blood for mankind;

+ Thanks be to You, for bringing me forth to Hebron;

Where my soul finds comfort, not only on account of that it is city of refuge;

But because it became for me a place to encounter You, O the stronghold of my life;

+ Grant me, together with David, to set forth from Hebron to Jerusalem;
What should I truly say? And what words should I utter, concerning the holy city of God?

Set on mountains, not of stones, but heavenly;

What enemy could crawl into it; And what harm could come near it?

+ In the old, Jerusalem was called "salem"; and its king was Melchizedek;
Grant me to enjoy the deposit of the High Jerusalem;
You are her King, the Grantor of righteousness and heavenly peace.

+ Jerusalem used to cherish her temple;
Whereas the temple of the High Jerusalem, is not made by human hand;
You are her Sun and Light; Darkness has no place in her;
You are the secret of her glory, gladness, and joy;
By You, I cross over to her; to live in Your divine bosoms.

+ Together with my father David, I sing, saying:
[I knew You, O Son of David, the Groom of my soul;
You are the King of kings; You set me a king;
You are the resurrection; You grant me the conquest over death;
You are the heavenly High Priest;
You bring me forth into the bosom of the Father;
You are my heavenly divine refuge;
You carry me up to heaven, the Higher Jerusalem;
Your divine peace dwells upon me;
And You cover me up by Your righteousness, O Holy One;

I enjoy the splendor of the heavenly sanctuaries;
Shining with Your light on me; darkness will no more surround me;
You are my glory, joy, and the gladness of my soul.



CHAPTER 4

THE SOUTHERN TRIBES

(JEBEZ, OTHNIEL, AND CALEB, SON OF JEPHUNEH)

We have already referred to the fact that the genealogies of the two tribes; Judah and Levi came more detailed than the other tribes; as is clear in the chapter in our hands (verses 1 to 23), concerning the genealogies of Judah.

To perceive the historical reason of this fact, it is enough for us to have a look at the southern kingdom, namely, the kingdom of Judah; to see how the kings followed one another in an uninterrupted chain, from one family (except for six years during which Athaliah reigned after taking the throne by force, and giving the command to kill the whole family of David). Otherwise, from the year 1000 BC until the year 589 BC, namely for more than four centuries, Jerusalem has been the capital of the kingdom. That continuity or stability contributed to a great extent to keep the historical records of the kingdom. In this concern, the southern kingdom of Judah differed from the northern kingdom of Israel; for the later was reigned by a chain of different families, some of which did not last long, all along two centuries (922 – 722 BC); during which the capital changed several times. That instability led to the loss of the historical records. As an example, when Naaman the Syrian came to the prophet Elishah to be healed from leprosy; the second book of the kings did not mention the name of the king of Israel at that time, despite the attempts of the scholars, and even of the author of the book to know his name.

Because of that, the two books of the chronicles look at the kingdom of Judah, and not to the kingdom of Israel, as a representative of the continuity of the history concerning the Holy Book; a testimony that is obvious here more than in any other books of the Holy Scripture.

Chapters 2 to 4, concentrate more on two names of descendants of Judah; namely: '**David**', considered as the main personality in the books of the chronicles; And '**Caleb** son of Jephuneh' who represents the strength and persistence of faith

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1- A CONSUMMATION OF THE GENEALOGIES OF JUDAH:

“The sons of Judah were Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur, and Shobai” (1)

Perez was the son of Judah and Hezron was his son (2: 5). ‘Carmi’ mentioned here, is ‘Chelubai’ (2: 9), son of ‘Hezron’, different from the other ‘Carmi’ mentioned in (2: 7), and in (Joshua 7: 1).

“Perez”; A Hebrew name, meaning (gap).

“Hezron”; A Hebrew name, meaning (siege or animal fold)

“Carmi”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a laborer in a vineyard)

“Hur”; Most probably an Egyptian name, driven from that of the god ‘Horus’.

“**Shobal**”; the son of ‘Hur’, of the house of ‘Caleb’, of the tribe of Judah, of the family of Hezron. From his descendants the inhabitants of ‘Keriath Jearim’ came (1 chronicles 4: 2, 4).

“And Reaiah the son of Shobal begot Jahath, and Jahath begot Ahumai and Lahad. These were the families of the Zorathites” (2)

“**Reaiah**”; most probably ‘Haroeh’ (2: 52), meaning (the Seer or Jehovah sees).

“**The Zorathites**”; ‘Zoar’ was at the south of Judah on the frontier of Palestine.

“**Jahath**”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (snatch); Beside the one mentioned here, another person bore the same name: A Levite, Kohathite, in the days of David (4: 22).

“**Ahumai**”; A Hebrew name, a prince in the families of Judah.

“**Lahad**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a burden).

town of ‘**Etam**’; a name of more than one town:

“These were the sons of the father of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash; and the name of their sister was Hazeleponi” (3)

“**Etam**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the dwelling place of the birds of prey); By saying ‘the father of ‘Etam’, he means that he was the builder of town. There are more than one town called by this name:

- 1- A town in Judea close to Bethlehem, strengthened by Rehoboam, after the division of the tribes (2 chronicles 11: 6). Called nowadays ‘Kherbet El-Khoch’ at Solomon’s pool, where ruins of water basins were excavated near ‘Keriath Artas’ and ‘Ein Etan’

2- A town in the southern part of Judea; moved from the portion of the children of Judah to that of Simeon (1 chronicles 4: 32); It is probably 'Eton' nowadays, eleven miles South-west of Hebron.

“Jezreel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God plants) (1 chronicles 4: 3)

“Ishma”; A Hebrew name, probably short of the name 'Ishmael'.

“Idbash”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Sweet as honey), the son of the father of 'Etam'.

“Hazeleponi”; A Hebrew name, meaning (puts her shadow on me); the name of a girl of the children of Judah.

“qnd Penuel was the father of Gedor; and 'Ezer' was the father of Hushah. These were the sons of 'Hur', the firstborn of Ephrathah, the father of Bethlehem” (4)

“Gedor”; A Hebrew name, meaning (A stronghold or a walled place). Beside the son of Penuel mentioned here, there is another person called by the same name, namely: the son of Jared from his Jewish wife (1 Chronicles 4: 18)

There is, as well, a location called “Gedor’ between ‘Seir’ and Judah; probably within the portion of Simeon, close to the North-western border of Palestine (1 Chronicles 4: 39). In the Septuagint version it came as “Gerar’.

“Ezer, father of Hushah’, meaning (help)

“Ephrathah’; A Hebrew name, meaning (fruitful). Saying ‘father of Bethlehem’ means its prince.

“And Ashhur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah, and Naarah” (5)

“**Ashhur**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (blackness).

“**Helah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (adornment, or a necklace);

“**Naarah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a girl).

“Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hephher, Temeni, and Haahashtari. These were the sons of Naarah” (6)

“**Ahuzzam**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the king or the owner); son of Ashur, of the family of Hezron.

“**Hephher**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (pit or well), son of Ashur, of the family of Hezron, of the tribe of Judah.

“**Haahashtari**”; probably a Persian name, meaning (belonging to the kingdom; son of Ashur.

“The sons of Helah were Zereth, Zohar, and Ethnan” (7)

“**Zereth**”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (splendor)

“**Zohar**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (white)

“And Koz begot Anub, Zobeba, and the families of Aharhel the son of Harum” (8)

“Koz”; A Hebrew name, meaning (thorns).

“Anub”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (engaged); the son of ‘Koz’, a prince of Judah.

“Zobeba”; A Hebrew name, meaning (hatred or anger)

“Aharhel the son of Harum”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (brother of Rachel) or (the last of the strong); a head of a family in Judah.

“Now Jebez was more honorable than his brothers; and his mother called his name ‘Jebez’, saying, ‘Because I bore him in pain” (9) “And Jebez called on the God of Israel, saying,

‘Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that you would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain:. So God granted him what he requested” (10)

“Jebez”; A Hebrew name, meaning (cause pain). There is no mention of his father’s name, nor the era when he existed; All we know about him from the Holy Book or from the Jewish tradition is that he was more honorable than his brothers, he was a teacher of law, and he was a godly man. That is most probably why the city where he lived was called after his name (1 Chronicles 2: 55); He was a man of faith *“For without faith it is impossible to please Him (God); for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of those who seek Him”* (Hebrew 11: 6).

He was called *“more honorable than his brothers”*: The secret of his greatness and honor, was not that he did something heroic, but because he made God the center of his life and his work. He knew how to let God occupy His proper place

in his life, being the Lord, the Grantor of blessings, the Giver of the inner conquest; the Leader of life, and the true Stronghold against evil.

Grief had no more place in the heart of such a man of God; For he knows what he should request; and God responded to his request.

The prayer of 'Jebez' is considered unique; Although it, together with its response, did not take more than one verse long, yet he presents to us an ideal prayer well received by God. He requested, and God granted him his request. The secret of God's response to it is that Jebez' prayer included four things, and revealed God's role in the life of a believer:

- 1- The first request was for blessing – the heavenly blessed life – saying: “*Oh, **You would bless me***”; meaning, Grant me the true happiness. For God is the Grantor of blessings and true happiness.
- 2- The second request was to “***enlarge his territory***” – Namely, the width of the heart with love of God and people. He requests a wide heart, in which all men would find a place by love. For God is the Grantor of true love.
- 3- The third request is **to have God's hand with him** – Namely, to enjoy God's presence; For God longs to dwell in us, to work in, and by us, and to protect us. He asks for God's protection and care.
- 4- The fourth request is **to be kept from evil** – Namely the conquest over the devil and evil. He asks God to grant him the authority over the devil and all his hosts; and to take away from him, evil that robs him of his joy in the Lord.

As all the requests came according to the will of God; or according to Jebez' vow; it is said: “*God granted him what he requested*” (10). In the Book of Jeremiah it came: “*You will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for me with all your heart*” (Jeremiah 29: 12, 13)

‘Jabez’ became successful in all aspects of his life: in his work, studies, his relationships with the others, and his wrestling against the pagans. God was always ready to listen to all what went on in his heart and mind.

“Chelub the brother of Shuhah begot Mehir who was the father of Eshton” (11)

“Chelub”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a basket of birds); his genealogy was not fully known (1 Chronicles 4: 11)

“Shuhah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (lowly).

“Mehir”; Hebrew name, meaning (price).

“Eshton”; The meaning of the name is not fully known.

“And Eshton begot Beth-Rapha, Pasea, and Tehinnah the father of Irnash. These were the men of Rechah” (12)

“Rapha”; A Hebrew name, meaning (healed or God heals); Beth-Rapha was built by Ashton.

“Pasea”; A Hebrew name, meaning (lame); a man of Judah, a descendant of ‘Chelub’ (1 Chronicles 4: 12)

“Tehinnah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (grace) or (a cry-out for help); founder of the town of ‘Irnash’.

Irnash; A Semite name, meaning (a serpent)

“Rechah”; A location in the portion of Judah.

“And the sons of Kenaz were Othniel and Seraiah. The sons of Othniel were Hathath...” (13)

“Othniel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God is power) or (God’s response) or (The time of God for myself). A descendant of ‘Kenaz’, namely from the family of the Kenizzites; the younger brother of Caleb from their father Jephunneh (Joshua 15: 17). Othniel was the first judge of Israel, achieved many reforms, and spread peace in the land (Judges 1: 9-15; 3: 5-11).

About him it was said: *“Caleb said, ‘He who attacks Keriath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother took it, so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife”* (Judges 1: : 12-13). And, *“When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, and his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim. So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died”* (Judges 3: 9-11).

We have already dealt with these two text in our commentary on the Book of Judges:

a- “Othniel”; means (God’s response); Nobody could take Keriath Sepher by force (Judges 1: 12); Namely, no one can enjoy the Holy Book unless he is granted God’s response to his request; and hence, he would be given

Achsah daughter of Caleb in marriage; Namely, he would get attached to the holy life, and to know its secrets; not as a “Keriath” to dwell in, but as a bride to marry.

b- Choosing 'Othniel' was not haphazard; For God intended for him to be the first of the judges, to proclaim that the secret of conquest and salvation lies in God. The word 'Othniel' means (God's response) or (God's power).

Salvation would not be realized by human power, but through God's response, He who hears the cry-outs of His children, and works in them by His divine power.

By him, the land had rest for forty years. If the land symbolizes the body, and the figure 40 refers to the blessed temporal life, If we, therefore, bear within ourselves a soul that walks the way that judge did, by the Spirit of the Lord, and enjoy the Word of God, our body would have rest in the Lord, and would be holy in His sight all the days of our life. Let 'Othniel' therefore, be our leader in us, to have rest, and to be filled with the exalted peace.

+ The book talks about 'Othniel; the deliverer, whose name means (the time of the Lord for myself); And accordingly, those early people got rid of the humiliation and bondage through him, and peace came back to them, after being lost a short time in the past because of their pride and diverse crimes.

'*Cushan Rishathaim*' could be understood by the spiritual concept, as one of the enemies, and "*the prince of the power of the air*" (Ephesians 2: 2). It would therefore be logical for us to follow 'Othniel' who is set by heaven to liberate us (Luke 2: 11); a symbol of one of the heavenly creatures and the angelic hosts "*sent forth to minister for those who will inherit heaven*" (Hebrew 1: 14). The angels of salvation, represented by Othniel or Ehud.

Indeed we are attacked by adversary hosts; Yet, good divine hosts are sent from God to help us. ... Let us see who is "Othniel", and from what noble family he came. He is the son of Kenaz, and brother of Caleb, the amazing man, worthy of commendation, who was in the company of

Joshua the son of Nun. About "Othniel" the book says: "*When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz*" (Judges 3: 9). I do not know if there is in the church such a judge whom the Lord finds worthy of "*being filled with the Spirit of God*", the way "Othniel" was, to whom the Holy Book testified, saying, "*The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand*" (Judges 3: 10). Why? Because the Spirit of the Lord came upon him; his hand prevailed upon Cushan-Rishathaim; and the land had rest for forty years. Do you see how great is the divine mercy?

For eight years the people of Israel were slaves (Judges 3: 8) because of the sins of many. And for forty years the land had rest because of one person (Judges 3: 9).

(The scholar Origen)

"Seraiah"; A Hebrew name, meaning (God conquered); son of Caleb, and younger brother of 'Othniel'. And father of Joab, father of the valley of craftsmen (13-14).

"Hethath"; A Hebrew name, meaning (horror); son of 'Othniel' (13)

"Meonothai who begot Ophrah; Seraiah begot Joab the father of Geharashim, for they were craftsmen" (14)

"Meonothai"; A Hebrew name, meaning (my dwelling places).

"Ophrah"; A Hebrew name, meaning (deer).

“Joab”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is Father); **‘The valley of the craftsmen’** could be “the valley of Shelal, extending to the North-West toward ‘Jaffa’. It is to be noticed that, because the land of Judah was less fertile than the Northern kingdom of Israel, there are fewer number of farmers in it; But there are many craftsmen (14), workers in linen (21), and workers in ceramics (23)..It is also to be noticed that the whole family (of Othniel) were craftsmen, and traders, who worked harder than their neighbors.

“The valley of the craftsmen”(Nehemiah 11: 35), close to ‘Led’, called nowadays ‘Wadi Rezia’; It is claimed that from it were craftsmen who worked in the temple.

“The sons of Caleb the son of Jephunneh were Iru, Elah, and Naam. The son of Elah was Kenaz” (15)

“Caleb”; A Hebrew name, meaning (heart); He was the son of Jephunneh, and the older brother of ‘Othniel’; one of 12 men sent by the prophet Moses to spy the promised land. Together with Joshua, they both confirmed the possibility of the realization of the divine promise to take over the promised land (Numbers 13-14; Joshua 14-15). While the other ten spies stirred up a spirit of defeat among the people, Joshua and Caleb alone, held fast to the promise of God, and believed in His power, and the truth of His promise to His people.

In every generation there is a holy remnant, a minority, who practically believe in God’s promise, and who testify to Him by their life.

Joshua joined Caleb in entering into the promised land. We shall not be able to enter into the promised land, unless “Jesus” -- the Lord of Glory-

(Joshua) is our Leader, and our heart (Caleb) is serious and faithful. The bond between Joshua and Caleb is the melding of the free divine work to the free human will, that accept the work in her inner depths.

To proclaim to the people the realization of God's promise; Joshua and Caleb, in Eshkol, carried one huge bunch of grapes on a pole, like the cross carried by the Grantor of life – our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the faithful believer (Caleb). It is the cross of the Savior Jesus Christ, carried by the believer as a fellowship in the passion with his Lord, to enter together with Him into the power of His resurrection.

According to St. John Chrysostom, that bunch of grapes was a deposit of the heavenly life; he says: [I wish we do not despise heaven! ... We received from heaven, not a bunch of grapes carried on a rod, but "*the heat of the Spirit in our hearts*" (2 Corinthians 1: 22); and "*the citizenship of heaven*" (Philippians 3: 20); fruits, taught to us by Paul and the rest of the apostles -- the amazing "vine dressers". It is not 'Caleb' the son of Jephunneh, nor "Joshua' the son of Nun, who brought forth those fruits, but Jesus "*the Father of mercies*" (2 Corinthians 1: 3); the Son of God who brings forth every virtue, and its fruits from heaven; namely its praises.]....

Commending those two men who preferred to utter the truth, even at the expense of being stoned to death (Numbers 14: 10), than to do like the other ten spies who preferred to please the people at the expense of the truth;

St. Ambrose says: [They preferred to be stoned to death as threatened by the people, to retreat from their steadfastness, full of virtue; The two good men preferred the divine glory to security; while the wicked preferred security to virtue].

“Iru”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Cautious; the older son of ‘Caleb’ the son of Jephunneh. His name came as ‘Er’ in the Greek Septuagint version, and in the ‘Volgata.

“Elah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Oak tree). ‘Kenaz’ mentioned her as his son is different from ‘Kenaz’ mentioned in verse 13. This name was popular among the Kenizzites.

“Naam”; A Hebrew name, meaning (pleasure); a son of ‘Caleb’; the head of a tribe, whose descendant inhabited East of the Jordan

“Kenaz”; A Semite name, probably meaning (A catch).

“The sons of Jahaleel were Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel” (16)

“And the sons of Ezra were Jether, Mered, Ephraim, and Jalon, And Mered’s wife bore Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa” (17)

“Ezrah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (help).

“Jether”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a Favor)

“Mered”; A Hebrew name, meaning (disobedience); son of Ezra, and husband of ‘Bithiah’ daughter of Pharaoh.

“Ephraim”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a little deer); a descendant of ‘Ezrah’.

“Jalon”; Son of Ezra; recorded among the tribe of Judah.

“Miriam”; a descendant of Judah; it is the first time her mother’s name was mentioned; probably the same ‘Bithiah’ mentioned in verse 18.

”Ishbah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (swim).

“And his wife Jehudijah bore Jared the father of Gedor, Heber the father of Sochoh, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah. These were the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took” (18)

“And his wife Jehdijah”; claimed to be an Egyptian second wife of Mered; with a Hebrew name, meaning (daughter of Jehovah), she probably took it when she converted to Judaism; her children were Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah, mentioned in verse 17.

“Jared”; A Semite name, probably meaning (descending).

“Heber”; A Hebrew name, meaning (fellowship, or partner); a descendant of ‘Ezrah’; father of the people of Sochoh.

“Sochoh” A Hebrew word, meaning (longings).

“Jekuthiel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God feeds), father of the people of Zanoah.

Zanoah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a swamp or a heap)

“Bithiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (daughter or worshipper of Jehovah); one of the few women whose names were mentioned in these genealogies. Daughter of Pharaoh, and wife of Mered, a man from Judah; She most probably converted to Judaism.

“The son’s of Hodiah’s wife, the sister of Naham, were the fathers of Keilah the Garmite and of Eshtomoa the Maachathite” (19)

“Naham”; A Hebrew name, meaning (comfort); a Jew who married ‘Hodiah’, his own sister (19)

“Keilah the Garmite”; Mentioned in the genealogies of ‘Caleb’ the son of Jephunneh.

“Eshtomoa the Maachthite”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Obedience); son of ‘Ishbah’ of the tribe of Judah.

“And the sons of Shimon were Amnon, Rinnah Ben-Hanan, and Tilon. And the sons of Ishi were Zoheth and Ben-Zoheth” (20)

“Amnon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (honest);

Rinnah Ben-Hanan; A Hebrew name, meaning (shouting)

“Tylon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (high)

“Ishi”; A Hebrew name, meaning (loyal). Beside the one mentioned here, there is another one with the same name, a Simeonite whose children formed a gang *“Five hundred of the sons of Simeon went to Mount Seir; ... and defeated the rest of the Amalekites, and dwelt in their land” (42).*

“Zoheth”; A Hebrew name , meaning (arrogant)

“Ben-Zoheth”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the son of Zoheth)

“The sons of Shelah the son of Judah were Er the father of Lecah, Laadah the father of Mareshah, and the families of the house of the linen workers of the house of Ashbea” (21)

“Shelah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (dog); the third son of Judah.

“Er”; A Hebrew name, meaning (cautious); the son of ‘Shelah’, a descendant of Judah. ‘Shelah had a brother with the same name.

“Lecah”; a village in Judah, as indicated by verse 21, of unknown location.

“Laadah”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (thick-necked); father of the inhabitants of Mareshah.

“Mareshah”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning ((place of the head and top).

“Ashbea”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (abundance or Satiety), a descendant of ‘Shelah’. His family were workers of a superb kind of linen, known as ‘Baz’; while according to some, the house of Ashbea was the name of a place.

“Also Jokim, the men of Chozeba, and Joash; Seraph, who ruled in Moab, and Jashubi-lehem. Now the records are ancient” (22)

“Jokim”; A Hebrew name, meaning (where Jehovah lives); one of the sons of ‘Shelah’ from Judah.

“The men of Chozeba”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a liar); a village in Judah, its inhabitants were the children of ‘Shelah’.

“Joash”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah granted); short of ‘Jehoash’.

“Seraph”; A Hebrew name, meaning (burning or a serpent); a descendant of ‘Shelah’.

“Jashubi-lehem”; A Hebrew name, meaning (return the bread); most probably someone of the tribe of Judah; Yet some versions consider the two words, not a name of person, but a phrase, meaning (they returned to Lehem)

“These were the potters and those who dwell at Netaim and Gederah; There they dwelt with the king for his work” (23)

“Netaim”; A Hebrew name, meaning (plantation); a place in Judah, where the plantations of the king were.

“Gederah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (fold of sheep); Although they were not of the elites, yet they got their fame and honor, on account of that they dwelt with the king in his quarters to serve him.

The secret of the strength and honor of the believer is his attachment to the King of kings, and working to the account of His kingdom. Each of them had his talents; yet what connect them together is their dwelling with the King in His vineyard to serve him. On the great day of the Lord, we shall enjoy the heavenly crown; not on account of the kind of work or ministry that we practiced, but of our faithfulness in doing it; to hear the divine voice, saying: *“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things; I shall make you ruler over many things”* (Matthew 25: 21). We shall see children, counted as heroes; and men of fame, who are barely saved ... God’s reckonings are based upon the believer’s faithfulness and not upon his role in work.

3- THE GENEALOGIES OF THE CHILDREN OF SIMEON:

The genealogies of the children of Simeon were recorded directly after those of the children of Judah, probably on account of that the two tribes were closely attached, and the portion of the children of Simeon in the promised land was within the inheritance of Judah (Joshua 19: 9). Anyway, that tribe sought an

additional land through the battles. As the lands of the tribes of Reuben and Simeon were in the South; the two tribes got preoccupied with the political life of Judah.

If the tribe of Benjamin joined Judah at the time of dissension, many Levites were driven away from the Northern kingdom, and joined the Southern kingdom; And several godly men from the other tribes, as well, including many of the tribe of Simeon, have forsaken the Northern kingdom, and joined the Southern kingdom.

“The sons of Simeon were Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, and Shaul” (24)

“Shallum his son, and Mibsam his son, and Mishma his son” (25)

“Shallum or Shallumi; A Hebrew name, meaning (in peace)

“Mishma”; A Hebrew name, meaning (news) (1Chronicles 4: 25)

“Mibsam”; A Hebrew name, meaning (sweet fragrance).

“And the sons of Mishma were Hamuel, Zacchur, and Shimei” (26)

“Hamuel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God’s wrath); probably a member of the family of Saul. (1 Chronicles 4: 26).

“Zacchur”; A Hebrew name, meaning (alert).

“Shimei”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah hears); had 16 sons and 6 daughters (1 Chronicles 4: 26-27)

“Shimei had 16 sons and 6 daughters, but his brothers did not have many children, nor did any of their families multiply as much as the children of Judah” (27)

“They dwelt in Beersheba, Moladah, Hazar Shual” (28)

Simeon were few in number; on the day of the exodus, they were 59,300 (Numbers 1: 23); and after 40 years they became just 22,200 (Numbers 26: 14).

“Molada”; A Hebrew name, meaning (birth); a land inhabited by Shimei son of Simeon (28)

“Shual”; A Hebrew name, meaning (jackal)

“(in) Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad” (29)

“Ezam”; A Hebrew name, meaning (great); a village close to the border of ‘Edom’, in the portion of Judah, and became a portion for Simeon (1 Chronicles 4: 29); Probably ‘Kherbet Um-El-Azm) nowadays.

“Bilhah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (simple or idiot); a name of a location in Simeon.

“Tolad”; A Hebrew name, meaning (giving birth); a town in southern Judah.

“(in) Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag”

(30)

“Hormah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a holy place) or (ruins); The city of ‘Safah’ was called ‘Hormah’, and was inhabited by the children of Simeon after its desolation.

Ziklag”; a town at the far south of Judah; given later to Simeon (1 Chronicles 4: 30)

”(in) Markaboth, Hazar Susim, Beth Biri, and at Shaaraim. These were their cities until the reign of David” (31)

“Bethuel”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (the house of God); a location in the portion of Simeon.

“Susim”; Plural of ‘Susa’, a Hebrew name, meaning (village of horses); close to ‘Tel El-Farha’; probably it is ‘Susiah’, two miles North of Eshtimoh”.

“Beth Biri”; A Hebrew name, meaning (house of My creation); a town in the portion of Simeon.

“Shaaraim”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Two doors); a town in the portion of Simeon.

“And their villages were Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Toshen, and Ashan – five cities” (32)

“Ain”; A village in Judea, in the southern part of Palestine, close to Rimmon; was a portion for Judah, then was given to Simeon, then to the Levites. It is probably ‘Um el-Rimmamin’, 9 miles North East of Beersheba.

“Rimmon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (pomegranate); a city South of Judah, close to ‘Ain’.

“Toshen”; A Hebrew name, meaning (A measure or weight); a town in the portion of Simeon, Its location nowadays is not wholly known.

“Ashan”; A Hebrew name, meaning (smoke); a city on the coast of Judah, given later to Simeon.

“And all the villages that were around these cities as far as Baal. These were their habitations, and they maintained their genealogies” (33)

“Meshobab, Jamlech, and Joshah the son of Amaziah” (34)

“Meshobab”; A Hebrew name, a Simeonite chief who received a pasture close to ‘Gedor’ (1 Chronicles 4: 34-41).

“Jamlech”; A Hebrew name, meaning (possess), A Simeonite chiefs.

“Joshah”; A Simeonite chief, son of Amaziah.

“Joel, and Jehu the son of Joshibiah, the son of Seraiah, the son of Asiel” (35)

“Joel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is God); a Simeonite leader.

“Jehu”; A Hebrew name, meaning (He is Jehovah).

“Seraiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God conquered); Beside the one mentioned here, the son of Kenaz, brother of Othniel father of Joab, had the same name.(1 Chronicles 4: 35)

“Asiel”; A Hebrew name , meaning (God worked); one of the grandfathers of Joel and Jehu, whose names were included in the census of the Hebrews (35).

*“Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel,
Jesimiel, and Banaiah” (36)*

“Elioenai”. A Hebrew name, meaning (my eyes are toward Jehovah); a Simeonite chief (36)

“Jaakobah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Strike the heel); a Simeonite chief.

Jeshohaiah”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (make him bow); A Simeonite chief.

“Asaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah worked); a Simeonite chief in the days of king Hezekiah.

“Adiel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (The adornment is for God); one of the Simeonite head chiefs.

“Jesimiel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God sets); a Simeonite chief.

“Banaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (whom Jehovah built); a Simeonite head chief.

*“Ziza the son of Shiphi, the son of Allon, the son of
Jedaiah, the son of Shimri, the son of Shimaiah” (37)*

“Shiphi”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Abundant); the father of a Simeonite prince in the days of king Hezekiah (37).

“Allon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (oak tree); the name of the son of ‘Jedaiah’ a Simeonites

“Jedaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah gives); a Simeonite.

“Shimri”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah guards and keeps); a Simeonite.

“Shimaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah hears); a Simeonite.

“These mentioned by name were leaders in their families, and their father’s house increased greatly” (38)

“So they went to the entrance of ‘Gedor’, as far as the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks” (39)

“And they found rich good pasture, and the land were broad, quiet, and peaceful; for some Hamites formerly lived there” (40)

“Ham”; A Hebrew name, meaning (hot) or (protect)

“These recorded by name came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and they attacked their tents and the Meunites who were found there, and utterly destroyed them, as it is to this

day. So they dwelt in their place, because there was pasture for their flocks there” (41)

The events mentioned here will be made clear in (2 Chronicles 20).

“The Meunites”; a tribe of Hamite origin, struck by the Simeonites in the days of king Hezekiah.

“Now some of them, 500 men of the sons of Simeon went to Mount Seir, having as their captains Palatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi” (42)

“Palatiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah liberated), a Simeonite chief who entered into a war in which the tribe of Simeon defeated the Amalekites (1 Chronicles 4; 42-43).

“Neariah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (who bears the shield of Jehovah): A Simeonite chief, who went to Mount Seir to fight against the Amalekites, in the days of king Hezekiah.(42)

“Rephaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah healed); a Simeonite chief in the days of king Hezekiah.

“Ishi”; A Hebrew name, meaning (faithful); Beside this one mentioned here, whose sons attacked the Amalekites in Mount Seir, and settled down in their land (42), a man from Judah; a man of Judah, the father of Zoheth, had the same name ((20)

“And they defeated the rest of the Amalekites who had escaped; they have dwelt there to this day” (43)

They struck the escapees of the Amalekites, after Saul harassed them (1 Samuel 14: 48; 15: 7-8),

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 4

LET ME ENCOUNTER YOU, O LORD, THROUGH THE MEN OF GOD

- + Together with a righteous man or a godly woman;
I see You transfigured, to pour Your blessings in my depths;

Together with 'Jabez, who exalted above sorrows; and by You he became more honorable than his brothers;

Grant me to encounter You, and to perceive that You are the First and the Last in my life;

No blessing can I acquire without You, O Source of happiness;

Bless me, to make my heart wide enough to love the heavenlies and the earthlies;

Let every heavenly and earthly creature have a place in my heart;

Let me love all, to become with you a lover of mankind;

Let Your hand be with me; Work by, in, and with me;

Accompany me all the days of my sojourn; so that evil would have no place in me;

Grant me authority upon the devil and all his hosts

+ Let me encounter You together with Othniel, the first of the judges;
Kindle my heart with Your Holy Spirit;
To make me filled with strength, wisdom, peace, and joy;
I shall not cease to encounter You, for the sake of the peace of my brethren.

+ Granting me the spirit of true leadership;
Pride will not crawl into my heart; nor softness will not prevail upon me;
By You, I shall strive for the sake of the conquest and peace of my brethren;

With every success for them, I shall count myself successful;

And with every sigh of their heart, my heart will sigh;

I shall not have rest until the whole world rest in You;

When shall I see all mankind an exultant procession?

That cross over, and eternally attach to You?!

+ Allow me to attach myself to Caleb the son of Jephunneh;

To accompany him, and his friend Joshua the son of Nun;
To cross over together with them, not to spy the mortal promised land;
But to set forth with and by You to the heavenly Canaan;
To taste the sweetness of the heavenly life;
And to carry with them the unique cluster of grapes on a rod;
To carry You, who became grapes, and went through the vine press,
alone, for my sake;
You carried the rod of the cross, to be carried by the cross;
You received the reproach and the shame of the cross, to pour Your
exalted glory on my depths;
I wish to get attached to You, like a bride with her groom;
For the more I get attached to You, the more my heart would be open to
mankind;
I love You with all my heart, as though no one else is in there;
Then I would realize that, in my depths, there is a place for every man;
When shall I see all mankind attached to You, on the day of Your
coming?!
Yes, hasten to come, O Lord, to every heart;
To knock on its door with Your wounded hand, to invite every soul to
receive You in it;
To make all a holy temple for You!

=====

AN ANNEX TO CHAPTER 4

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

“Oh, that You would bless me indeed;

And enlarge my territory;

That your hand would be with me;

*And that You would keep me from
evil;
That I may not
cause pain;
So
God granted him what he requested”*

(1 Chronicles 4: 10)

We have already talked about Jabez’s prayer in this chapter.

Is it a prayer or a vow?!

According to the Hebrew text, it came as a vow: Namely, if God blesses him, enlarges his territory, stretches his hand to support him, and keeps him from evil But how will he pay God back? He did not say! ... It is as though ‘Jabez’ presented a vow, and signed it on a blank paper; leaving it to God to complete according to what is good in His eyes.

It is the most magnificent portrait of the concept of a vow. For, when I seek from God His blessing, to enlarge my territory, to stretch His hand to support me, and to keep me from evil; I would present to Him my heart, mind, emotions, senses, talents, abilities, and all my being, as a blank paper, to do whatever is good in His eyes. I shall promise Him nothing less than to deliver myself utterly into His hands.

That is the genuine vow ... I am for my beloved, and He is for me, chooses my way, leads me by His Holy Spirit, and bears me in Him, to enjoy the bosom of my heavenly Father.

He is in no need of any service I may present to Him, nor promise Him of any specific way I may walk along, or money may present; but He seeks from me my

heart, and my will to live according to His divine pleasure. What I should vow to Him is to let Him do to me what is good in His eyes..

The first request: I seek the heavenly blessing.

The first commandment presented by the Lord Christ in His sermon on the mountain: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit*" (Matthew 5: 30) calls us to the blessed life; namely, to share with Him the exalted heavenly life, through partaking of his feature, "*For though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor*" (2 Corinthians 8: 9). The first commandment is the enjoyment of the heavenly, blessed and exultant life, through receiving the poverty in spirit; namely, to become as poor together with Him, to make others rich.

Although 'Jabes' in Hebrew means (causing pain or sorrow); and although his mother so called him because "*she bore him in pain*" (1 Chronicles 4: 9); Yet, he was sure that God calls him "blessed" and "exultant".

His first request "*Oh, that You would bless me*", came in harmony with God's will, He who intends to say to me and to you, what He said to our father Abraham: "*I will make you a great nation*" (Exodus 32: 10)); He wishes to have us bear Him inside us, being the Fountain of every blessing; so that wherever we are, the blessing of the Lord would dwell on the place, and on those in it.

When St. Mary set forth to the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth, once she entered through the door, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit; and the fetus in her womb exulted and danced, the way king David did, leaping and dancing before the ark of the covenant (2 Samuel 6: 14).

In the daring of sonhood, we seek from the Source of the blessings to proclaim His dwelling in us; to become blessing. The first request is to seek from our Father to present to us what He has; as the Lord Christ says: "*If you then, being*

evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?" (Matthew 7: 11).

My heavenly father; I ask You one thing: Grant me from You what You intend to give me! Let me acquire you, O wholly blessed; Give satiety to my soul; to become, by You, a blessing to everyone I encounter.

The second request: "Enlarge my territory"

What shall I seek from my God who fills the heaven and the earth? If the heaven and earth could not accommodate You; Grant me, Your son, a wide heart to acquire You, to enlarge its territory; so that, if possible to love all mankind, beloved by You.

Enlarging the inner territory is a divine gift; when the heart opens up by love to accommodate everyone, even his oppressor; so that its law would be: *"Love your enemies, bless those who curse you; do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"* (Matthew 5: 44)

This request is in harmony with the spiritual gift of God, promised to us, by saying: *"For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year"* (Exodus 34: 24). What are those nations but the spiritual evil hosts that intend to occupy the heart, to corrupt it with hatred and narrow-mindedness; to become a land taken up by the devil and his hosts. Whereas if the Lord enlarges our territory, He will cast away every evil thought and every hatred toward our brethren; so that by love we can ascend before the Lord, exultant, as though in an unceasing feast. We would utter to the Lord the song saying: *"You have increased the nation, O Lord, You have increased the*

nation; You are glorified; You have expanded all the borders of the land” (Isaiah 26: 15)

The apostle Paul asked his people to pray for his sake, and for those who work with him in the vineyard of the Lord, to enlarge their territory through the word of preaching, saying: *“Praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I make it manifest, as I ought to speak” (Colossians 4: 3-4).*

The third request: “*Your hand will be with me*”

The Lord Christ promised to count us among His sheep who are on His right hand, to bring us forth, on the day of His coming, to His eternal kingdom. God’s right hand refers to His power working to sanctify us, and to His dwelling in our midst; Hence in the prayer of the first hour we proclaim our longing to have this blessing, saying; *“I have set the Lord always before me; Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved” (Psalm 16: 8).*

When the prophet Moses interceded for the people of God who sinned, and the Lord accepted his intercession; not satisfied, Moses dared to persist not to move unless the Lord Himself precedes them, saying: *“If Your presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here,.....” (Exodus 33: 15).* Pleased to hear that, the Lord said to him: *“I will also do this thing that you have spoken, for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name” (Exodus 33: 17)*

If we may say; God desires to find in us a pure heart, to support it by His right hand, and to strengthen it by His power; *“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf on those whose heart is loyal to Him” (2 Chronicles 16: 9).* He always encourages us, saying: *“With whom My hand shall be established, also My arm shall strengthen him” (Psalm 89: 21).*

The fourth request: “*keep me from evil*”.

While the three first request were positive: seeking from the Lord to bless us by dwelling in us, and to become a blessing; to enlarge the territory of our hearts, minds, and all our depths by His exalted love; as well as seeking from Him to let His hand accompany us; namely His power through His perpetual presence in our midst, as well as in us; Jabes left the negative aspect for his last request: “*that You would keep me from evil, that it would not trouble me*”. That is exactly what the Lord Christ taught us, to seek from him at the end of the Lord’s prayer: “*Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one*” (Luke 11: 4)

Let us acquire God, so that the evil one would flee from us; and would even fall as though from the heavens of our hearts, in humiliation underneath our feet; according to the words of the Lord Christ, saying: “*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven*” (Luke 10: 18).

- + Do not fear from Satan, even though he is without a body, he approaches you with a body. For no one is weaker than him who so does; and no one is stronger than him, who bravely confronts him, with his mortal body.

(St. John Chrysostom)

The divine response to Jebez’ prayer:

As ‘Jabez’ prayers came according to God’s will; or according to his vow; it is written: “*God granted him what he requested*” (10)

In the book of Jeremiah, it came: *“Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you; you will seek Me and find Me; when you search for Me with all Your heart”* (Jeremiah 29: 12-13)

As his requests, or his vow, was the enjoyment of God Himself, and to be kept from evil, they were instantly realized.

- + By the heart we request; by the heart we seek; and to the voice of the heart, the door will be opened.
- + He who prays with longing, will be praising with his heart, even if his tongue is silent’ Whereas he who prays without longing, will be mute before God, even though his voice is loud enough to be heard by men.
- + The mouth speaks words, while the heart speaks through its desires. Your prayer is the desire of your heart;
- + God does not seek your words, but seeks your hearts.

(St. Augustine)

The power of prayer, coming from a pure heart:

- + The purity of heart raises a stronger prayer than all the prayers with loud voice; For silence with reason, is better than the loud screams.
Give God your heart and understanding; Listen to how strong the pure prayers are; and to how our saintly fathers prayed diligently before God; and how they presented their prayers as a pure offering (Malachi 1: 11).
By prayers their offerings were well received.

Prayer saved Noah from the great flood (Genesis 1: 6 – 11: 32).

Prayer covers up our nakedness (Luke 8: 26-39). Prayer defeats armies (Exodus 17: 8-16)

Prayer proclaims secrets (Daniel 2: 17-30). Prayer split the sea open (Exodus 14: 21)

Prayer split a way across the River Jordan (2 Kings 2: 13-14)

Prayer made the sun stand still over Gibeon (Joshua 10: 12-14)

Prayer made the moon stop in its course (Joshua (10: 12-14)

Prayer destroyed sin (Judges 16: 28-30). Prayer quenched the fire (Numbers 11: 1, 2)

Prayer closed up the heaven (1 Kings 17: 1); Prayer raise up from the pit (Daniel 6: 19-23), and saved from the fire (Daniel 3: 17-25), and from the sea (Jonah 2).

The power of prayer is as great as that of the pure fasting. And the way I told you about fasting in my last article, I shall not cease to tell you about prayer.

(St. Aphrahat, the Persian sage)

Prayer and the happy life:

- + Man – the rational creation – is so great and noble being, that, in case he would fall, none less than God would save him, to grant him a happy comfort; that he could not have on his own; Hence I say: Great is he who acquires God.

- + No life except that coming from God. God is the exalted life; He + You created us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts will never be at peace until they find comfort in You.

- + Let us attach ourselves to God with love; Let us reach Him by prayer. Our whole goodness is God. It would be beftting for us not to fail in this, and not to seek more than that. .. Belonging to God is to seek happiness; and reaching Him is happiness itself.

- + Nothing is better for man than to have his whole life like a journey toward the unchangeable life; and when his emotions would abide wholly on it.

(St. Augustine)



CHAPTER 5

THE TRIBES EAST OF THE JORDAN

THE SECRET OF STRENGTH AND OF WEAKNESS

This chapter deals with the tribes who chose their portion east of the Jordan; namely: Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. A small area was given to those tribes; and they were the first to be captivated (5: 26).

Presenting the two and a half tribes, this chapter reveals to us the secret of strength and of weakness in the life of the congregation, as well as in that of the believer. It reveals the mutual reaction between the congregation and the individuals. This chapter, in essence, is a call to enjoy the spirit of strength through the grace of God, His righteousness, and His holiness; He pours what is His in us; and grants us the spirit of fellowship with Him, of trust in Him, and the feeling of His divine presence, together with loving the brethren, and working together by the spirit of faithfulness, diligence, and watching, so as not to allow the devil to crawl secretly, even into our dreams.

1- Reuben loses his privileges

1 - 11

2- The tribe of Gad

11 - 17

3- The tribes East of the Jordan defeat the Hagarites

18 - 22

4- The half-tribe of Manasseh

23 - 24

5- Having been unfaithful to the God of their fathers, they were the first to be captivated by the Assyrians 25 - 26

1- REUBEN LOSES HIS PRIVILEGES:

“Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel – he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright” (1)

With all the privileges given by God to man, the secret of his strength is not in the privileges given to him, nor in his position or work, as much as it is in his faithfulness and his attachment to God.

Reuben has been the firstborn of Israel from Leah; and among the privileges of the firstborn was to enjoy two portions of the inheritance, and the position of leadership. Yet, Reuben lost the privileges of birthrights because of the sin he committed with one of his father’s concubines, defiling his father’s bed. (Genesis 35: 22; 49: 4).

- 1- He did not get two portions of the inheritance; for it was given to Joseph’s sons: a portion to Ephraim, and a portion to Manasseh; although they were born by Joseph’s Egyptian wife. The secret of this blessing given to Joseph was that he enjoyed a holy life contrary to his brother Reuben.
 - a- Reuben defiled his father’s bed, while being the firstborn, enjoying the warmth of the family (Genesis 35: 22; 49: 4); Whereas his young brother, in the land of sojourn, in the humiliation of bondage, and deprived of the warmth of the family; under the pressure and seduction of the wife of his master Potiphar; he refused to fall into sin with her.
 - b- It is amazing how many of the Israelites along the eras have fallen into idol-worship, and the betrayal of the living God; despite what

God granted them of conquests on the pagan nations (the Gentiles); while Joseph, who lived helpless in Egypt, did not forsake the worship of the living God, nor perverted to idol-worship during the period of his bondage, and imprisonment; and even when he became the second man in the kingdom, and married an Egyptian wife. He indeed surpassed many of his people along the generations in his faithfulness and faith.

2- Reuben lost his second privilege concerning the leadership; For nowhere in the whole history of Israel up till the return from captivity, and even to the coming of the Lord Christ, we find one king, leader, nor priest of the tribe of Reuben.

The privilege of leadership was given to the tribe of Judah; from which the first godly king, object of the pleasure of God, came from the tribe of Judah; And the Word of God -- the eternal heavenly King.-- incarnated from St. Mary, a descendant of the tribe of Judah

3- In Jacob's farewell prophecy to his sons, he said with bitterness: "*Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the first fruits of my vigor, excelling in rank and excelling in power. Unstable as water, you shall no longer excel, because you went up onto your father's bed; then you defiled it – you went up onto my couch*" (Genesis 49: 3, 4). He likened him to the boiling water, kindled by carnal desire, he lost his stability and reason. As, according to the apostle James: "*He is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind For not let that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord*" (James 1: 6, 7).

So has Reuben corrupted God's privileges and gifts, to let them become, not for his edification, but for his judgment. For whoever is give more, more will be sought of him.

“Reuben”; was born in ‘Haran’ (Genesis 29: 32); his name is derived from ‘Rai-be-Oni’, translated as “God saw my affliction”

His attempt to save his brother Joseph from being killed by his brothers, delivering him out of their hands, reveals his good nature; saying to them: “... *Let us not take his life; shed no blood, throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him*” – *‘that he might rescue him out of their hands and restore him to his father’* (Genesis 37: 21-22); That attempt, according to some scholars was for the sake of reconciling with his father, who was angry with him for defiling his bed; a view rejected by many others, who count his attempt as coming from a true desire to save his young brother Joseph from the hands of his brothers.

Feeling that the troubles that dwelt upon them in Egypt were a retaliation for their cruelty against their young brother (Genesis 42: 22), he was ready to sacrifice his own two sons, as a surety to his father Jacob for bringing Benjamin back to him safe from Egypt; according to the request of Joseph from them to bring him with them to see him (Genesis 42: 37).

The rebellion carried out by Reuben’s sons: ‘Dathan and Abiram’, in collaboration with Korah the Levite, was probably an attempt to confirm the authority of their tribe as the firstborn of Israel (Numbers 16).

Probably feeling the contrition of heart of this tribe for losing all their privileges, the prophet Moses, in his final blessing of Israel, prayed for them, saying: “*Let Reuben live, and not die; nor let his men be few*” (Deuteronomy 33: 6); to which God responded.

“Yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph’s” (2)

Although not given the birthright, Judah became the royal tribe; And because David's heart was pure, the Savior came incarnate of his descendants.

Proclaiming the shift of birthright from Reuben to Joseph, the book of the Chronicles finds itself committed to refer to the tribe of Judah as being the strongest, having brought forth the Leader of the people of God.

"The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel were Hanoah, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi" (3)

The four sons of Reuben were previously referred to in (Genesis 46: 9; Exodus 6: 14; Numbers 26: 5).

Their census as it came in (Numbers 25: 9) was 46,500; while after the plague that dwelt because of God's wrath on Israel in on account of that the people of God committed adultery with the girls of Moab; who drew them to partake of the sacrifices to their gods, and to worship them; their number got down to 43,730 (Numbers 26: 7).

"Hanoah"; A Hebrew name, meaning (learned, trained, or dedicated); the firstborn of Reuben, and founder of the family of the 'Hanoahites' (1 Chronicles 5: 3).

"Pallu"; A Hebrew name, meaning (famous); head of the family of the 'Pallupites'.

"Hezron"; A Hebrew name, meaning (siege or a livestock fold), founder of the family of the 'Hezronites'. Hezron and Carmi here, are different from Hezron and Carmi of the tribe of Judah.

“Carmi”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a worker in a vineyard); head of the ‘Carmites’.

“The sons of Joel were Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, and Shimei his son” (4)

“Shimaiah”; meaning (Jehovah hears).(1 Chronicles 5: 4).

“Gog”; a Reubinite.

Shimei”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah hears).

“Micah his son, Reaiah his son, Baal his son” (5)

“Micah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Who is like Jehovah?); one of the grandfathers of Beerah, who was taken into captivity by Tiglath-Pileser..

“Reaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah saw or Jehovah cared).

“And Beerah his son, whom Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria carried into captivity”; He was leader of the Reubenites” (6)

“Beerah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (well);..taken into captivity by Tiglath-Pileser. Having been the ninth generation after Reuben undoubtedly refers to that some generations were omitted from the genealogies.

“And his brethren by their families when the genealogy of their generations was registered: the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah” (7)

“Jeiel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God cares); A Reubenite chief (1 Chronicles 5: 7).

“Zechariah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah remembered).

“And Bela the son of Azaz, the son of Shema, the son of Joel, who dwelt in Aroer, as far as Nebo and Baal-Meon” (8)

“Baal the son of Azaz”; **“Baal”**, a Hebrew name, meaning (to swallow),. We know that the cities of ‘Aroer’, ‘Nebo’, and ‘Baal-Meon’, have fallen under the Moabite reign during the ninth century BC.

“Aroer”; A Moabite and Hebrew name, meaning (a loan); a town east of the Jordan, on the border of Moab and Reuben; north of the River ‘Arnon’ in Moab; And south of the Amorite kingdom of Sihon. It was a portion of Reuben, then taken over by the king of Syria, after it was occupied and fortified by the Gadites and Micha king of Moab. It was affiliated to Moab in the days of the prophet Jeremiah; And is called nowadays ‘Araer’, 12 miles east of the Dead Sea, south of ‘Ziban’.

“Shema”; A Hebrew name, meaning (news).

“Nebo”; A Babylonian name, meaning (a broadcaster)

“Baal-Meon”; A Moabite name, meaning (dwelling of Baal); a city built by the Reubenites, 9 miles south-west of ‘Hesban’; in which there are nowadays many ruins; mentioned on the ‘Moabite stone’.

“Eastward they settled as far as the entrance of the wilderness this side of the river Euphrates, because their cattle had multiplied in the land of Gilead” (9)

While Reuben and Gad were more inclined to work as shepherds of livestock; when the other tribes were more interested in agriculture, , the two tribes lived as neighbors east of the Jordan, in pasture land.

Because the tribe of Reuben cared more for temporal things, God gave them their heart desire; (enlarging their territories) (10), yet not in righteousness and virtue, but in the number of their cattle in Gilead (9). Nothing will destroy man's life like sin; and nothing will pour goods on him like love, even for the oppressors, together with faith in the care of the Good God; He who brings forth out of evil, good things for His believers.

“Now in the days of Saul they made war with the Hagarites, who fell by their hand, and they dwelt in their tents throughout the entire areas east of Gilead” (10)

The tribe of Reuben disappeared early, and what remained of them were scattered. From this text it so seem that some Reubenite groups lived as half nomads at the boundary of the eastern desert up to the days of king Saul.

“The Hagarites”; nomad tribes who dwelt east of the land of Gilead (East of the Jordan). It was not proved that they were descendants of Hagar and Ishmael. It was rich in horses, camels, and livestock. Was defeated by the Hebrews dwelling east of the Jordan in the days of king Saul (1 Chronicles 5: 10, 18-22).

3- THE TRIBE OF GAD:

Having dealt with Reuben settling east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, the author's mind was ready to deal with the tribe of God (11-17), and half of the tribe of Manasseh (23-24), who also settled down in Gilead and Bashan. The tribe of Gad had a better spiritual sense than Reuben. Although they, like Reuben,

sought pasture land (16), yet they had a true desire to remain as part of the people of God, in the days of 'Jotham' king of Judah

“And the children of Gad dwelt next to them in the land of Bashan as far as Salcah” (11)

This book exclusively has the genealogies concerning the tribe of Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh; probably taken from a census in the days of 'Jeroboam' king of Israel (17)

The portion of Gad was north of Reuben, and south of Manasseh.

“Selcah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (walking the path); It is 'Selchad' at the southern border of Gabal- el-Derouz; which was a portion of Manasseh on the frontier of Gad (Deuteronomy 3: 10); Bashan was for Manasseh (Joshua 13: 30); but the Gadites took over a part of it.

Gad dwelt facing Reuben in the land of Bashan even up to selcah; which indicate that the tribes have altered the boundaries of their territories.

“Joel was the chief, Shapham the next, then Jaanai and Shaphat in Bashan” (12)

“Joel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is God); It is a name of a man from the tribe of Reuben, and of another of the tribe of Gad (1 Chronicles 4: 5, 8)

“Shaphat”; A Hebrew name , meaning (He judged). This name came twice in verse 12: the first should be 'Shapham' according to the Hebrew origin; and the second 'Shaphat'; two Gadite chiefs. 'Shapham' was the name of a Gadite chief who dwelt in Bashan; who together with his chief Joel fought against the Hagarites in the days of king Saul (1 Chronicles 7: 5-10; 18-220).

“Jaanai”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah responds). A Gadite chief (12)

“And their brethren of their father’s house: Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, , Jorai, Jachan, Zia, and Heber – seven in all” !3)

“Meshullam”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Who got his reward); a descendant of Gad in the days of ‘Jotham’ king of Judah.

“Sheba”; A Hebrew name, meaning (seven) or (a part); A Gadite chief who dwelt in Gilead. Bashan

“Jorai”; A Gadite chief.

“Jachan”; A Gadite chief.

“Zia”; A Hebrew name, meaning (moving) or (shaking); probably a Gadite family head.

“Heber”; A Hebrew name, meaning (crossed over); A Gadite chief of a house in Gilead, Bashan.

“These were the children of Abihail the son of Huri, the son of Jaroah, the son of Gilead, the son of Michael, the son of Jeshishai, the son of Jahdo, the son of Buz” (14).

“Abigail (Abihail)”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Father of power or Father is power); A Gadite chief.

“Huri”; A Hebrew name of a Gadite of the Horite family.

“**Jaroah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (soft or gentle).

“**Gilead**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (solid or tough)

“**Michael**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Who is like God?); A Gadite who dwelt in the land of Bashan

“**Jeshishai**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (an honorable elder); A Gadite descendant of ‘Buz’

“**Jahdo**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (union)

“**Buz**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (despite)

“Ahi the son of Abdiel, the son of Guni, was chief of their father’s house” (15)

“**Ahi**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (My bother), or probably short of ‘Ahiah’; a Gadite chief who dwelt in Gilead, Bashan..

“**Abdiel**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (slave of God)

“**Guni**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (light red)

“And the Gadites dwelt in Gilead, in Bashan and its villages, and in all the common-lands of Sharon within their borders” (16)

“**Gilead**”; is south of Bashan, and distinct from it; yet its border changed from one generation to another.

“Bashan”; A Hebrew name, meaning ((a flat land); a province in the land of Canaan, east of the Jordan, between Mounts Harmon and Gilead (Numbers 21: 33).

“Sharon”; A word meaning (a plain); a pasture east of the Jordan, where the Gadites dwelt; And according to some, it is the land between the River ‘Arnon’ and the city of ‘Heshbon’ (Deuteronomy 2: 10); different than ‘Sharon’ in the West toward the sea coast.

Reference to ‘Sharon’ here is very strange, because the land of ‘Sharon’ is not close to this region.

“All these were registered by genealogies in the days of ‘Jotham’ king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel” (17)

“Jotham”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is perfect)

4- THE TRIBES EAST OF JORDAN DEFEAT THE HAGRITES:

“The sons of Reuben, the Gadites, and half of the tribe of Manasseh had forty-four thousand seven hundred and sixty valiant men, men able to bear shield and sword, to shoot with the bow, and skillful in war, who went to war” (18)

The two and a half tribes started as one entity; who had very noble stand, when they entered into the promised land; and with true love they fought together with the other tribes west of the Jordan until the end, when Joshua allowed them to return to east of the Jordan to settle down in the land they have chosen for themselves.

“They made war with the Hagriles, Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab” (19)

The book here did not mention the date of this battle. For, in the days of Saul the union between those tribes was not strong the way it was before; as every tribe cared for its own interests. Reuben had a conquest over the Hagrites; then in a later era, when the union between the tribes got stronger, they defeated the Hagrites again..

With the courage and skill in war that characterized the armies of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh; yet the secret of their conquest was that they resorted to the help of the Lord and leaned on Him in their fights. It is good for man to have talents and capabilities, yet, it is befitting of him to sanctify them by trusting in the Lord (Psalm 20: 7)

The two and a half tribes entered into war against the Hagrites, Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab, and defeated them, for they trusted in God and cried out to Him.

This chapter refers twice to the wars against the Hagrites – an Arab congregation that dwelt east of the Jordan : the first concerns the end of the eleventh century (10); while the second obviously concerns a later period (19-20). Despite being defeated twice, yet it was difficult to wipe them out completely; as they were mentioned, in a later time by the Greek authors ‘Strabo’ and ‘Ptolomy’, and the Latin author ‘Pliny’.

“**Jetur**”; One of the sons of Ishmael. The Jetur tribe fought against the children of Israel east of the Jordan (1 Chronicles 5: 19); and his descendants dwelt in ‘Iturea’ (Luke 3: 1), close to Galilee.

“**Naphish**”; One of the sons of Ishmael (Genesis 25: 15); and his descendant tribe dwelt east of the Jordan (1 Chronicles 1: 21; 5: 19).

“Nodab”; A Semite word, meaning (honor or nobility); an Arab tribe in the Syrian desert, against whom the Hebrews who dwelt east of the Jordan fought.

*“And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all who were with them, for they cried out to God in the battle. He heeded their prayers,
because they put their trust in Him” (20)*

According to some, the Hagarites are themselves the ‘Ishmaelites’, or a group of them; so called on account of that they were referred to ‘Hagar’.the slave girl of Sarai wife of Abraham.

If ‘Ishmael was known for his strength and violence; Hagar, on the other hand was known for her weakness and helplessness. In our war against the devil and all his hosts, it is befitting of us to remember and trust in the promise of God, who gave us the authority to trample over the devil, sin, and death; for we carry the spirit of power, authority, and conquest. This chapter presents to us beautiful touches about those tribes; that, together with their courage and military skill; feeling that the war is the lord’s, they cried out to Him.

We may say that the secret of their conquest were set upon:

- a- Their love, attachment, and true unity with the brethren
- b- Feeling the divine presence even during the battle, they cried out to the Lord.
- c- They had courage
- d- They walked with the spirit of reason
- e- Their spiritual war was the Lord’s

“Then they took away their livestock – fifty thousand of their camels, two hundred and fifty thousand of their sheep, and two thousand of their donkeys – also one hundred thousand of their men” (21)

“for many fell dead, because the war was God’s. And they dwelt in their place until the captivity” (22)

4- THE HALF-TRIBE OF MANASSEH:

The author presents to us here, the names of the heads of their fathers’ houses of half of the tribes of Manasseh who dwelt in the east of the Jordan. At the beginning, their portion was only Bashan, but they greatly increase in number, wealth, power, and authority, to extend to the far North, until they reached Hermon (23). Although their region was huge in comparison with those of the other tribes, yet they abused the divine blessings; and instead of approaching the Lord with thanks for His gifts and grace, they turned away from Him, and betrayed the God of their fathers (25). For that, God allowed for them to be taken into captivity by Assyria, and to be carried to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river of Gazan; and remained there until the writing of the two books of the chronicles. (26).

“So the children of the half-tribe of Manasseh dwelt in the land. Their number increased from Bashan to Baal-Hermon, that is, to Senir, or Mount Hermon” (23)

“Hermon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a holy mountain); it was the north-east limit of the wars of the Israelites under the leadership of Moses and Joshua (23)

“Senir”; An Amorite name, probably meaning (the mountain of light). Here we find that Senir and Hermon are mentioned as two different mounts; but it is more probable that ‘Senir’ is the name of a part of ‘Mount Hermon’ (Gabal el-Shikh)

“These were the heads of their fathers’ houses: Epher, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah, and Jahdiel. They were mighty men of valor, famous men, and heads of their fathers’ houses” (24)

The rest of chapter 5 presented a concise account of the destiny of those tribes, who successfully made war against the Ishmaelites (the children of Hagar), with a small army of 44,760 men, to overcome the huge numbers of enemies.

Trusting in God (20), He granted them conquest and a multitude of spoils (21).

Yet, in spite of the military experience and skill of those heads in war, to come to be very famous all over the world, They forgot the Lord and betrayed Him, through their relationship with the pagan nations, being drawn to worship their gods. Hence, to chasten them, the Lord delivered them into the hand of the king of Assyria, to lose their country, and to live in humiliation and bondage under Assyria.

“Epher”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a little deer); of the tribe of Judah, a descendant of ‘Ezrah’ (17). A chief in the tribe of Manasseh, east of the Jordan, also bears this name (2: 27).

“Ishi”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a Savior); the name of a head of his father’s house in the half-tribe of Manasseh who dwelt east of the Jordan.

“Eliel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Eil is God), a head of his father’s house.

“Azriel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God’s help); a head of his father’s house, and a mighty man of valor

Hodaviah”; A Hebrew name, meaning ((glory be to Jehovah); a head of his father’s house.

“**Jahdiel**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God rejoices), a head of his father’s house..

5- BEING UNFATHFUL TO THE GOD OF THEIR FATHERS, THEY WERE THE FIRST TO BE TAKEN INTO CAPTIVITY BY THE ASSYRIANS:

“And they were unfaithful to the God of their fathers, and played the harlots after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them” (25)

Having referred to the glorious conquest of those tribes, united together, over the Hagrites, this chapter, as well, referred to their collapse before Assyria, because their unfaithfulness to God.

The two verses 25 and 26 at the end of this chapter, refer to what dwelt upon those tribes in the east of the Jordan, on account of their unfaithfulness to the Lord their God, their worship of the gods of the pagan peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them; forsaking the worship of the living God, despite the long and amazing experience of their fathers of God’s dealings with them..

Abraham, the father of fathers, lived in a pagan atmosphere; even his own fathers worshipped the moon; Yet he, with a living faith, entered into a covenant with God, and enjoyed a fruitful spiritual life of faith, for which he got divine promises for his descendants to become as numerous as the stars in heaven and the sand of the sea. **Jacob**, who, oppressed by his brother Esau, who threatened to kill him, had to flee from his father’s house; In the midst of his affliction in the wilderness, he enjoyed seeing the heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending, and as though God Himself was welcoming him. And **Joseph**, the son of Jacob kept his faith in God, while being sold as a slave in a foreign land (Egypt); and unjustly imprisoned; And did not forget God when he became the second man after Pharaoh, and got married to an Egyptian

pagan wife. Yet those people of the two and a half tribes perverted from the worship of the Living God, after their enjoyment of the promised land, and having got a law, priests, and Levites.

What the Hegrates failed to achieve, the pagan worship and its abominations managed to do. They defeated the Hagrates, but they were defeated by their lusts and corruption. If they continued on their faithfulness to the Lord, as they were in the beginning, they would have kept the lands they took, and it would have increased more and more.. God who allowed for them to possess that land when they trusted in Him, allowed the Assyrians to take them into captivity because of their treason.

“So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, that is Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria. He carried the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh into captivity.

He took them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river of Gozan to this day” (26)

God used the pagan peoples as tools to chasten His people who perverted from worshipping the living God. He used the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans; all along the history (Isaiah 10: 5-6).

The talk here concerns all the tribes mentioned in this chapter, who collapsed because they did not put God first in their life

“**Pul**”; is himself, ‘Tiglath-Pileser; he changed his name after a famous Assyrian king. Pul came to Samaria in the days of ‘Menahem’ (2 kings 15: 19-20), then left after taking money from him; Then after four years, he joined forces with Ahaz king of Judah, he ascended to Damascus, took it over, captivated it, and killed its king; and also took the Northern of the land of Israel, and took its people into

captivity (2 kings 15: 29); and took, as well, those dwelling east of the Jordan. He was used by God to chasten His people. Starting by that captivation, there was no return; Israel got mixed with the other people, lost their identity, and their race.

“**Helah**”; Probably an Assyrian name of unknown meaning; the name of a province in the Assyrian empire; where the captives of the ten tribes were taken. It was probably the same province, known later as ‘Khalkitis’, in Mesopotamia, close to ‘Gozan’, in the basin of the two rivers ‘Habor; and ‘Saukoras’.

“**Habor**”; An Akadian name of unknown meaning; pronounced in Hebrew ‘Kabar’; a river on whose banks the Jewish captives settled down.

“**Hara**”; An Aramite name, meaning (the mountain); a location in Assyria where some of the captives of the ten tribes were taken; probably ‘Kergat Beghlar’, close to ‘Tel-Halaf’.

“**River of Gozan**”; A river in the lands of the Chaldean; that runs southward through Mesopotamia; and after 190 miles, it joins the eastern branch of the river Euphrates at ‘Kerkasia’; where the captives from the ten tribes were taken, including the prophet Hezekiel, where he saw many visions.

“**Gozan**”; a town and a province in the land of ‘Made’ on the river ‘Habor’; where some of the Israeli captives dwelt; called ‘Gozinities’ by Plimy.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 5

BY YOUR HOLY SPIRIT, GRANT ME, O LORD, THE SPIRIT OF STRENGTH

+ Reuben enjoyed the gift of firstbirth, but he slothfully despised it

You granted me to be counted as a member in the church of the firstborn;
To be qualified to the eternal inheritance; and to enjoy the reflection of
Your splendor on me;

Reuben denied himself the double portion in the inheritance;
While his younger brother Joseph got qualified to get them, and to
become two tribes;

Reuben denied himself the position of leadership of the whole people;
And no one of his descendants ever became a true leader to work to the
account of the kingdom of God;

While Judah enjoyed the leadership; and from his descendants came
David, the righteous king;

And from his descendants the Word of God, the King of kings, incarnated;
Grant me to hold fast to my inheritance, to become Your splendid icon;
And to be counted, together my brethren, like a heavenly host.

+ Reuben destroyed himself, as well as all his tribe;
Defiling his father's bed, by his shameful covetousness, he came to be like
boiling water;

Grant me the spirit of purity, to be sanctified by You, and to be clothed
with Your amazing righteousness.

+ By Your fiery spirit, grant me to become sanctified, and to kindle my heart
by the fire of love toward the generations to come.

So as not to be an offense to my children and grandchildren;
For the sake of the church and its holiness; I shall not allow the sin to crawl
into my heart and mind;

So that, on my account, Your wrath would not dwell upon the others.

+ Grant me the spirit of love and unity, particularly toward my brethren;
If I am sanctified by Your Spirit for their sake, I would not enjoy Him by
being isolated from them;

Let me be attached with all my depths to them; so that my inner man
would be transformed to a new heaven;

To feel together with them, Your divine joyful presence;

To feel, in the battle against the devil and sin, that it is the Lord's battle;

You are my weapon, conquest, and crown;

I trust in You; and cry out with the spirit of hope

To count every spiritual conquest, a free grant from You to me.

+ By Your Holy Spirit, I challenge the devil with all his tricks;

By You, O the Resurrection, I challenge death;

By You, O Almighty God, I fear no event;

Let me hide in You; For I am not alone in the battle;

You are the leader of the battle, who scatters the darkness, and grants the
conquest;

You are my weapon; that protects my spiritual, mental, and carnal being;

You granted me the spirit of sonhood; How would I fear, even death?!

+ Grant me the inner conquest;

Set a guard over my senses, emotions, and all my depths;

Who can control my tongue, mind, and feelings, but You?!

By Your Spirit, You perpetually renew my inner being;

To experience the sweet taste of the deposit of heaven;

To You, will be my thanksgiving, and praise, O Grantor of salvation.

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CHAPTER 6

THE TRIBE OF LEVI

The importance of the tribe of Levi:

In this chapter we find the genealogies of the priests and the Levites, and their dwelling locations.

Giving special care to the tribe of Levi, on account of their specific role in the ministry of the temple; the genealogies of the descendants of Aaron came in some detail, particularly those of his son Eleazar

It so seems that the goal of this work is to present the main priestly line; up to the time of captivity (4 -15); to be completed by what came in (Nehemiah 12: 10-11); of a list of the high priests after the captivity; to confirm the legitimacy of the priests after the return from captivity (see Ezra 2: 62-63; Nehemiah 7: 64-65)..

As the genealogies of Judah were important for making sure of having the kings from the house of David, chosen by God; so was the high importance of the genealogies of the Levites for the continuity of the ministry in the house of the Lord; All the persons who carry out religious works in the tabernacle of meetings or in the temple, had to be of the descendants of Levi. The Levites who, although being truly children of the priests, yet, *“having sought their listings among those who were registered by genealogy, but they were not found, therefore they were excluded from the priesthood, and were denied eating of the most holy things”* (Ezra 2: 62-63).

Levi has been the third among Jacob's sons from Leah; and when certain of his descendants showed jealousy for the Lord, He separated the Levites from all the tribes of Israel for the ministry in the house of the Lord (Deuteronomy 10: 8-9); and chose them instead of all the firstborn of all the tribes (Exodus 13: 11-13; Numbers 3: 44-45).

The priests were descendants of Aaron of the tribe of Levi; and the rest of them were Levites who carried out the following tasks:

- 1- They carried the ark of the covenant on the departure of the congregation, and set it up on their arrival
- 2- As their tribe had no portion in the promised land, they were given cities in the midst of all the tribes, to teach them the law of God.
- 3- They had the right of the tithes in livestock, crops, and revenues.
- 4- David separated 24,000 of them for the holy ministry; 6000 for teaching; 4000 as gatekeepers; and 4000 for singing praise and playing music (2 Chronicles 23: 3-5).

The Levites represent a group, bound together, on account, not of their presence in a certain place, but through carrying out a specific task wherever they go.

The genealogies of the tribe of Levi:

In the list of the genealogies of the Levites, it is to be noticed:

- a- It is an incomplete list; having omitted 'Jehoiada', mentioned in (2 Chronicles 23-24); and 'Uriah the priest, mentioned in (Ezra 8: 33).
- b- This list included 12 priestly generations from Aaron to the temple of Solomon (1 – 10); and 12 priestly generations from the temple of Solomon to the temple rebuilt after the return from captivity (11 – 15; Ezra 3: 2).

Those 24 priestly generations carry a portrait reflecting upon what came in the book of Revelation (4: 10)

- c- The tribe of Levi could be followed through the three families of the sons of 'Gershon', 'Kohath', and 'Merari'.

1- The origin of the family of Levi	1 - 3
2- The series of priests up to the time of captivity	4 - 15
3- The other Levite families	16 -
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6- The dwelling places of the Levites, and the cities of refuge	54 –
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1- THE ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY OF LEVI:

"The sons of Levi were: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari" (1)

From Levi to 'Jehozadak', who was carried into captivity, was 25 generations, covering a period of about 1300 years. Yet, the list here does not include some of the high priests, like 'Jehoiada' (2 kings 11), 'Azariah' (2 Chronicles 26: 17), 'Uriah' (2 kings 16: 15), 'Azariah (2 kings 31: 10). For the book was not preoccupied with presenting a complete list of the high priests, as much as with presenting the genealogies of 'Jehozadak', who was the high priest in the time of captivity, and his son 'Joshua' the high priest after the captivity (Haggai 1: 1).

The tribe of Levi were separated for ministry in the ark of the covenant (Numbers 3-4); then in the temple (1 Chronicles 23-26).

Aaron the brother of the prophet Moses was set as the first high priest (1 Chronicles 6: 3); And, according to God's command, all the priests were descendants of Aaron; whereas the rest of the tribe of Levi, had their important role in the ministry of the house of the Lord, as assistants to the priests in their ministry; as well as they dwelt in the midst of the tribes to teach the people the word of God, and to help them obey the divine commandment.

The children of Levi in the order of birth were 'Gershon', 'Kohath', and "Merari.

"Gershon"; A Hebrew name, meaning (a bell); the firstborn of Levi, and founder of the Gershonite family (1 Chronicles 6: 16-17)

"Kohath"; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (a synagogue); the second son of Levi, and the founder of the Kohathite family. He lived 133 years, and begot four sons, among whom were 'Amram' father of Moses, and Izhar father of 'Korah' who rebelled against his cousin Moses (1 Chronicles 6: 1' 16; 23: 6). He had a sister by the name of 'Jocabed', married to his son 'Amram', from whom he begot Aaron, Miriam, and the prophet Moses. 'Omram', therefore was married to his aunt. As all the priests were children of the 'Kohathites', every priest was therefore a Levite; but not every Levite is a priest.

"The sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel" (2)

He does not start with 'Gershon' by the natural order of birth, but according to the choice of grace; namely by 'Kohath' as the origin of the Aaronite priesthood.

"Amram"; A Hebrew name, meaning (high)

"Izhar"; A Hebrew name, meaning (illuminates or shines) (1 Chronicles 6: 18)

“Hebron”; A Hebrew name, meaning (company, bond, or unity): the founder of a family (1 Chronicles 6: 2, 18; 23: 12). Beside Levi the son of Kohath the founder of the family, a town by the same name ‘Hebron’ had villages annexed to it, given to the priests; and was one of the cities of refuge (1 Chronicles 6: 54-57)

“The children of Amram were Aaron, Moses, and Miriam; and the sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar” (3)

‘Aaron’ represents priesthood; Moses represents the law; and Miriam represents the prophecy. Moses and Aaron were honored by the Lord; having used them as tools for the salvation of the people, and as His representatives.

He starts by priesthood, and not by the law; as it symbolizes the Lord Christ, the heavenly High Priest, who intercedes, reconciling us by His blood with the Father; to let us understand the law or the divine commandments. As it is customary in the genealogies, he starts by the natural man then opens the way for the spiritual man.

He starts here with ‘Nadab’ and ‘Abihu’, according to nature; who were consecrated as priests to the Lord (Exodus 28: 1). But, having offered profane fire, the Lord allowed for them to be killed (Leviticus 10: 1-7; Numbers 26: 61). They probably have been drunk when they so did; hence the Lord forbade the priests to enter the tabernacle of meeting after drinking wine (Leviticus 10: 9).

They are followed by ‘Eleazar’ and ‘Ithamar’. The first a priest according to the choice of grace; and the second ‘Ithamar’, who was sent away to leave his place to ‘Eleazar’.

As Abiathar helped ‘Adonijah’ son of David, in his attempt to take the throne by force (1 Kings 1: 7); he and his descendants were sent away by Solomon once

he sat on the throne (1 Kings 2: 26-27); and gave the honor of priesthood to 'Eleazar' and his descendants.

The prophet Moses, the priest Aaron, and their sister Miriam, the prophetess, were a work group to the account of the kingdom of God; each according to his talent and mission; but the three of them worked with harmony under the leadership of God Himself; Each was in need of the others; for there is no perfect leader except the Lord Christ alone.

“The prophet Moses”; He led the people in exodus; received the ten commandments and the law; encountered God as a representative of the people; The Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend; and enjoyed beholding the glory of God from the back.

“Aaron”; The first high priest; accompanied his brother to encounter with Pharaoh; and was the speaker on his behalf, for Moses was of heavy mouth and tongue.

However, in spite of his exalted position, being chosen by the Lord to be the first high priest; yet Aaron had his weaknesses:

- a- He surrendered to the request of the people, to make for them a golden calf, when Moses delayed on Mount Sinai
 - b- Together with Moses, they disobeyed the Lord's command concerning bringing water out of the rock.
 - c- He joined his sister Miriam in criticizing their brother Moses' marriage to the Ethiopian woman.
- + Aaron's dry rod gave fruition;
Today the secret is revealed; when the womb of the Virgin bore a child.

+ Seeing how his rod ate the serpents (Exodus 7: 12), Aaron understood how the Lord's cross eats the serpent that ate Adam and Eve.

(St. (Mar) Ephraim the Syrian)

“The prophetess Miriam”; Led the women in praising God after crossing over the Red Sea; But she joined her brother Aaron in criticizing their brother Moses; for which she was inflicted with leprosy, and was separated from the camp for a week.

+ Moses, made like God over the camp, ordered and commanded the children of Jacob;

Miriam, like a bride of God; held the guitar among the tribes;

Aaron, carrying his censor, entered into the dome of time (the tabernacle of meetings), for the sake of the forgiveness of his people's sins.

By his censor he drove the horrible death away, and instantly stopped the work of the angel of perdition;

Moses and Aaron saved the people from bondage in Egypt; and Aaron the priest became a forgiver and a purifier;

(St. (Mar) Jacob el-Serougi)

“Nadab” and “Abihu”; **Nadab**, a Hebrew name, meaning (generous); the firstborn of Aaron, from 'Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab (Exodus 6: 23; Numbers 3: 2); He was among the few who were allowed by the Lord to approach Mount Sinai. **'Abihu'** A Hebrew name, meaning (My Father, He is)

Nadab and Abihu died for their disobedience to God, through offering a profane fire (Leviticus 10: 1-7). Most probably they were drunk; hence God denied the priests to enter into the tabernacle of meeting after drinking wine (Deuteronomy 1): 9); And 'Eleazar became a high priest after the death of his father Aaron (Numbers 20: 28).

“Eleazar”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God is Help); became a high priest after the death of his father Aaron (Numbers 20: 24-28)

“Ithamar”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Coast of palm trees); carried out an important role in organizing the ministries of worship in the tabernacle of the covenant (Numbers 4: 28, 33; 7: 8).

2- THE SERIES OF PRIESTS UP TO THE TIME OF CAPTIVITY:

“Eleazar begot Phinehas, and Phinehas begot Abishua” (4)

'Eleazar begot 'Phinehas', a man of zeal and valor; Like 'Caleb' who in his faith, presented virtue; He was chosen by the Lord to continue the line of priesthood, with no break, until 'Azariah' (9) who ministered in the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem (10). Then to 'Jehozadak' who was carried into captivity in Babylon (15). In captivity their genealogy stopped and became vague; as well as that of the line of royalty.

“Abishua begot Bukki, and Bukki begot Uzzi” (5)

“Bukki”; A Hebrew name, an abbreviation of the same word (in Arabic); a descendant of high priests, who most probably did not reach that position.

“Uzzi”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is power); a descendant of high priests, and an ancestor of ‘Ezra’ (1 Chronicles 6: 5, 6, 51).

“Uzzi begot Zerahiah, and Zerahiah begot Meraioth” (6)

“Zerahiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the Lord shined); a priest descendant of ‘Eleazar’ (1 Chronicles 6: 6, 51)

“Meraioth”; meaning (disobedience); a priest, son of ‘Zerahiah; a contemporary of ‘Eli’ the priest (1 Chronicles 6: 6-7; 52)

“Meraioth begot Amariah, and Amariah begot Ahitub” (7)

It is to be noticed that there is repetition of some names like ‘Amariah’ (7); different from ‘Amariah’ in verse (11).

“Ahitub begot Zadok, and Zadok begot Ahimaz” (8)

Ahitub and Zadok in verse (8) are different from those in verse 12. Azariah in (9) is different from ‘Azariah’ in (10), and from him in (14)

“Ahimaz”; A Hebrew name, meaning (brother of disgust or of anger)

“Zadok”; A Hebrew name, meaning (righteous); most probably the young man who came to Hebron together with the leaders of Israel, to turn the kingdom from Saul to David (1 Chronicles 12: 27-28). He was one of the two great priests in the days of ‘Abiathar’; ‘Ahimalech’ the son of ‘Abiathar’ was the other priest (2 Samuel 8: 17), who during the rebellion of Absalom, fled together with David from

Jerusalem, bearing the Ark of the covenant; but the king commanded them to go back with the Ark to the capital until the rebellion is over (2 Samuel 15: 24-29). When David grew old, and Adonijah his son intended to take the throne by force, Zadok remained faithful to David; while Abiathar helped Adonijah, and was sent away by Solomon.

“Ahimaz begot Azariah, and Azariah begot Johanan” (9)

“Johanan”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is compassionate); son of Azariah, and father of Azariah the priest (9-10)

Azariah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (whom Jehovah helped). Many bore this name, among whom were:

- a- The grandson of Zadok, son of Ahimaz; a great priest (6:9)
- b- The son of Johanan, a great priest (10-11)
- c- The son of Hilkiah, father of Seraiah; a great priest (13-14; 9: 11)
- d- The son of Zephaniah, a Kohathite; one of whose grandchildren was the prophet Samuel, and Heman, the singer of praise (36)

“Johanan begot Azariah (it was he who ministered as priest in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem)”.(10)

“Azariah”; The fourth generation from Zadok who was in the days of Solomon (1 Kings 2: 35). The one who was a priest in the days of Solomon was probably not the one mentioned in verse (9).

”Jerusalem”; has been the political capital of Judah and Palestine for a long time; It is a holy city of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims.

“Azariah begot Amariah, and Amariah begot Ahitub” (11)

“Ahitub begot Zadok, and Zadok begot Shallum” (12)

“Zadok”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Just or righteous); a priest, a descendant of the great priests, father of Shallum, and son of the second Ahitub (12).

“Shallum”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a reward); one of the high priests from Zadok, a precedent of Ezra; lived before Nebuchadnezzar put Jerusalem under siege (12-15).

“Shallum begot Hilkiah, and Hilkiah begot Azariah” (13)

“Hilkiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is my portion); More than one bore this name, among whom:

- a- A Levi, son of Amaziah, of the children of Merari (45-46)
- b- The high priest, contemporary of king ‘Josiah’ who helped the king in his religious reform, found the book of the law, while he was counting the silver entering the temple.

“Azariah begot Seraiah, and Seraiah begot Jehozadak” (14)

“Jehozadak”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is just). When Nebuchadnezzar killed the great high priest ‘Seraiah’, he took his son ‘Jehozadak’ captive (15) to Babylon; He was the father of Josiah the priest who returned together with Zerubbabel from Babylon, to rebuild the temple and the Jewish synagogue (Haggai 1: 1, 12, 14).

“Seraiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God has overcome); the great priest during the reign of Zedekiah, was taken into captivity together with many of the great men of the kingdom, and was killed. His name came among those of the high priests (14).

“Jehozadak went into captivity when the Lord carried Judah and Jerusalem into captivity by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar” (15)

In the last chapter we saw how God used ‘Tiglath-Pileser’ the Assyrian king, as a historical tool against the Northern kingdom (5: 26). Now we see His hand chastising Judah by the Babylonian captivity (15) This historical concept reveals what is behind this book of theological concept of the historical events.

3- THE OTHER LEVITE FAMILIES:

“The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari” (16)

The ritual singing of praise (the praise and thanksgiving) were the essence of the sacrificial worship (Hosea 14: 3; Isaiah 12: 25-26; Malachi 1: 11)

After mentioning the descendants of Kohath; of whom were the priests; he mentions the descendants of Gershon, the firstborn.

“Gershon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a stranger) or (godly); derived from the Hebrew word, meaning (drive away, or exile); called Gershon the son of Levi in (6: 1); and Gershon in (1 Chronicles 16: 16-17).

“These were the names of the sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei” (17)

The goal of the following genealogies is to present a list of the descendants of Levi, who were not priests, but regular Levites.

“The sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Heron, and Uzziel” (18)

“Amram”; Father of Aaron, and the whole line of the high priests. As to the rest of the priests, they go back to Kohath from his other sons: Izhar, Heron, and Uzziel. As to the descendants of Levi, not from Kohath, it was definitely impossible for them to be set as priests.

“Uzziel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God is power).

“The sons of Merari were Mahli, and Mushi. Now these are the families of the Levites according to their fathers” (19)

“Mahli”; A Hebrew name, meaning (ill); a grandson of Merari (47)

Mushi; the son of Merari the son of Levi (19)

“Of Gershon were Libni his son, Johath his son, Zimmah his son” (20)

“Zimmah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a counsel(or (deception)); one of the children of Gershon; son of Shimei, and grandson of Johath.

“Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, and Jeatherai his son” (21)

“Joah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is Brother); the name of a Levite, son of Zimmah (21); he may probably be Ethan, a Gershonite.

“Iddo”; (its plural is enemies in Hebrew), on whom God exhorted us to have compassion, to keep their possessions, to love, pray for them, help them; to treat them gently, and not to rejoice on their affliction, fall, and death; Yet He also warned against friendship with the wicked, and exhorted us to seek protection from them.

“Zerah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the shining of the light); A Levite of the children of Gershon; Many of the men of the old covenant were called by this name (21; 41).

”Jeatherai”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah guides). A Levite of the children of Gershon; also called Ethni (41).

“The sons of Kohath were Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son” (22)

“Amminadab”; A Hebrew name, meaning (generous); A Levite; whose name came in other locations as Izhar in (2); and in (38). He is the father of Korah (^: 37, 38; Exodus 6: 21; Numbers 16: 1).

“Korah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (joy). This sin of Korah and his group came in (Numbers 26: 9-11). Whereas his descendants lived and became famous in ministering to the temple (22, 37).

“Assir”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a captive); By this name, in the Holy Book, the following were called:

a-A Levite, born to Korah in Egypt (22)

b- A grandson of the man mentioned in (a), and son of Ebiasaph; a captive, a relative of Samuel (23)

*“Alkanah his son, Ebiasaph his son,
Assir his son” (23)*

“Alkanah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God created or acquired); Among others who bore this name:

- a- A Levite of the family of Kohath, from the house of Izhar, and of the Korites (36)
- b- A Levite of the same family, house, and group as the previous one; son of Joel (36)
- c- A Levite of the same family, house, and group as the previous ones; son of Mahath(26, 35)
- d- A Levite of the same family, house, and group as the previous ones; son of Jeroham from the mountains of Ephraim; lived in Ramathaim-Zophim; who had two wives: Hannah and Peninnah; father of the prophet Samuel from his wife Hannah

In this division, we notice that ‘Alkanah’ and his son ‘Samuel’ were seen as belonging to the Levite line (23-26); while in the first book of Samuel the house of Alkanah was said to an ‘Ephraimite’. It is obvious that they were Levites who lived in the province of Ephraim; No wonder when we take into consideration that the Levites were scattered among all the tribes.

*“Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uzziah
his son, and Shaul his son” (24)*

“Tahath”; A Hebrew name, meaning (what is underneath); A Levite of the family of Korah, of the house of Izhar (24, 37)

“Uriel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God is my light); the son of Tahath of the family of Kohath of the tribe of Levi was mentioned in (24). Uriel here is Zephaniah in (36). And Uzziah and Shaul here are Uzziah and Joel in (36)

“Uzziah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is power), A Kohathite Levi; son of Shaul (24)

“Shaul”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Was sought from God); A Kohathite Levi (24)

“The sons of Alkanah were Amasai, and Ahimoth” (25)

“Amasai”; A Hebrew name, meaning (carried by Jehovah); son of Alkanah; a Kohathite Levi; one of the group of Himan the singer of praise in the days of David (25, 35)

“Ahimoth”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the brother of death)

“As for Elkanah, the sons of Elkanah were Zophai his son, Nahath his son” (26)

“Zophai”; A Hebrew name, meaning (honey); a Kohath Levite, an ancestor of Samuel (35)

“Nahath”; A Hebrew name, meaning (rest); a Kohath Levite; probably the same Zuph in (34 and 35)

“Eliab his son, Jehoram his son, and Elkanah his son” (27)

“Eliab”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God is Father); a Levite, an ancestor of Samuel (27, 34); called Eliel in (34)

“The sons of Samuel were Joel the firstborn, and Abijah the second” (28)

“The prophet Samuel”; After a period of darkness during the era of the ‘Judges’, came Samuel, the Judge and prophet; he united the people, and drew them to worship God, and to trust in Him.

He came as a fruit of his mother’s Hannah prayers (1 Samuel 3: 19-20)

He was a man of God. Prayer was his slogan: *“As for me, far it be from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you”*, but I shall teach you the good and right way” (1 Samuel 12: 23). He was a Judge, priest, prophet, and a counselor to king Saul; whom he rebuked for not heeding his council; He was, as well, a counselor to king David. He was the last judge of Israel; He anointed two kings: Saul and David; but, unfortunately he did not succeed in raising his own two sons. According to some, although Samuel belonged to another tribe; yet he was counted as one of the Levites (28, 16); because of his relationship to the temple. And according to others, he was called an Ephraimite; not because he was of the tribe of Ephraim, but on account of that he dwelt in Remithaim-Zophim within the territory of the tribe of Ephraim; hence he was raised by Eli the priest (1 Samuel 9: 13; 10: 8).

“Joel”; the firstborn of Samuel, and the second was Abijah. (1 Chronicles 6: 28; as well as in some of the Greek Septuagint versions, and in the Syrian version).

“Abijah”; meaning (God is father) or (God is my Father)

“The sons of Merari were Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzzah his son” (29)

“Uzzah”; A Hebrew name , meaning (strength); a Levite son of Merari.

*“Shimei his son, Haggiah, and
Asaiah his son” (30)*

“Shimei”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God hears); By this name, a Levite of the Merari family (30), and another Levite of the Gershon family (30-43), were called.

“Haggiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Servant of Jehovah).

“Asaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah worked); A Levite, head of the Merari family; took part in bringing the Ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem in the days of king David (30-31; 15: 6, 11).

4- THE SINGERS OF PRAISE IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD:

Here is included a list of those who led the singing of praise in the temple (see also 1 Chronicles 9: 23). In Israel, singing praise has been developed to a great extent; David so greatly cared for it, to be called *“The sweet psalmist of Israel”* (2 Samuel 23: 1); Most of the psalms were referred to him; and as many of the psalms were used in worship and praise of the Lord, no wonder that many of them were referred to Asaph (39).

“Now these are the men who David appointed over the service of song in the house of the Lord, after the ark came to rest” (31)

During the journey in the wilderness, the Cohathites had the privilege to carry the tabernacle of meeting with all its inclusions; and were entrusted to carry the Ark of the covenant. Now, as the Ark came to rest in the promised land, and there was no need to carry it, David set of the three families of the Levites, groups for the service of singing praise in the house of the Lord; until Solomon built the temple, when all of them continued their ministry in the temple.

The list of the Levite singers of praise came in unusual detail; According to some, the author depended on his own memory, being of the family of Levi; or depended on the registers kept in the possession of his family, and was delivered from generation to generation.

The book often talks about the great care of David – *“the sweet psalmist of Israel”* – as a spiritual musician, who organized the musical work in the liturgical worship (15: 16, 27; 25: 1, 2; 2 Chronicles 29, 26; Nehemiah 12: 46). And who did a great job to assign chief singers, and groups to praise on a regular basis.

“They were ministering with music before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of meeting, until Solomon had built the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they served in their office

according to their order” (32)

“And these are the ones who ministered with their sons: Of the sons of the Kohathites were Heman the singer, the son of Joel, the son of Samuel” (33)

According to some, the chief singers Heman, Asaph, and Ethan (Jaduthun), were referred to the three Levite families: Kohath, Gershon, and Merari.

The continuity and the legitimacy of the singers were set upon two things:

(1) Those who were assigned by David, who established the Liturgical music, were Heman, Asaph, and Ethan (Jeduthun 1 Chronicles 25: 1)

(2) The genealogies of those three came together with the genealogies of the Levites.

After the return from captivity, it was only referred to Asaph’s family (Ezra 2: 41; Nehemiah 7: 44); As to Heman and Ethan, they were mentioned in another place in the first book of the Chronicles, being affiliated to the sanctuary in Gibeon (1 Chronicles 16: 37, 41).

As supervisors on the singers of each family: Heman was on the Kohathites, Asaph on the Gershonites, and Ethan on the Merarites.

“Heman”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Faithful); the name of the son of Joel, the son of the prophet Samuel; of the Levites, the children of Korah (1 Chronicles 6: 33; 15: 17)

“Joel the son of Samuel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is God); More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- The firstborn of Samuel ((33; 15: 17)
- 2- One related to Heman, the Kohathite singer (36)

“The son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Eliel, the son of Toah (34)

“Jeroham”; A Hebrew name, meaning (on whom God has mercy); an ancestor of Samuel (27)

“Eliel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (ieL is God); A Kohathite Levi, an ancestor of Samuel, also called (Eliab and Elihu (1 Chronicles 6: 1, 24)

“Toah”; A Kohathite Levi (34)

“The son of Zuph, the son of Elkanah, the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai” (35)

“Mahath”; A Hebrew name, meaning (holder); A Kohathite Levi (35); of the ancestors of the prophet Samuel.

“The son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah” (36)

“The son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah” (37)

“Zephaniah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah covers up); A Kohathite Levi (36-38)

Despite punishing Korah on his rebellion against Aaron (Numbers 16: 16); his descendants served as musician Levites; And the book of Psalms included some the psalms they composed their music (Psalm 42-49; 84-88).

“Ebiasaph”; A Hebrew name, meaning (my father had the increase); a head of one of the Korathite families (23, 37)

“The son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel” (38)

“Izhar”; A Hebrew name, meaning (illuminate or shine) (1 Chronicles 6: 18)

“And his brother Asaph, who stood at his right hand, was Asaph the son of Berachiah, the son of Shimiah” (39)

“Asaph”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the one who gathers together), or probably an abbreviation of (God gathered together); A Levite of the Gershonite family (3, 43); He, Heman the son of Joel, and Ethan; used to stand among the singers, with musical instruments; Then was given a perpetual position as a cymbal player in the ministry of the temple.

Asaph was called ‘a Seer’, like all the other chief singers of praise. And when it was time to set a perfect final system of ministry, his family with Asaph as its

head was perpetually appointed to become responsible for the ministry of music accompanying the songs of praise in the house of the Lord; They used to stand on the right side during their ministry (39)

He was called a brother of Heman the son of Joel, concerning the profession, and not the family relationship.

Asaph stood on the right side, being a descendant of Gershon the firstborn of Levi; Merari stood on the left side, being the younger son of Levi; And Heman stood in the middle; being the middle son among the three Kohathites.

“Berachiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning ((blessed by God); A Levite, father of Asaph (39; 15: 17).

“The son of Michael, the son of Basaeiah, the son of Malchijah” (40)

“Michael”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Who is like God?); A Gershonite Levite (40)

“Basaeiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (The work of Jehovah); in some old writings and translations it came as “Maseiah”

“Malchijah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is the King); A Gershonite Levite (40).

“The son of Ethni, the son of Zerah, the son of Adaiah” (41)

“Ethni”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a gift), A Gershonite Levite; probably the same person mentioned in (1 Chronicles 6: 21) by the name of ‘Jeatherai’.

“Adaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (who is adorned by Jehovah); A Gershonite Levite, the son of Ethan, father of Zerah; one of the ‘Asaph’ group of singers in the house of the Lord, in the days of David.

“The son of Ethan, the son of Zimmah, the son of Shimei” (42)

“Ethan”; A Hebrew name, meaning (steady); More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- The son of Kishi, of the tribe of Levi; a singer in the tabernacle of meeting in the days of David (44, 47).
- 2- The son of Zimmah, of the tribe of Levi (42)

“The son of Johath, the son of Gershon, the son of Levi” (43)

“Johath”; A Hebrew name, meaning (to snatch); A Gershonite Levite (20)

“And their brethren , the sons of Merari, on the left hand, were Ethan the son of Kishi, the son of Abdi, the son of Malluch” (44)

“Ethan”; Different from Ethan mentioned in verse 42; for this one is a descendant of Merari, while the former was a Gershonite – Jeduthun (42); his name probably changed, as it happened with Abraham, Sarah, and Jacob.

“Kishi”; A Levite of the family of Merari.

“Malluch”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Owner)

“The son of Hashabiah, the son of Amaziah, the son of Hilkiyah” (45)

“Hashabiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah ordained); A Merari Levite, a descendant of Amaziah; an ancestor of Jeduthun or Ethan (44-45)

“Amaziah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is powerful) (45)

“The son of Amzi, the son of Bani, the son of Shamer” (46)

“Amzi”; A Hebrew name, probably an abbreviation of Amaziah (46)

“Bani”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a building); probably an abbreviation of Banaiah; a Merari Levite (46)

“Shamer”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Guard); A Merari Levite (46)

“The son of Mahli, the son of Mushi, the son of Merari, the son of Levi” (47)

“Mahli”; A Hebrew name, meaning (ill); a grandson of Merari (47; 23: 23)

“Mushi”; The son of Merari the son of Levi (19)

“Merari”; A Hebrew name, meaning (bitter); the third son of Levi, and the head of Merari (1 Chronicles 6: 1, 16). And after opening the land of canaan, the children of Merari were given twelve cities from the portion of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun (63, 77-81).

“And their brethren, the Levites, were appointed to every kind of service of the tabernacle of the house of God” (48)

5- THE TASK OF THE PRIESTS:

The family of Aaron:

“But Aaron and his sons offered sacrifices on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense, for all the work of the Most Holy Place, and to make atonement for Israel, according to all

that Moses the servant of God had commanded” (49)

The priest children of Aaron had double task:

- a- Taking care of the altar of burned offering, and of the golden altar of incense; together with ministering in the Most Holy Place.
- b- Make atonement for Israel according to the law received by the prophet Moses; a symbol of the work of the Lord Christ: to be a *“merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people”* (Hebrew 2: 17).

Aaron and his sons, having alone the right to practice priesthood; particularly offering the sacrifices, symbolizing the Lord Christ, slain for the sake of the salvation of the world; had the need, themselves, to be purified and sanctified; on account of that the goal of their ministry was to sanctify the whole people for the Holy God,

They were committed to a specific rite in ministering the house of the Lord; the way the heavenly hosts are committed to a specific rite, as it came in the book of revelation. In the church of the new covenant, although we are, as well, committed to a rite, yet not to be practiced with a deadly literalism, but with the Spirit.

*“Now these are the sons of Aaron: Eleazar his son,
Phinehas his son, Abishua his son” (50)*

“Eleazar”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God helped)

“Phinehas”; An Egyptian name, meaning (Nubian); son of Eleazar, and grandson of Aaron (1 Chronicles 6: 4, 50).

“Abishua”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Father of salvation) (4-5, 50)

“Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son”

(51)

“Uzzi”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is power); the son of Bukki and father of Zeraiah, a descendant of the Levite high priests; and an ancestor of Ezra (5, 6, 51)

“Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitab his

son” (52)

Maraioth; meaning (disobedience); a priest, son of Zeraiah, a contemporary of Eli the priest (6-7, 52)

Amarih; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah said); More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- A priest, a son of Meraioth (6-7)
- 2- A high priest , the son of Azariah (11)

“Ahitub”; A Hebrew name, meaning (brother of goodness); More than one in the Holy Book bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- The son of Amariah, and father of Zadok the priest (7-8)

2- Another Ahitub, of the same family, whose father is also Amariah, and his grandson is Zadok (11-12)

“Zadok his son, and Ahimaz his son” (53)

“Zadok”; A Hebrew name, meaning ((Just or righteous); a priest descendant of the great priests; father of Shallum; and the son of the second Ahitub (12). Zadok was the head of a priestly family in the days of David, as it came in the second book of Samuel; Yet it was the book of the Chronicles that gave us his genealogy. Unfortunately, the descendants of Zadok, in the days of the Lord Christ (the Sadducees) have rejected and denied the Son of David

5- THE DWELLING PLACES OF THE LEVITES AND THE CITIES OF REFUGE:

Some of the names changed from the way it came in (Joshua 21: 13-19)

‘Hilen’ here is ‘Holon’ in Joshua 21; and ‘Alemeth’ here is ‘Almon’ in Joshua 21.

Not all the cities mentioned here were from the portion of the tribe of Manasseh, but some of them were from Ephraim and Dan.

“Now these are their dwelling places throughout their settlements in their territory, for they were assigned by lot to the sons of Aaron, of the family of the Kohathites” (54)

The tribe of Levi were not given a specific portion in the promised land like the other tribes; for the Lord Himself was their portion. And as the Levites were spread all over the land, they were given cities and common-lands within the portions of the tribes, to give them the chance to teach the people the word of God, how to walk according to the will of God, and in obedience to Him”

The children of Aaron had their possessions close to Jerusalem so as to be always ready to minister there.

It is to be noticed that the priests in this chapter were not counted as a group secluded from the rest of Israel. It was befitting of them to live in the midst of the tribes of Israel to be at the service of the people.

In the ministry of the new covenant, the priests with their ranks, whether they are bishops, priests, or deacons, are no more chosen from a specific family or tribe.

“They gave them Hebron in the land of Judah, with its surrounding common-lands” (55)

We know that the Levites were not given a portion of their own in the promised land; the Lord Himself being their portion. Yet they had cities in the midst of the tribes, some of which became cities of refuge. It is to be noticed that all the major cities in the promised lands, beside Jerusalem, were assigned as priestly cities: Debir, Beth-Shemesh, Anathoth, , Sheshem, Gezer, Aijalon, Golan, Jermuth, Kedesh, Tabro, etc.

The cities of the Levites included the twelve cities of refuge; the order of which are bound to (Joshua 21); which are: Hebron, Sheshem, Golan, in Bashan, Kedesh, Jattir, Jermuth in Gilead.

The city of Hebron came on the top of the list; As in it David received his throne on the tribes of Israel; It was taken by the children of Aaron, and became for them a city of refuge (55, 57). Hence royalty was bound to priesthood.

“But the fields of the city and its villages they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh” (56)

Hebron was given to Caleb for the sake of his faithfulness in his task spying the promised land (Joshua 15: 13)

Libnah”; A Semite name, meaning (whiteness); a city on the coast between Maceda and Leshesh. It was within the portion of Judah, then was given to the descendants of Aaron.

“And to the sons of Aaron they gave one of the cities of refuge, Hebron; also Libnah with its common-lands, Jattir, Eshtomoa with its common-lands” (57)

The cities of refuge: For this goal, certain of the cities of the Levites were assigned as cities of refuge, that *“any manslayer may flee whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him in time past”* Deuteronomy 19: 4). Out of the 48 cities, six cities were chosen, spread all over the land east and west of the Jordan, that had their own statute.

God is the soul’s refuge; the psalmist says: *“God is my refuge”* (Psalm 59: 9, 16; 61: 3); *“You are my strong refuge”* (Psalm 71: 70); Six cities were set: three east of the Jordan, and three in land of Canaan. If the east of the Jordan refers to the church of the old covenant, which did not cross over the holy water of baptism; and if the land of Canaan refers to the church of the new covenant; Man’s refuge, whether in the old or the new covenant, is the Holy Trinity; the One God for all. The figure 6, referring as well to man’s complete days of work. Man, in all the days of his sojourn will find in God his refuge; he will find his arms always open to him; never to be closed.

Lest someone may assume that the statute of the cities of refuge implies any softness toward the crime of murder; the following are taken into consideration:

- a- The crime of murder, is not proved by the testimony of one witness, but by more, and is punished by death

- b- No ransom is accepted from the guilty party; so that the rich would not assume that, by his money he could get away with murder; but he who kills must be killed.
- c- Any slothfulness in punishing the killer, would be counted as defilement of the land they dwell in; and where the Lord Himself dwells in its midst.

To make clear the idea behind the city of refuge, he confirms that salvation does not mean slothfulness with sin, or with the value of the life of others.

In the days of St. John Chrysostom, 'Atropius, who was an oppressor of the church; When he was accused of treason against the Emperor, and of plotting to have him killed, he took refuge in the altar. The police and the people then expected that St. John Chrysostom will definitely make revenge by having him delivered outside the church to be killed; but the saint proclaimed his love; and gave two sermons about the concept and mission of the church, even toward her oppressors, proclaiming that the beauty of the altar lies in loving the enemies.

The city of refuge undoubtedly is the Lord Christ Himself; But the revenge is sought by the law that seeks the divine justice. The Lord Christ came to realize mercy together with justice; having received in His body, as our representative, the death under which the sinner falls; by which He liberates us, and opens before us the way to the Higher Jerusalem. Yet, the sinner is committed to hasten to flee without delay to a city of refuge, to find its gates always open. By that he would not fall under the judgment for which the Savior paid the price in full.

“**Jattir**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (exaltation); a city in the mountains of Judea, given to the priests (57); was a city of refuge; claimed to be 6 miles north of Moladah, and 13 miles south-west of Hebron.

“Eshthomoa”; A Hebrew name, meaning (obedience); And also a name of a city in the mountains of Judea, given to the priests (57)

“Hilen with its common-lands, Debir with its common-lands” (58)

“Hilen”, or Holon; a Hebrew name, probably meaning (Romelah); its location is unknown nowadays.

Debir”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (holy); a city in the mountains of Judea, in the ‘Nakab’ or in the land of the south, given as a portion to the priests (57, 58); claimed by some to be now the village of Dahria, 12 miles south-west of Hebron; but it is most probably Tel-Beth- Mersim, 13 miles west to south-west of Hebron, and three miles north to north-west of Shamir. Excavations in Debir revealed ruins that go back to the era of the Canaanites, the Egyptians, the Heksus, and the Hebrews.

Ashan with its common-lands, and Beth Shemesh with its common-lands” (59)

“Ashan”; A Hebrew name, meaning (smoke)

“Beth Shemesh”; or (house of the sun); a name by which four places were called in the Holy Book.

“And from the tribe of Benjamin; Geba and its common-lands, Alemeth with its common-lands, and Anathoth with its common-lands. All their cities among their families were thirteen” (60)

“Alemeth”; A Hebrew name, meaning (hiding), A Levite city, a portion given to the children of Benjamin (60); It is probably ‘Alemeth’ 4 miles north-east of Jerusalem, and one mile from Anathah.

“Anathoth”; A Canaanite name, plural of ‘Anath’; a city in the portion of Benjamin, given to the Levites (60).

“To the rest of the family of the tribe of the Kohathites they gave by lot ten cities from half the tribe of Manasseh” (61)

The children of Israel used the lot as a sign of delivering themselves into the hand of the Lord; It was not done before raising a prayer seeking the intervention of the Lord’s hand, seeking the proclamation of His will; so that man would choose, not according to his own will, but to that of God.

The children of Israel used the lot to seek the will of God, after raising prayers, for the following purposes:

- 1- To recognize a sinner (Joshua 7: 16, 18)
- 2- To appoint someone to a high position (1 Samuel 10: 20; etc.)
- 3- To assign portions (Numbers 55. etc.)
- 4- To divide the spoils of war, the garments of those convicted to prison or to death (Matthew 27: 35); As in the choice of the kid goat of the Lord, and the scape goat of Azazel on the day of atonement (Leviticus 16)..
- 5- To know the day convenient to perform evil things (Esther 3: 7)

“Manasseh”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Who will forget?)

“And to the sons of Gershon, throughout their families, they gave thirteen cities from the tribe of Issachar, from the tribe of Asher, from the tribe of Naphtali, and from the tribe of

Manasseh in Bashan” (62)

“To the sons of Merari, throughout their families, they gave twelve cities from the tribe of Reuben, from the tribe of Gad, and from the tribe of Zebulun” (63)

“So the children of Israel gave these cities with their common-lands to the Levites” (64)

“And they gave by lot from the tribe of the children of Judah, from the tribe of the children of Simeon, and from the tribe of the children of Benjamin these cities which are called

by their names” (65)

“Now some of the families of the sons of Kohath were given cities as their as their territory from the tribe of Ephraim” (66)

“And they gave them one of the cities of refuge, Shechem with its common-lands, in the mountains of Ephraim, also Gezer with its common-lands” (67)

“Shechem”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a shoulder); an ancient town, close to which Abraham set his tents, and built an altar (Genesis 12: 6); where the body of Joseph was buried (Joshua 24: 32); and where Joshua read the book of the law of Jehovah (Joshua 8: 30); and gave his farewell speech (Joshua 24: 1). It was chosen as one of the cities of refuge (Joshua 20: 7; 21: 21); and in it ten tribes rebelled against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, and set Jeroboam a king over them (1 Kings 12: 1-19). Nowadays it is called ‘Nablus’.

“Gezer”; A Hebrew name, meaning (A portion) or (a bride’s dowry); an old Canaanite city, whose history goes back to 3000 years BC. It is close to Lechich and the lower Beth Horon, on the border of the portion of Ephraim; and its common-lands were given to the sons of Kohath the Levites.

“Jokmeam with its common-lands, Beth Horon with its common-lands” (68)

“Horon”; or Horoni: inhabitants of Horonaim, or more probably of Beth Horon.

“Jokmeam”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Let the people rise); a city of Ephraim, given to the Levites (68).

“Aijalon with its common-lands, and Gath Rimmon with its common-lands” (69)

“Gath”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a winepress)

“And from the half tribe of Manasseh: Aner with its common-lands, and Bileam with its common-lands, for the rest of the family of the sons of Kohath” (70)

Aner; a Levite town in Manasseh, west of the Jordan; was, together with its common-lands a portion of the sons of Kohath.(70)

“Bileam”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (greed) or (perdition); a place in the land of Manasseh, west of the Jordan, given as a portion to the Levites the sons of Kohath (70)

“From the family of the half tribe of Manasseh the sons of Gershon were given Golan in Bashan with its common-lands and Ashtaroth with its common-lands” (71)

“Golan”; probably a Canaanite name, probably meaning (a coast), (a side), or (wandering); a famous city of refuge in Bashan, belonged to half the tribe of Manasseh, east of the Jordan (71); And from it the region called ‘Golanetes’ (Golan nowadays), took its name. According to the Historian Josephus, in his ‘History of the Jewish nation’ he said that ‘Alexander Ganisos’ was bitterly

defeated close to it; then attacked it later and destroyed it. It is located between Hermon and Yarmouk, divided into two parts: the southern part, has plowable soft soil, and the northern part half rocky. The former part with the rich pasture lands in Syria, had its water by drains from Hermon and several springs; But nowadays it is nothing but ruins.

“Ashtaroth”; An old town in Bashan, east of the Jordan; was the base of ‘Og’ king of Bashan; then became a portion of the Levites, the sons of Gershon (71)

“And from the tribe of Issachar: Kedesh with its common-lands, Daberath with its common-lands” (72)

“Kedesh”; A Semite name, meaning (holy)

- 1- A city of Issachar given to the Levites, the sons of Gershon (72); probably ‘Abu-Kedis’, 2 ½ miles south of ‘Mageddo’
- 2- A fortified city of Naphtali in the Galilee; given to the Levites, the sons of Gershon (76).

“Daberath”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Pasture land); a town within the portion of Issachar, given, together with its common-lands to the Gershonites (72); In its location, nowadays is the village of ‘Deborah’ on the western side of Mount Tabor.

“Ramoth with its common lands, and Anem with its common-lands” (73)

“Ramoth”; A Hebrew name, meaning (highlands) or (bitter); the third son of Levi, head of the Merari 1, 16). And later twelve cities were assigned to the sons of Merari from the portion of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun (63, 77-81).

“Anem”; A Hebrew name, meaning (springs); a Levite city in the portion of Issachar; which was before, together with its common-lands, a portion of the children of Gershon (73)

“And from the tribe of Asher: Mashal with its common-lands, Abdon with its common-lands” (74)

“Mashal”; a city in Zebulun, assigned to the Levites the children of Merari (77); probably where ‘Hezmet-Deborah’ at the plains of Mount Tabor, is nowadays, called ‘Daboria’.

“Hukok with its common-lands, and Rehob with its common-lands” (75)

“Hukok”; A Hebrew name, meaning (A portion); a city on the border of ‘Asher’, given, together with its common-lands, to the Levites the children of Gershon (75); claimed by some to be, nowadays, ‘Jerka”, 8 ½ miles north-east of ‘Ata’; while according to others it is ‘Tel-el-Hareh.

“Rehob”; A Hebrew name, meaning (A wide place); given to the Levites (75); probably nowadays ‘the western Tel-el- Bir’, close to ‘Akka’, to its east.

“And from the tribe of Naphtali: Kedesh in Galilee with its common-lands, Hannon with its common-lands, and Kirjathaim with its common-lands” (76)

“Hannon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (hot springs); A Levite city in the portion of Naphtali (76); most probably ‘Hemma and Hamon-dor; called nowadays ‘Hammamat el-Hemma’; and the land around it is called ‘Land of Hemma’.

“Kirjathaim”; A Hebrew name, meaning (two villages or cities); a city in the portion of Naphtali, given to the Gershonite Levites (76).

“From the tribe of Zebulun the rest of the children of Merari were given Rimmon with its common-lands and Tabor with its common-land” (77)

We have already dealt with the Kohathites and the Gershonites; and we are left with the children of Merari.

“Rimmon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a Pomegranate); a city in the portion of Zebulun, then given to the Lavites, and called ‘Rommono (77).

“And on the other side of the Jordan, across from Jericho, on the east side of the Jordan, they were given from the tribe of Reuben: Bezer in the wilderness with its common-lands,

Jahzah with its common-lands” (78)

“Bezer”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a stronghold)

“Jahaz”; A Moabite name, meaning (a treaded land); a Moabite city close to the desert in the portion of Reuben, where the Hebrews defeated Sihon, and took over the land between Arnon and Jebuk. But it so seems that the Moabites took it back in later times. Claimed to be one mile south of ‘Zerka Moen’, 12 miles east of the Dead Sea. And also claimed to be the village of ‘Tel- sl-Mawalid’, or ‘Kherbet Iskander’; And if it is proved to be remains of the ‘Iron Era’, it would be the cause of a great interest.

“Kedemoth with its common-lands, and Mephaath with its common-lands” (79)

“Kedemoth”; A Hebrew name, meaning (eastern regions); a city in the province east of the River of Lot, in the higher valley of Arnon. It was a portion of Reuben, then given to the Levites the children of Merari (79). Its location is not precisely known; although claimed by some to be Kasr-el-Zaafran, 2 ½ miles north-west of the city.

“Mephaath”; A Hebrew name, meaning (splendor); a Levite city in the portion of Reuben (79).

“And from the tribe of Gad: Ramoth in Glead with its common-lands, Mahanaim with its common-lands” (80)

“Mahanaim”; A Hebrew name, meaning (two camps); a city east of the Jordan, so called by Jacob; given to Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh; then Gad’s portion in it was given to the children of Merari, to become a city of refuge (80)

“Heshbon with its common-lands, and Jazer with its common-lands” (81)

“Heshbon”; A Moabite name, meaning (planning); the city of Sihon king of the Amorites; but it so seems to be originally taken from the Moabites. It was assigned by Moses to the children of Reuben; and after the invasion, it was rebuilt by men of this tribe; It was on the border line between Reuben and Gad. After being possessed by the tribe of Gad, it was given to the Levites (81).

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 6

I CHERISH YOU, O HEAVENLY HIGH PRIEST

- + Open my eyes, O Lord;
To see Your grace and mercies;
Who was Aaron, to grant him that authority and the garments of glory?!
You commanded the tribe of Levi, as well as every other tribe, to keep their purity;
Neither the tribe of Levi would take the royalty by force, nor the king would take the Levite work by force;
You came down to me, O King of kings, and the heavenly High Priest;
To make me a member in Your holy body;
And to make me a king and a priest for God Your Father (Revelation 1: 6);
Grant me to cherish that amazing belonging;
You granted me the adoption to Your Father in the water of baptism;
And sanctified me to be qualified to enter the heavenly sanctuaries
And to trust by You, to trample the serpents and the scorpions;
How rich are Your grace and Your exalted love!

- + By Your love, You exalted the Levites, to seek no portion of the land for themselves;
For You presented Yourself as their portion;
You made their cities a safe refuge;
"I say to myself: "The Lord is my portion";
Every broken heart, poor, and miserable would resort to You;
To see in his heart a deposit of the exultant heaven;
Set me and my brethren cities of refuge, not to be broken by time;
Let us be a refuge, even after our departure to You in paradise.

- + You made for the priests and the Levites, a place in Your city, Jerusalem;
You made them dwell in the midst of all the tribes, to become, by You, light for them;
And a refuge not to be corrupted by men;
They have no palaces like kings;

But live in regular homes, among Your people;
For all to bear Your sweet fragrance, and delicious taste;
As none of them are spared of falling into sin;
So that, while moaning in weakness, they would have compassion on the
weak sinners;

Some among them were corrupted, to be swallowed by earth;
To be burned by fire;
To be taken in shame and reproach into captivity;
Keep me from sin and weakness;
Cover me up; to bear Your righteousness and Your holiness, O Holy One.

+ Out of them You set singers of praise and musicians;
To stir up the spirit of Joy by You; and to administer the deposit of Your
heavens;

What should I say? What should I seek? While in the midst of the
afflictions of this world?!

Receive my soul, a spiritual guitar, the work of Your hand;
Let Your Holy Spirit play on the strings of my senses, emotions, and
thoughts;

Let Your Holy Spirit play on the strings of my body;
To produce in me a magnificent symphony of love, the work of Your grace;
To make men as well as the heavenlies hear the praise of my heart;
And make all rejoice in the mighty works of Your grace;

+ Let my joy by You, harmonize with my behavior in Spirit;
To proclaim by Your power the deposit of heaven, that never ceases to
work;

Grant me seriousness in my life;
Let every breath in my life have its value;
Grant me to live by the rite of heaven, that knows no confusion;
Let my hidden and manifest life be controlled by Your amazing ordinance;

Let me walk by Your ordinance, yet, not with the deadly literality;
Nor with the appearances of false spirituality;
Let me walk, neither in deadly dark attitude, nor in loose kind of life;
Let me walk by Your Holy spirit according to Your divine will;
Divine glory be to You, O who always grant me the abundance of Your
love.



CHAPTER 7

THE GENEALOGIES OF THE NORTHERN TRIBES

Despite the fact that the author of the two books of Chronicles did not care much for the northern kingdom concerning the political status; yet he presented to us a record of the history of its tribes, for which he greatly cared.

The present chapter refers to the genealogies of the remaining six tribes: Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Asher; all of whom were taken into the Assyrian captivity.

He did not mention the genealogy of 'Dan' and of 'Zebulun'. Concerning Dan, Reproach and shame dwelt upon them, on account of that idol-worship started in the portion of Dan, where Jeroboam set one of his golden calves. That is why Dan was omitted from the list of the book of revelation. Concerning Zebulun, the reason is unknown.

The genealogies here are not as complete as those of Judah and Levi; on account of that none of the tribes of the northern kingdom were a part of royalty or priesthood. And it so seems that the author had no records like those he has of the southern kingdom; beside the fact that the records of the northern kingdom were scattered when they fell into the Assyrian captivity in the year 722 BC.

1- Issachar, the working tribe	1 - 5
2- Benjamin the ravenous wolf	6 - 12
3- Naphtali	13
4- Manasseh	14 - 19
5- Ephraim	20 - 29
6- Asher, who enjoys the oil of grace	30 - 40

1- ISSACHAR, THE WORKING TRIBE:

Jacob likened his son Issachar to a strong donkey (Genesis 49: 1); on account of that the tribe of Issachar were perpetually working, always finding pleasure in their tents (Deuteronomy 33: 18). Here he says that they had many wives and sons (4); were mighty men of valor (5); Yet their great number did not cause them trouble, for they were creative, and none of them was idle.

Concerning working with diligence, however old, man may be, Ben Sirach says:

“Do not hate hard labor or farm work, which was created by the Most High”

(Sirach 7: 15)

“Stand by your agreement and attend to it; and grow old in your work; Do not say: ‘What do I need, and what further benefit can be mine?... Do not say: ‘I have enough, and what harm can come to me now?’” (Sirach 11: 20, 23, 24)

“The idler is like a filthy stone, and everyone hisses at his disgrace. The idler is like the filth of dunghills; anyone that picks it up will shake it off his hand” (Sirach 22: 1, 2).

+ Idleness is the teacher of every sin.

(St. John Chrysostom)

+ It is not befitting of a Christian to be without discipline; He who is able, is committed not to eat the bread of idleness; and he who works, let him work well for the glory of Christ.

(St. Basil the Great)

- + The apostle says: “Make sure to be at peace”; Meaning, stay in your cell, and do not preoccupy yourself with rumors, that are spread by the idle, who disturb themselves and cause disturbance to the others.

- + “*Drowsiness (idleness) will clothe a man with rags*” (Proverb 23: 21 – the Septuagint version). The idle will surely not be worthy of being clothed with the incorruptible or the non-worn out garment, about which the apostle says: “*Put on the Lord Christ*” (Romans 13: 14); or of “*putting on the breastplate of faith*” (1 Thessalonians 5: 8); of which the Lord Himself talked on the tongue of the prophet, addressing Jerusalem, saying: “*Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion*” (Isaiah 52: 1). It is befitting of whoever is overcome by the slumber of slothfulness or boredom, to be clothed, not by his work and strife, but by the rags of idleness..

(St. John Cassian)

“The sons of Issachar were: Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron – four in all” (1)

In the details concerning the tribe of Issachar in Genesis 46: 13, and Numbers 26: 23-25), the numbers according to the census (Numbers 1, 26) were less than what came here.

They were characterized by:

- a- Having many wives and sons, the number of men of war in this tribe steadily increased since the establishment of royalty. In the days of David, they were 22,600 men; then increased to 36,000 men; and finally they reached 87,000 men
- b- They cared to record their genealogies (5).

c- The tribes of Issachar, Benjamin, and Asher, bound together, were capable of going up to war

“Tola”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a warm), or (purple textile); the firstborn of Issachar, and ancestor of the children of Tola...

“Puah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (strength); a son of Issachar and ancestor of the children of Pua (7: 1); the name also came as ‘Fuah’.

“Jashub”; A Hebrew name, meaning (who comes back)

“Shimron”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a watcher or guard); founder of the Shimronite family.

“The sons of Tola were Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Jibsam, and Shemuel, heads of their father’s house. The sons of Tal were mighty men of valor in their generations; their number in the days of David was twenty-two thousand six hundred” (2)

“Uzzi”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is power); Two bore this name:

- 1- The son of Tola the son of Issachar, a head of his father’s house and a mighty man of valor (2, 3)
- 2- The son of Bela, of the children of Benjamin, and a head of his father’s house (7)

“Rephaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah healed) (2)

“Jeriel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God sees) (2)

“Jahmei”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah protects) (2)

“Jibsam”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God is power) (2)

“Shemuel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (His name is God). In the Hebrew origin, this is the same name that came in the Arabic versions as ‘Samuel’; a chief in Issachar of the Tola family (2)

According to some, the word ‘eleph’ in Hebrew means a division of a tribe, whatever its number is, like the different military terms defining the divisions of an army.

“The son of Uzzi was Izrahiah, and the sons of Izrahiah were Michael, Obadiah, Joel, and Ishiah. All five of them were chief men” (3)

“Izrahiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Johavah shines) (3)

“Michael”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Who is like God?); A chief of Issachar in the days of David

.

“Obadiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a slave of Jehovah) (3)

“Joel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is God) (3)

“Ishiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah forgets).

“And with them, by their generations, according to their father’s houses were thirty-six thousand troops of the army ready for war; for they had many wives and sons” (4)

“Now their brethren among all the families of Issachar were mighty men of valor, listed by their genealogies, eighty-seven thousand in all” (5)

“Issachar”; A Hebrew name, meaning (works for a wage); the ninth of Jacob’s sons, and the fifth from Leah, in whom the prophecy of Jacob was realized; as the children of Issachar were known for their diligence in work of agriculture; and were often invaded by nomadic tribes. According to the census in the days of David, their number was 87,000 (5)

3- BENJAMIN, THE RAVENOUS WOLF:

In spite of the fact that this tribe has weakened, and its number came to be 600 men, because of their foolishness (Judges 20: 470; Yet it so seems that they got stronger and more numerous with time.

In this chapter, he concentrated on Benjamin concerning their relationship with the people; Yet in the following chapter, he talks of Benjamin concerning their relationship with king Saul and Jerusalem. Calling Benjamin “a ravenous wolf” (Genesis 49: 27); Jacob probably refers here to Saul the son of Kish the Benjamite, who became the first king of Israel; who, being unfaithful to God, he treated the people like a ravenous wolf devouring lambs, instead of caring for them like a father for his children. Yet, many Benjamite mighty men of valor around Saul were drawn to David, and showed every loyalty and faithfulness toward him (1 Chronicles 12); And when the kingdom was divided, the tribe of Benjamin was bound to the kingdom of Judah in the southern kingdom.. David did not close the door in the face of the tribe of Benjamin on account of the behavior of king Saul, but gained Jonathan, Saul’s son, as well as many mighty men of valor to his side.

+ Among the fiercest oppressors, you may find certain individuals who could become your friends.

(St. Augustine)

- + By your love of an enemy, you would become a friend of God; and even His son; according to the words of the Lord Himself, saying: "*Love your enemies, ... do good to those who hate you; ... that you may be sons of your father in heaven*" (Matthew 5: 44-45).

(Father Caesarius, bishop of Arle)

- + When he says: "*Be kindly affectionate to one another*" (Romans 12: 10), the apostle means: Be friendly to him Do not wait for him to love you, but jump to be the initiator, yourself; to gain the wages of his love in return. To show why we are committed to love one another; and to tell us about the way by which affection would abide; he adds: "*in honor, giving preference to one another*" (Romans 12: 10). ... Nothing would create friends for man, like jealously seeking to honor his neighbor

(St. John Chrysostom)

According to some, what came here concerning the tribe of Benjamin (6-11), was probably a mistake while editing; writing 'Benjamin' instead of 'Zebulun', the way it actually came in the Greek documents. No reference to Zebulun came in the first book of the Chronicles ; unless the text here concerns him.

As it came in Genesis 49: 13, Zebulun is located on the Mediterranean coast, south of Phoenicia; a fact that shows in the mention of "Tarshish' (10), the name of an ancient port 'Cadiz' that received the ships coming from the west side of Mediterranean Sea (Spain).

“The sons of Benjamin were Bela, Becher, and Jediel – three in all” (6)

Bela”; A Hebrew name, meaning (swallowing)

“Becher”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the firstborn), (the first) or (the early).

“Jediel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (known in God), a head of a family (6, 10, 11)

“The sons of Bela were: Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth, and Iri – five in all. They were heads of their fathers’ houses; and they were listed by their genealogies, twenty-two thousand and thirty-four mighty men of valor” (7)

“Ezbon”; A Hebrew name of unknown meaning (7)

Jerimoth”; A Hebrew name, meaning (swollen), (huge) or (tall); Two bore this name:

1- A Benjamite son of Bela (7)

2- A Benjamite son of Becher (8)

“Iri”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a guard); also called “Er’

“The sons of Becher were: Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Eliezer, Omri, Jerimoth, Abijah, Anathoth, and Alemeth; All these are the sons of Becher” (8)

“Zemirah”; A Hebrew name meaning (a hymn) or (an elegant un-bearded young man of little stature) (8)

“**Joash**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah rescued); a head of a Benjamite family in the days of David (8)

“**Eliezer**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God is Help)(8)

“**Elioenai**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (My eyes are toward Jehovah); the head of his father’s house. (8)

“**Omri**”; A Hebrew name , probably meaning (successful)

“**Abijah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God is a Father), or (God is my Father)

“**Anathoth**”; A Canaanite name, plural of Anath; a head of his father’s house;

“**Alemeth**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (hiding) (8)

“And they were recorded by genealogy according to their generations, heads of their fathers’ houses twenty thousand two hundred mighty men of valor” (9)

They cared to record their genealogies (9); beside their consistent attachment to the tribe of Judah, even when the kingdom was divided; they never separated from Judah; referring to those who attach themselves to the Lion coming from the tribe of Judah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

“The son of Jediael was Bilhan, and the sons of Bilhan were Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Chenaanah, Zethan, Tharshish, and Ahishahar” (10)

“**Bilhan**”; meaning (foolish or simple); a Benjamite chief (10)

“Jeush”; A Hebrew name, meaning (He helps); a head of his father’s house, in the days of David (10)

“Benjamin”; A Hebrew name, meaning (son of the right hand); A chief (10)

“Ehud”; A Hebrew name, probably an abbreviation of the name ‘Abihud’

“Chenaanah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (toward Canaan)

“Zethan”; A Hebrew name, meaning (an olive tree), A Benjamite chief,

“Tharshish”; A Phoenician name, meaning (A refinery lab)

“Ahishahar”; meaning (the brother of dawn)

“All these sons of Jediel were heads of their fathers’ houses; there were seventeen thousand two hundred mighty men of valor fit to go out for war and battle” (11)

“Shuppim and Huppim were the sons of Ir, and Hushim was the son of Aher” (12)

“Shuppim or Shuppam or Shuppan”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a serpent; a chief of a Shuppamite family.

“Huppim or Huppam”; A Hebrew name of unknown meaning; a son, or a far grandson of Benjamin, founder of a family in that tribe (12, 15).

“Hushim”; A Hebrew name, meaning (haste) or (excitement); According to some, it refers to the tribe of Dan referred to in (Genesis 46: 23), a

“Aher”; A Hebrew name, meaning (another) (12)

4- NAPHTALI:

“The sons of Naphtali were: Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shallum, the sons of Bilhah” (13)

Only the first generation of the fathers of this tribe, and none of their descendants, were mentioned; their records were probably lost. Naphtali, with his love of freedom, was likened by his father Jacob to a doe (a female deer) roaming with swiftness in an open wilderness with no obstacles, to wherever it wants; saying: *“Naphtali is a doe let loose, that bears lovely fawns”*.

Yet this freedom, not to become a chance for corruption and evil; the tribe committed itself to have good relationships with the rest of the tribes; offering *“lovely fawns”*. In the book of judges, Deborah the prophetess sang: *“Zebulun is a people who jeopardized their lives to the point of death, Naphtali also, on the heights of the battlefield”* (Judges 5: 18); probably referring to the extent of their strife in war. And the prophet Moses, before his death, blessed them, saying: *“O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full of the blessing of the Lord, Possess the west and the south”* (Deuteronomy 33: 23)... Naphtali, therefore has become an example of the gentle soul in their dealings with their brethren by the blessing of the Lord.

- + We do not consider the free man, according to his position in the society, but according to his nature and way of life; ... The freedom and beatitude of the soul are a result of a true purity and the despise of temporal things.
- + The free man is he who is not enslaved by pleasures, but who controls his body with good discernment and chastity, satisfied with what God gives him, whatever few it may be; giving Him thanks from all his heart.

(St. (Abba) Anthony)

In this tribe, it is to be noticed:

a- One of them got married to a Srian or Aramite concubine (14)

b- 'Macher', who came a fruit of this marriage, learned from his father's fault, and married a Benjamite girl (15)

"Naphtali"; the son of Bilhah, Leah's concubine, the book did not any care for his genealogy (13); had few men of war; the list of Naphtali conforms to what came in (Genesis 46: 24) and (Numbers 26: 48).

"Jahziel"; A Hebrew name, meaning (God ordains); the firstborn of Naphtali (13)

"Goni"; A Hebrew name, meaning (painted) or (light red); founder of the family of Gonites

.

"Shallum" A Hebrew name, meaning (a reward); also called 'Shallim', meaning (God makes reward)

“

"Jezer"; A Hebrew name, meaning (creation) or (purpose); a head of a family.

"Bilhah"; A Hebrew name, meaning (half-wit)

5- MANASSEH:

We already spoke about the children of Manasseh who inhabited east of the Jordan, in Gilead and Bashan (5: 23-24). We shall deal here with those who inhabited in Canaan, west of the Jordan.

Of the descendants of Manasseh was 'Zelophehad' who had no sons, but only daughters, who sought their right of inheritance (Joshua 17: 3).

“The descendants of Manasseh, his Syrian concubine bore him: Machir the father of Gilead, the father of Asriel” (14)

The list of Manasseh includes both sides of the tribe; and refers to their relationship with Syria.

It is obvious that some Hebrew women married Syrian rulers. The list shows that the half-tribe of Manasseh, who inhabited the east bank of the Jordan, having become like a political extension of Syria; have suffered its destiny, when 'Tiglath-Pileser' appeared in the year 734 BC.

In these few verses (14-19), the reference to the genealogies of women are noticed, because of the desolation that dwelt upon Israel in the period of captivity; as it is referred here to 13 women, including the five daughter of 'Zelophehad" (15).

“Asriel” (In Arabic); or (Israel in Hebrew); A Hebrew name, probably meaning (God strives); the son of Gilead, a head of his father's house.

“Machir”; A Hebrew name , meaning ((sold), the firstborn of Manasseh, and his only son from his Aramic concubine.

“Machir took as his wife the sister of Huppim and Shuppim, whose name was Maachah, The name of Gilead's grandson was Zelophehad, but Zelophehad had only daughters” (15)

“Maachah”; A Semite name of a Benjamite woman who married Machir the son of Manasseh.

“Zelophehad”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a protection against fear); the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh (Joshua 17: 3)

“The daughters of Zelophehad”; had their special importance in Israel's history ; for Fear that, on account of that they had no brother, the name of the family would accordingly be wiped out, they, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting sought the inheritance of their father before Moses, Eleazar the high priest, the rulers, and all the congregation. Daringly, they sought that their father's name would not be wiped out because he had no sons. Hence the statute came giving the daughters the right to inherit their father, if there is no male heir to set his father's name (Numbers 27: 1-11); with one condition that they do not get married outside their own tribe; lest the inheritance would move to another tribe

The daughters of Zelophehad were mentioned five times in the Holy Bible (Numbers 26: 33; 27: 1-11; 36: 3-12; Joshua 3-6; 1 Chronicles 7: 15). Their names were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah (Numbers 26: 33).

Despite their confession that their father, although he did not partake of the rebellion of the Korah group, yet he died in the wilderness with his sin; (Numbers 27: 3), yet they intended to keep his name alive. Being truly daughters of Israel; and appreciating their genealogies, they sought from Moses to raise their claim before the Lord. Because of their zeal, God responded to them, and turned their claim into a statute for the children of Israel. And in (Numbers 36) we see the whole tribe of Manasseh intercede in their favor.

It is befitting of the believer to marry from within his own tribe, namely to marry from among the girls of God; And of the women believers to marry from among the sons of God; lest they would lose their heavenly inheritance.

The daughters of Zelophehad actually got married to their cousins; and sought from Joshua their rights in the inheritance according to the command of God.

+ O Repentant! Do not delay your return, to bring pleasure to the Father, and to earn the inheritance waiting for you;

The Father does not anticipate an application from you; but only seeks from you to return to Him to receive You;

Although your application would not fulfill the handwriting requirements of your debt, yet the mercies of God will receive you if you repent;

Although the supplications would not wipe out your iniquity, yet God's compassion would do that without your seeking;

It remains for you to keep away from offenses; and God's mercies will cover all these issues, for the sake of your consummation;

Behold; baptism clothes you with the garment of glory; And Behold, by faith, the King's ring is in your hand;

Behold, the fattened calf of life is slain for you for your spiritual enjoyment; All these things are yours; it is only you who delay your return.

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

“Maachah the wife of Macir bore a son, and she called his name Peresh. The name of his brother was Sheresh, and his sons were Ulam and Rakem” (16)

“**Peresh**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (discernment) (16)

“**Sheresh**”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (origin) or (a plantlet)

“**Ulam**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (first) (16-17)

“Rakem”; A Hebrew name meaning (formation) or (coloration)

“The son of Ulam was Bedan. These were the descendants of Gilead the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh” (17)

Bedan”; He probably is the same ‘Bedan’ referred to as one of the rescuers of Israel mentioned in (1 Samuel 12: 11)

“His sister Hammoleketh bore Ishhod, Abiezer, and Mahlah” (18)

“Hammoleketh”; A Hebrew name, meaning (queen); sister of Gilead, and daughter of Machir the son of Manasseh; her sons had importance in the history of the Hebrews

“Ishhod”; A Hebrew name, meaning (s man of glory)

“Abiezer”; A Hebrew name, meaning (father of help), or (father is help); a father of a prominent family that produced ‘Gideon’, the judge who saved Israel from the Midianites (Judges 6-8)

“Mahlah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (sickness); anephew of Gilead.

“And the sons of Shemidah were Ahian, Shechem, Likhi, and Aniam” (10)

“Shemidah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (his name will be known); head of the Shemidites

“Ahian”; A Hebrew name, meaning (my brother or my little brother); a Shemidite.

“Shechem”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a shoulder); son of Shemidiah.

“Likhi”; a descendant of Manasseh, a Shemidite..

“Aniam”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (I am an uncle), or (people’s lamentation)

6- EPHRAIM:

We read great things about the tribe of Ephraim; through whose genealogies, the author presented the position of Joshua the son of Nun (27), the most prominent person in that huge tribe; who was a symbol of Jesus Christ on several aspects (20-29). In this part we see the only woman about whom the holy Book said she built a city (24).

“The sons of Ephraim were Shethulah, Bered his son, Tahath his son, Eladah his son, Tahath his son” (20)

“Shethulah”; Two bore this name:

1-The son of Ephraim; founder of the Shethulites (20)

2- Another descendant of Ephraim (21)

“Bered”; When a cloud suddenly passes through a very cold current, its water particles turn into solid ice; which are sometimes tiny ; and sometimes are big particles of hail that could cause harm to man, cattle, and plants.

Tahath”; A Hebrew name, meaning (What is underneath). Two bore this name:

1- An Epraimi, the son of Bered; a Shethulite (20)

2- The son of Eladah, a descendant of Tahath (20)

“Eladah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (beautified by God); the son of Tahath.

“Zabad his son, Shuthelah his son, and Ezer, and Elead. The men of Gath who were born in that land killed them because they came down to take away their cattle” (21)

That event was not mentioned anywhere else in the Holy Book; There are different views concerning it; of which are:

- a- According to some, that event took place while the tribe of Ephraim were still in Egypt, during the days of Ephraim, Joseph’s son himself; While, according to others, Ephraim here is another person from the same tribe; and those who were killed were his descendants and not his direct children.
- b- Who initiated the attack on the other side? According to some, the children of Ephraim, assuming that it was high time for them to realize the divine promise, came down to Gath and attacked its men to possess Canaan; Then God allowed the men of Gath to kill them, on account of that they moved against reason without consulting the Lord, or waiting for the time designated by Him; So He used the men of Gath as His tool to knock them out.

As obviously, the children of Ephraim were shepherds of sheep in Gasan, with no military experience; it is difficult to imagine that they came down to Gath to take away their cattle; But it is more probable that it was the other way round; namely, the men of Gath came down to Egypt and killed the children of Ephraim to take their cattle away.

Later on, God granted the faithful men of Ephraim the chance to drive the inhabitants of Gath out (1 Chronicles 8: 13)

The tree of this tribe grew, and the divine promise on Jacob's tongue was realized: "*His younger brother shall be greater than him, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations*" (Genesis 48: 19).

"Zabad"; A Hebrew name, meaning (God granted) or (a grant); an Ephraimi killed by the men of Gath (21)

"Ezer"; A Hebrew name, meaning (help).

"Gath"; A Hebrew name, meaning (winepress)

It is more probable that those who were killed by the men of Gath were Ezer, Elead, and their servants; on whom their father Ephraim mourned many days.

"Then Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him" (22)

Nothing would grieve a father's heart like the death of his children, particularly when their death is by shedding their blood. His brethren came to comfort him, the way Job's friends came to comfort him when his sons and daughters died. But the comfort of men is helpless; and as Job said to his friends: "*Miserable comforters are you all*" (Job 16: 2).

Most probably they tried to comfort Ephraim by reminding him of his father Jacob's blessing on him, when he put his right hand on his head, refusing to move it to that of his older brother Manasseh; confirming to their father Joseph that his descendants will be a multitude of nations (Genesis 48: 19).

"And when he went in to his wife, she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Beriah, because tragedy had come upon his house" (23)

Being granted a son; although it gave him some comfort, yet his tragedy was so tough that he called the newborn 'Beriah'

“Beriah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (in labor) or (a grant). Four persons in the Holy Book bore this name. God did not grant him a son to replace those he thought he had lost; because no man would replace another; and everyone has his own unique personality, talents, and mission. Hence, when God gave back to job double what he has lost, he did not give him double the number of his sons and daughters who died, because they are never lost.

Of the faulty expressions said by some in case of the death of a son or a daughter: [May the Lord grant you what will take his or her place]. God may give us back what we lost of possessions or honor; but we do not lose those who departed, to grant us someone else to replace them.

“Now his daughter was Sheerah, who built lower and upper Beth Horon and Uzen Sheerah” (24)

“The upper Beth Horon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (house of the cave); a name by which two villages are called, on the border between Ephraim and Benjamin, 12 miles north of Jerusalem, also called 'lower and upper Beth Horon'; on account of that one of them was built on high land, while the other was built on low land.

“Sheerah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a relative); daughter of Ephraim; who built the lower and upper Beth Horon and Uzen Sheerah (24)

“Uzen Sheerah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the portion of Sheerah); the name of a village built by Sheerah, daughter of a man of Ephraim, also called Ephraim (24); its location is where Beth Serah is nowadays, 3 miles south-west of the lower Beth Horon.

*“and Rephah was his son, as well as Resheph, and
Telah his son, Tahan his son” (25)*

“Rephah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (wealth) (25)

“Reshaph”; A Hebrew name, meaning (flame)

“Telah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a break); an Ephraimi, most probably from Beriah’s side (25)

“Tahan”; A Hebrew name, meaning (camp); a founder of a family.

*“Laadan his son, Ammihud his son,
Elishamah his son” (26)*

“Laadan”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (thick-necked); an Ephraimi name, an ancestor of Joshua.

“Ammihud”; A Hebrew name, meaning (my uncle is honorable); father of Elishah, grandfather of Joshua; head of an Ephraimi during the maze of the wilderness (26)

“Elishamah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God heard); son of Ammihud, and one of the heads of Ephraim at the beginning of their journey in the wilderness; an ancestor of Joshua (26)

*“Nun his son, and Joshua his
son” (27)*

“ **Joshua (or Yehoshua, or Jeshua) the son of Nun**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is salvation), an eye-witness of God’s work with Moses and Aaron, during the plagues on Egypt, and the exodus from it.

He was a disciple of the prophet Moses, and his personal assistant, all along the time of the wilderness; chosen by God to replace Moses after his death (Joshua 1: 1; Numbers 27: 18-23); brought forth the people of God into the promised land, and drove out the pagan nations. He most probably refers to Jesus Christ, who, alone, opens the gates of heaven before us, and brings us forth into the heavenly Canaan, and gave us the right of eternal inheritance.

He was chosen by Moses to be one of those whom he sent to spy the promised land; and, together with Caleb the son of Jephunneh, came back to invoke the spirit of hope in the people, contrary to what the other spies did, who stirred up in them the spirit of terror.

He took over the task of dividing the promised land, and got his own portion, after all the other tribes had theirs; for the successful leader would always give the priority to others.

+ Joshua the son of Nun, who became a perfect disciple of Moses the great teacher, was beautiful as well;

He also intended to have in himself the love of life; and to approach God by perfection;

He kept his purity during his ministry in the dome of time (the tabernacle of meeting); and to the people he came to be the second Moses

He fought to plant the word of God in the peoples; And the powers he did, testified to how exalted his beauty was.

+ Come and see the beauty of Joshua the son of Nun; and the astonishing wonders and powers done on his hands;

How, when he cried out to the swift river, it checked its running, as though by a wall;

How he divided the river, and crossed as though on dry land; followed by the people in great wonder (Joshua 3: 17);

How, crying out to the high walls of Jericho, they fell down before him (Joshua 6: 20)

How God stood on his side to destroy the Amorite kings (Joshua 2: 10)

How, by a command of God, stones of hail came down to destroy the Canaanites (Joshua 10: 11)

How he commanded the sun to hide her mighty power; and the moon responded to his word, and checked its path (Joshua 10: 13)

How he directed his voice toward the stratosphere, checked its speed, and stopped the movements of the stars.

(St. (Mar Jacob El-Serougi)

“Now their possessions and habitations were Bethel and its towns; to the east Naaran, to the west Gezer and its towns, and Shechem and its towns, as far as Ayyah and its towns” (28)

“Naaran”; a town in Ephraim (28); nowadays called ‘Ein-Dok’, in the valley of the Jordan, 5 miles north of Jericho.

“Gezer”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a portion), or a (bride’s dowry)

“And by the border of the children of Manasseh were Beth Shean and its towns, Tanaach and its towns, Megiddo and its towns, Dor and its towns. In these dwelt the children of Joseph, the son of Israel” (29)

“Beth Shean”; A Hebrew name, meaning (house of tranquility), a town 5 miles from the western side of the Jordan; It belonged to the children of Issachar; then was given to the tribe of Manasseh (29). After the captivity, it became the capital of ‘Decapolis’ (the ten cities), and was called (Skethopolis)

“Tanaach”; A Canaanite name, meaning (sandy land); a Canaanite city, mentioned about the year 1600 BC, when Pharaoh Tohetmus the third came against Magiddo; Its king was defeated and slain by Joshua the son of Nun; located within the border of Issachar, but was given to Manasseh (29).

“Magiddo”; A city of Manasseh, within the territory of Issachar; was before a royal Canaanite city, then overcome by Joshua (29)

“Dor”; A Canaanite name, meaning (a dwelling place).

7- ASHER WHO ENJOYS THE OIL OF GRACE:

Jacob, his father, prophesied that he will have a multitude of goods; And Moses prophesied that he will dip his foot in oil (Deuteronomy 33: 24). Both prophesies were realized; as the tribe of Asher enjoyed a fertile lands rich with olive trees, from which oil is extracted. The produce of his land was so rich to export to the other tribes. Even though his portion was geographically more distant from Jerusalem than the other tribes, yet, being located on the coast, they could import merchandise and sell it to the other tribes. This tribe refers to the flood of grace in the life of those who spiritually strive.

- + Let Your grace, O Lord, the life-giving Spirit, the player on the strings of my heart, to produce a harmonious tune.

- + For the grace, there is an eternal house; for which she cares and would never forsake, as a compassionate mother. Like an infant who thinks that

there is no other woman in the world but she who suckles him; so the soul that loves God thinks of Him... Wherever a true Christian is, he dwells in God, and God dwells in him.

- + Grace, having become a mother for the earth, she supplicated to the Lord, saying: [Enough of folly for the earth! Come on down, O Lord, and save it from vanity]. ... Her request was well received before the divine presence; and the Merciful Physician was sent to the sick.

- + Grace established the world, and carries it, lest it would fall. She is like a hen that stretch its wings over its chicks to gather and keep them. She portrays a model of the Divinity who spread His mercies over all creation to protect them.

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

“The sons of Asher were: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Sarah” (30)

“Imnah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (prosperity and success); the firstborn of Asher; and a chief of a tribe (30)

“Ishvah”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (equal); Ashir’s second son.

“Ishvi”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (equal); Ashir’s third son.

“Beriah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (clever)

“Sarah”; A Hebrew name; claimed to be the only daughter of Asher, or she is mentioned because of her strong personality and great beauty.

“The sons of Beriah were Heber and Malchiel, who was the father of Birzaith” (31)

“Heber”; A Hebrew name, meaning (partnership) or (a partner)

“Malchiel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God reigns); grandson of Asher (31)

“Birzaith” A Hebrew name, meaning (fountain of olives)

“And Heber begot Japhlet, Shomer, Hotham, and their sister Shua” (32)

“Japhlet”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God rescues) (33)

“Shomer”; A Semite name, meaning (A Keeper or guard); also called “Shamer”

“Hotham”; A Hebrew name, meaning (A seal or a ring)

“Shua”; A Semite name; Heber’s daughter.

“The sons of Japhlet were Pasach, Bimhal, and Ashphath; these were the children of Japhlet” (33)

“Pasach”; A name, most probably Aramite, meaning (divider)

“Bimhal”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (at my ease)

“Ashphath”; son of Japhlet; grandson of Heber

“The sons of Shemer were Ahi, Rohgah, Jehubbah, and Aram” (34)

“Ahi”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (my brother), or an abbreviation of Ahia (34)

“Rohgah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (dust) or (loud noise); A chief of the children of Asher

“Jehubbah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (hides); A chief of Asher; sometimes came as Hubbah

“And the sons of his brother Helem were Zophah, Imna, Shelesh, and Amal” (35)

“Helem”; A Hebrew name, meaning (strength); he is probably ‘Hotham’, mentioned in (32)

“Zophah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a Jug) or (a jar); a chief of Asher

“Imna”; A Hebrew name, meaning (he denies)

“Shelesh”; A Hebrew name, meaning (obedient); a hero among the children of Asher

“Amal”; A Hebrew name, meaning (work); a contemporary of David.

“The sons of Zophah were Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, and Imrah” (36)

“Suah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (sweeper)

“**Harnephar**”; probably an Egyptian name referring to Horus

“**Shual**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (fox)

“**Imrah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (resists)

*“Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Jithran,
and Beera” (37)*

“**Bezer**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a stronghold)

“**Hod**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (glory); A head of his father’s house; a mighty man of valor; and a leader of a company in war (37-39)

“**Shamma**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (desolation); a chief of Asher

“**Shilshah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (triple or triangle); A chief of Asher

“**Jithran**”; A Semite name, meaning (favor); the same ‘Jether’ (38)

“**Beera**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a well)

*“The sons of Jether were Jephunneh, Pispah,
and Ara” (38)*

“**Jether**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (favor); Two bore this name:

- 1- A man whose name came in the genealogies of Judah, then disappeared after Ezra (37)
- 2- A son of Asher (38); most probably ‘Jethran the son of Zophah (37)

“**Jephunneh**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (arranges); A chief of Asher

“**Ara**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (lion); A chief of Asher

“The sons of Ulla were Arah, Haniel, and Rizia” (39)

“**Ulla**”; Head of his father’s house in Asher (39)

“**Arah**”: A Hebrew name, meaning (a traveler). A chief of Asher.

“**Haniel**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Grace of God) or (Compassion of God)

“**Rizia**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (cheerful); a chief of Asher

“All these were the children of Asher, heads of their fathers’ houses, choice men, mighty men of valor, chief leaders. And they were recorded by genealogies among the army fit for battle; their number was twenty-six thousand” (40)

Although the number of the men of war of the whole tribe would not compare to those of the other tribes; yet according to some, the tribe of Asher was distinguished for their wisdom; who cared, not for the great number, as much as for being mighty men of valor.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 7

YOUR COMFORTS, O LORD, BRING PLEASURE TO MY SOUL

+ The tribe of Issachar were distinguished for strength and diligence in work;
He was not offended when his father likened him to a donkey;
For he was strong, and never ceased working;
None among them knew the spirit of slothfulness or idleness;
I do not seek a specific work;
But grant me the perpetual faithfulness in practicing the work;
Let me hear Your voice, saying “*You have been faithful with a few things, I will put yo in charge of many things*” (Matthew 25: 21)

+ You do not despise the work of any man;
But You set on Your right hand in Your kingdom, him who is honest and faithful;
Let me work by Your Holy Spirit, who grants me faithfulness

+ I shall never suffer despair, because of my low position in the society or in the church;
And I shall not fall into pride because of an authority You granted me;
But I shall cherish honesty, faithfulness, love, and fellowship;
I shall cherish You, o Source of every virtue.

+ If king Saul turned into a ravenous wolf;
Yet, by sound love without hypocrisy, David earned the love of Jonathan Saul's son;
He, as well, earned the love of many mighty men of valor, relatives of Saul;
Grant me, O Lord, to love all mankind;
You are able to turn the ravenous wolves into meek lambs;
I trust Your grace; wil bring forthl “*Out of the eater, something to eat; Out of the strong, something sweet*” (Judges 14:14)
Grant me not to hasten to judge men;
For many have turned like Your angels in their last moments;

Grant me to imitate You, O Son of David;
To close the door of friendship before no one;
By You I would jump with love into the hearts of many, to let them become
my, and Your friends;

+ Ephraim's brothers could not comfort him when his sons were killed;
You gave him a son, yet not to replace his killed sons;
For they were still living with their souls that death cannot kill;

+ How amazing! The wild animals mostly cooperate with, and support their
own race;

While mankind devour one another
With Your compassion, You did not provide us with the fangs of lions;
So as not to tear one another apart;
Nor the huge size of elephants,
So as not to suffocate their breath;
The wild animals live in peace with their own race;
As for man, his enemies are the members of his own household.

+ Grant me, O Lord, the true freedom, together with the tribe of Naphtali;
To set forth by the wings of the Spirit, as though to heaven;
Where the ancient serpent cannot reach me to swallow me up;
And where the love of the world cannot hinder my path;
Let me fly to You, together with my brethren, to find comfort in Your divine
bosoms;

+ Grant me, together with the daughters of Zelophehad, of the children of
Manasseh.
To seek the eternal inheritance;
For You are only preoccupied with letting me settle down in Your bosoms
forever.

+ Grant me, together with Joshua the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim,
To hear Your voice, saying: "*As I was with Moses, I shall be with you*";
So as not to be disturbed by the afflictions, nor be confused because of
the weak;

For the church is Your body, you bring forth up to Your heavens;
On her, You pour Your splendor, to become the subject of wonder and
amazement in the sight of the heavenly creatures;

+ Let me be attached to You; For Your fatherly bosoms, give warmth to my
life;

Pour the oil of Your grace in my depths;
Like a mother to me; You would never let me in need of anything;
How amazing is the motherhood of Your grace;
That embraces every true believer, as though he is its only child;
Let Your grace work in me;
To bear the spirit of compassionate motherhood toward all mankind.



CHAPTER 8

THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN AND THE DESCENDANTS OF SAUL

For the second time he talks about the children of Benjamin, yet with a different goal; namely, in reference to the issues pertaining to the kingdom of God.

- 1- The genealogy here, brings us forth to Saul and his household, to refer to the enthronement of the first king of Israel according to the human mind; who had physical features sought by the people in the king, by which to boast before the surrounding nations; and to be appreciated and honored by them. Yet, although having the body stature, strength, and beauty, he failed to realize the portrait of the divine kingdom in his own life and worship, as well as in his dealings with the people; and had to be removed to pave the way for the enthronement of David as a king according to the choice and the council of the divine grace.

- 2- The second issue was to present the possibilities of the tribe of Benjamin; in which were found mighty men of valor, capable of bearing the bow. Yet this power could not support the young Saul, when the mighty Goliath stood defying the Lord of host; nor support him to care for the people; for he was only preoccupied with his own popularity, reputation, and personal honor. And ultimately, it could not save him, and his sons, from death in shame and reproach in the last battle against the Palestinians; to realize God's plan and promises for David to be enthroned in his place.

- 3- With the horrible persecution of Saul against David, and his persistent attempts to get rid of him, some Benjamites and Saul's brethren, started to be drawn to David, even during the life of Saul. Feeling that God was with him; they attached themselves to David, and the relation of the two tribes: 'Judah and Benjamin' got stronger with time, to become one kingdom, including some of those defected from the northern kingdom, or driven out of it. Then the two tribes were taken captives to Babylon, and from there they returned together.

The book follows the genealogies of the tribe of Benjamin, with a special reference to Saul and Jonathan.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------|
| 1- The tribe of Benjamin | 1 – 32 |
| 2- The children of Saul | 33 – 40 |

1- THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN:

“Now Benjamin begot Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, Aharah the third” (1)

“**Bela**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (swallowing).

“**Ashbel**”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning a portrait of ‘Ashbaal’, the founder of a family that carries his name.(1)

“**Aharah**”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (a follower of the brother).

“Nohah the fourth, and Raphah the fifth” (2)

“**Nohah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (rest). The fourth son of Benjamin. He did not found a family like his brothers, nor his name was mentioned among those who accompanied Jacob when he set forth to Egypt. He probably was born in Egypt.

“**Raphah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (healed), or (God healed) (2).

“The sons of Bela were Addar, Gera, Abihud” (3)

“Addar”; A Hebrew word, probably meaning (width) or (greatness). In some Hebrew and Greek documents, this name came as ‘Ard’, which, most probably, is more correct.

“Gera”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (who resided with God) the name of a man of Benjamin, and of a grandson of Benjamin by Bela (3, 5, 7)

“Abihud”; A Hebrew name, meaning (father of reverence) or (my father is reverent)

“Abishua, Naaman, and Aboah”

(4)

“Abishua”; A Hebrew name, meaning (father of salvation)

“Naaman”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Paradise)

“Aboah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (brotherly); Probably the same person mentioned by the name of ‘Ahijah’ in verse 7 of the same chapter.

“Gera, Sheshuphan, and Hiram”

(5)

“Shephupham” (or Shephuphan) A Hebrew name, meaning (a serpent); A Benjamite chief of the family of the Shephuphamites.

“Horam”; A Phoenician and Hebrew name, meaning (the brother is exalted); probably the son of Bela.

“And these are the sons of Ehud, who were the heads of the fathers’ houses of the inhabitants of Geba, and who forced them to move to Manahath” (6)

“Ehud”; A Hebrew name, meaning (union); he was a left-handed judge, of the tribe of Benjamin (12-30)

“Geba”; A Hebrew word, meaning (a hill)

Connecting between the crying out of the people after 18 years, and God sending Ehud the left-handed as a deliverer, the scholar Origen says

+ It is written: *“So the children of Israel served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years”* (Judges 3: 14) *“The children of Israel cried out to the Lord ,the Lord raised up a deliverer for them, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man”* (Judges 3: 15):

What kind of Man did the Lord send to deliver the people of Israel?

He had in his soul nothing (left) to do; but had a (right) hand on both sides; hence called ‘left-handed’.

He was qualified to become a leader of the people, and a judge to the church; who does no (left); and “his left hand does not know what his right hand is doing” (Matthew 6: 3). He was (right-handed) in both faith and works, had nothing of the works of those on the left hand, to whom the Lord says: *“Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matthew 25: 41). According to the spiritual concept, I believe that all saints should be called ‘left-handed’; and on the contrary, the devil and his angels should be called ‘those on the left hand’; on account of that they do nothing but what is (left), that would lead to the eternal fire prepared for the people of the left.

Let us see now, what that left-handed judge has done: *“By him, the children of Israel sent tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Ehud made himself a dagger (it was double-edged and a cubit in length), and fastened it under his clothes on his right thigh”* (Judges 3: 15-16). You may see that all what that ‘left-handed’ man did was ‘right-handed’; he carried his dagger on his right thigh to kill the king of Moab. As we already said, those, whom their God set for the salvation and the liberation of His people Israel; those judges or deliverers who bear the portrait of a multitude of heavenly host (Luke 2: 13) whom God sends to support and help those who cry out to Him from their whole heart, on whom, through their change by repentance, the divine mercy will dwell.

This conform to other episodes in the Holy Book, where we read in the Book of Exodus, how our fathers the people of Israel were serving for a long time, the Egyptians and their cruel Pharaoh, making mud bricks (Exodus 1: 14); and how they cried out to the Lord ; and *“their cry out for help rose up to God”* (Exodus 2: 23).

How God brought them out by Moses before all; and how He sent His angel to destroy every firstborn of the Egyptians; yet did not touch those of the Israelites (Exodus 11: 5-7) ; which proclaims that it was a heavenly power that brought the people of God out of the yoke of bondage, and brought perdition upon the Egyptians. Something similar, along history, happened against the Assyrians, led by king Sennecherib, when God sent His angel to liberate His people from the siege, and eminent perdition, and he killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand in one evening (2 Kings 19: 35).

That is why, for the same reasons, we should be aware, when we are delivered into captivity because of our sins, we have to cry out to the Lord;

yet not by the mouth, but by the heart, that from it, a fountain of tears will come out of our eyes (Jeremiah 9: 1); *“that all night I make my bed swim , I drench my couch with my tears”* (Psalm 6: 6). If we turn away from the ways of evil, not to go back to them again; if we stop being proud and arrogant; God will send to us His heavenly power, by which we can be liberated from the hold of the devil of bondage; a power that provide us with everything good and of benefit; and by which we forsake *“the wide gate and the broad way that leads to destruction”* (Matthew 7: 13). God calls on us to walk in the right way, He who said about Himself: *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”* (John 14: 6); Jesus Christ, our Lord, *“to whom belong the glory and the dominion, forever and ever, Amen”* (1 Peter 4: 11).

(The scholar Origen)

“Naaman, Ahijah, and Gera, who forced them to move. He begot Uzza and Ahihud” (7)

“Ahijah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (my brother)

“Uzza”; A Hebrew name, meaning (strength), or (Jehovah is the strength).

“Ahihud”; A Hebrew name, meaning (brother of union).

“And Shaharaim begot children in the country of Moab, after he had sent away Hushim and Baara his wives” (8)

“Shaharaim”; (or Shahraim) A Hebrew name, meaning (the two dawns); a father of a big family (8)

The Old Testament, sometimes, refers, with no comments, to divorce and marrying many wives; Yet that does not mean that God is in favor of any of them; having proclaimed that He hates divorce (Malachi 2: 15-16); And the Lord Christ confirms that: *“Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it was not so”* (Matthew 19: 8).

“**Hushim**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (haste) or (excitement)

“**Baara**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (burnt up); the ex-wife of Shahraraim.

*“By Hodesh his wife he begot Jobab, Zibia,
Mesha, Malcam”* (9)

“**Hodesh**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (A crescent) (9). The wife of Shahraraim.

“**Jobab**”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (screams); a name of two Benjamite chiefs (9-18)

“**Zibia**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a deer)

“**Malcam**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (their king); A Benjamite chief.

*“Jeuz, Sachiah, and Mirmah. These were his
sons, head of their fathers’ houses”* (10)

“**Jeuz**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a listener to sermon); a Benjamite chief, son of Shahraraim by his wife Hodesh.

“**Sachiah**”; A Hebrew name, most probably meaning (Come back, O Jehovah)

“Mirmah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (cheating); born to Shaharaim in Moab by his wife Hodesh.

“And by Hushim he begot Abitub, and Elpaal”

(11)

“Abitub”; A Hebrew name, meaning (my father is good) or (goodness) (11)

“Elpaal”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God did); A head of fathers’ house (1, 8, 11, 12, 18).

“The sons of Elpaal were Eber, Misham, and Shemed, who built Ono and Lod with its towns” (12)

“Eber”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Crossed over); Two Benjamites bore this name; one, the son of Elpaal; and the other the son of Shashak (12, 22, 25)

“Misham”; A Hebrew name, meaning (swift)

“Shemed”; A Hebrew name, meaning (guard)

“Ono”; A Hebrew name, meaning (strong); the name of a city in Benjamin, built by Shemed, a Benjamite

“Ono and Lod”; No mention of them came among the cities of Benjamin in (Joshua 18: 21-28). ‘Lod’ is ‘Lydda’ in (Acts 9: 32).

“and Beriah and Shema, who were heads of their fathers’ houses of the inhabitants of Aijalon, who drove out the inhabitants of Gath” (13)

“Shema”; A Hebrew name, meaning (news); One of the heads of fathers who drove away the inhabitants of Gath.

“Aijalon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (an Oak tree); a town that belonged to the tribe of Dan (Joshua 19: 43), then was given to Benjamin, then to Judah, then to Benjamin, in the days of Rehoboam (1 Chronicles 11: 1)

“Ahio, Shashak, Jeremoth” (14)

“Ahio”; A Hebrew name, meaning (brotherly) or (brother of Jehovah); More than one person bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- A Benjamite, of the children of Alpaal (14)
- 2- A Benjamite , the son of Jeoel from his wife Maacah (8: 29)

“Shashak; A Hebrew name, meaning (a desire); A Benjamite, one of the sons of Alpaal (14, 25)

“Jeremoth”;A Hebrew name, meaning (swollen), (huge) or (tall)’ A head of a Benjamite family (14); probably the same ‘Jeroham’.

“Zebadiah, Arad, Eder” (15)

“Zebadiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah gave); Nine persons of little importance in the Old Testament were so called, among whom was the son of Beriah, and the son of Alpaal.

“Arad”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Zebra)

“Eder”; A Hebrew name, meaning (herd); son of Alpaal.

“Michael, Ispah, and Joha, were the sons of Beriah” (16)

“Michael”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Who is like God?)

“Ispah”; A Benjamite chief; son of Beriah

“Joha”; A Benjamite chief (16)

“Beriah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (clever); A Benjamite chief

“Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber” (17)

“Mushullam”; A Hebrew name, meaning (he who got his reward); a name of three Benjamite persons

“Hizki”; A Hebrew name, meaning (my strength) or an abbreviation of Hezekiah); son of Alpaal

“Heber”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Partnership) or (partner); son of Shaharaim from Elpaal.

“Ishmerai, Jizliah, and Jobab, were the sons of Elpaal” (18)

“Ishmerai”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah guards); son of Elpaal

“Jizliah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (eternal); dwelt in Jerusalem

“Jobab”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (screams); a name of two Benjamite chiefs

“Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi” (19)

“Jakim”; A Hebrew name, meaning (dwells)

“Zabdi”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God gave)

“Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel” (20)

“Elienai”; A Hebrew name, most probably an abbreviation of ‘Alihuenai’, meaning (his eyes are toward Jehovah); a Benjamite chief; son of Shimei

“Zillethal”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is a shade or a refuge); son of Shimei

“Eliel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Iel is God); son of Shimei

“Adaiah, Beraiah, and Shimrath were the sons of Shimei” (21)

“Adaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (whom Jehovah adorned); son of Shimei

“Beraiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (whom Jehovah created)’ a Benjamite chief; son of Shimei

“Shimrath”; A Hebrew name, meaning (A watcher or a guard); son of Shimei

“Shimei”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah hears); A Benjamite head of a house in Aijalon; was called ‘Shema’ in verse 13

“Ishpan, Eber, Eliel” (22)

“Ishpan”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (bald); A Benjamite chief, son of Shashak

“Abdon, Zichri, Hanan” (23)

“Abdon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (enslaved); Two bore this name:

- 1- A Benjamite son of Shashak
- 2- A Benjamite son of Jeoel the Gibeonite (8: 30; 9: 36)

“Hananiah, Elam, Antothijah” (24)

“Hananiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah granted) or (showed compassion); son of Sheshak

“Elam”; A Hebrew name of Achadian origin, meaning (heights); son of Sheshak; a head of a house in Benjamin

“Antothijah”; A Hebrew name, probably referring to ‘Anathoth; son of Sheshak

“Iphdeiah, and Penuel were the sons of Shashak” (25)

“Iphdeiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah redeems); son of Sheshak

“Penuel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (face of God); son of Sheshak

“Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah” (26)

“Shamsherai”; A Benjamite of the children of Jeroham (26)

”**Shehanah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is dawn); son of Jeroham

“**Athaliah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is exalted); son of Jeroham

“Jaareshiah, Elijah, and Zichri, were the sons of Jeroham” (27)

“**Jaareshiah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah plants); son of Jeroham

“**Elijah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (My God is Jehovah); The Greek and Arabic pronunciation of this name is ‘Elias’; son of Jeroham

“**Zichri**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (mentioned); a name of three Benjamite chiefs

“**Jeroham**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (on whom God has mercy) or (with whom He is pleased) his two sons were chiefs; dwelt in Jerusalem

“These were heads of the fathers’ houses by their generations, chief men; These dwelt in Jerusalem” (28)

Here, as in verse 32, he referred to Jerusalem; which will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter.

“Now the father of Gibeon, whose wife’s name was Maacah, dwelt at Gibeon” (29)

The goal of the author here is to talk about the ancestors and descendants of Saul in an indirect way; For the relationship that binds the names mentioned here is meant to present the family which was rejected and was replaced by the family of David.

“Gibeon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a hill); where the ancestors of Saul dwelt for some time, and had influence.

“Father of Gibeon”; namely head of the city of Gibeon (35); Gibeon is mentioned in (Joshua 9: 10)

“Maacah”; A Semite name, meaning (injustice); the name of the wife of Jeoel father of Gibeon; from whom Saul descended.

“And his firstborn son was Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Nadab” (30)

“Zur”; A Semite name, meaning (a rock); son of the founder of Gibeon

“Nadab”; A Hebrew name, meaning (generous); son of ‘Jeoel’ and ‘Maacah’; a head of a household in Gibeon

“Gedor, Ahio, Zecher” (31)

“Gedor”; A Hebrew name, meaning (A stronghold or walled place); son of Jeoel; and brother of Ner and Kish, ancestors of Saul (30-31)

“Zecher”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a memorial)

“and Mikloth, who begot Shimeah. They also dwelt alongside their relatives in Jerusalem, with their brethren” (32)

“Mikloth”; A Hebrew name, meaning (disobeyed)

“Shimeah”; son of Mikloth; dwelt in Jerusalem.

3- DESCENDANTS OF SAUL:

“Ner begot Kish, Kish begot Saul, and Saul begot Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-Baal” (33)

“Ner”; A Hebrew name, meaning (light or a lamp); son of Jeoel and Maacah, and father of Kish, father of Saul

“Saul”; Saul the son of Kish was the first king of Israel. Concerning his body stature, He had an ideal appearance as a king; and showed some kind of humility, courage, and generosity, when he was chosen as a king (1 Samuel 9). He obeyed God at the beginning of his reign, and achieved great conquests and success. Then he soon fell into pride, and attempted to take priesthood by force. Depending on himself, and caring for his popularity, not by walking according to the will of God, isolated him from his people, and made him lose much; and even destroyed his personality. Trying to draw every mighty man of valor to work with him, yet not for the glory of God, but to the account of the growth of his popularity; made even his own relatives turn their backs to him. His attempts several times to kill David, and directing all his energy and possibilities to get rid of him, led to his own failure and not to that of David.

“Jonathan”; Son of Saul; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah gave); Contrary to his father, he was characterized by courage, faithfulness, good leadership, and trusting in God. Although he was the heir of the throne, yet he believed that God has chosen David for the throne, he so loved him that he became a close friend to him, saved his life from his father’s attempts to kill him (1 Samuel 14-31) and did not envy David because of his conquests and popularity; despite of the warnings of his father that David will take the throne away from him.

“Malchishua”; A Hebrew name, meaning (The king is salvation

“Abinadab”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Father is generous)

“Esh-Baal”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Man of Baal); the first name of ‘Ish-Bosheth’, the son of Saul; namely (a naked man); changing his name was meant as a despise of Baal.

“The son of Jonathan was Merib-Baal; and Merib-Baal begot Micah” (34)

“Merib-Baal”; He is ‘Mephibosheth’ son of Jonathan, and grandson of Saul. The word Baal was replaced by ‘Bosheth’, as a despise.

Mephibosheth is a Hebrew name, meaning (taking the idols away)..

The two names bound to the idol Baal: ‘Esh-Baal’ and ‘Merib-Baal’ were changed in (2 Samuel 2: 8, 9, 5) to Ish-Bosheth and Mephibosheth.

When he was 5 years old, Mephibosheth fell from the hands of his governess and became lame his whole life, David searched for him, took him to live in his palace, and gave him back what belonged to his father Jonathan . Yet, when he showed some signs of treason during the rebellion of Absalom the son of David, he first took from him what was his, and gave it to ‘Ziba’ his servant, then, having compassion on him, he gave half of it to Ziba , and gave him back the other half.

Why was the change of the two names mentioned in the second book of Samuel, and not in the books of Chronicles?

The second book of Samuel was the holy Hebrew book in the second part of the prophecies (Nebiwim), which were read in the synagogue, and it was not befitting to mention the name of an idol (Baal); hence it was replaced by (bosheth),

meaning (my disgrace). Whereas in the two books of the Chronicles, there was no need for this change; on account of that the two books were in the third part (Ketubim), namely (the writings), which were not read in the synagogue until recently. That shows that the texts of the Holy Book were bound to worship.

“Micah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (like Jehovah); son of Mephibosheth, or Merib-Baal; and grandson of Jonathan.

“The sons of Micah were Pithon, Melech, Tarea, and Ahaz” (35)

“Pithon”; a descendant of Jonathan son of Saul

“Melech”; A Hebrew name, meaning (king), a descendant of Jonathan, son of Saul

“Tarea”; A Hebrew name, meaning (crafty); a descendant of Jonathan, son of Saul

“Ahaz”; A Hebrew name, meaning (The Lord seized); a descendant of Jonathan, son of Saul

“And Ahaz begot Jehoaddah, Jehoaddah begot Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begot Moza” (36)

“Jehoaddah”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (Jehovah, come back); a descendant of Jonathan son of Saul.

“Alemeth”; A Hebrew name, meaning (hiding); a descendant of Saul (8: 36; 9: 42)

“Azmaveth”; A Hebrew name, meaning (death is powerful); a descendant of Jonathan.

“Zimri”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (Who is like wild cows). More than one bears this name, among whom are:

1-A Benjamite, a descendant of Jonathan son of Saul

2- A leader in the army of Israel, of half the chariots of ‘Elah’ son of ‘Baashah’ king of Israel; then rebelled against his master and killed him;

consummating the divine judgment on the house of Baashah. According to some, he was a descendant of Saul who tried to restore his old throne (1 Chronicles 8: 36).

“Moza”; A Hebrew name, meaning (exodus); a descendant of Saul

“Moza begot Binea, Raphah, his son, Eleasah his son, and Azel his son” (37)

“Bineah”; Son of Moza, a descendant of Jonathan son of Saul

“Raphah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah healed) or (God healed); a descendant of Saul

“Eleasah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God did); a descendant of Saul and Jonathan his son (33-370)

“Azel had six sons whose names were these: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan; All these were the sons of Azel” (38)

“Azal”; A Hebrew name, meaning (honorable); a descendant of Jonathan son of Saul

“Azrikam”; A Hebrew name, meaning (He rose to my help); More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- Son of Azel, a descendant of Jonathan (1 Chronicles 8: 38)
- 2- Son of Gerah, a descendant of Ahihud the Benjamite (1 Chronicles 8: 7)

“Bocheru”; A Hebrew name, meaning (firstborn); son of Azel

“Ishmael”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God hears)

“Sheariah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the might of Jehovah); a descendant of Saul

“Obadiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (servant of Jehovah); son of Azel; a descendant of Saul (8: 38; 9: 44)

“Hanan”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Compassionate, merciful, generous). More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- A famous Benjamite, son of Sheshak ((23)
- 2- Son of Azel; a descendant of Jonathan son of Saul (38)

“And the sons of Eshek his brother were Ulam his firstborn, Jeush the second, and Eliphelet the third” (39)

“Eshak”; A Hebrew name, meaning (cruelty); a descendant of Saul

“Ulam”; A Hebrew name, meaning (first); son of Eshek.; The children of Ulam were mighty men of valor.

“Jeush”; A Semite name, meaning (God helps); head of a fathers’ house; a descendant of Saul

“Eliphelet”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God saved him); son of Eshek

“The sons of Ulam were mighty men of valor – archers. They had many sons and grandsons, one hundred and fifty in all. These were the sons of Benjamin” (40)

- 1- It is to be noticed that, in the genealogies of all the tribes, there was no reference to any king of Israel after the dissension from the house of David; Nor any reference to the houses of Jeroboam, Baashah, Omri, and Jahu, on account of that they were all idol-worshippers.
- 2- He cared for the descendants of Jonathan the son of Saul for the sake of his loyalty and faithfulness in his friendship with David.
- 3- The genealogies ended by Ulam and his sons, whose family had a special fame in Benjamin, because of his numerous sons and grandsons, who reached 150; known for being mighty men of valor. The secret of their greatness was not their authority, social status, or riches, as much as for their service to their country in battles.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 8

IN THE MIDST OF THE DENSE THORNS, YOU PRESENT TO US, O LORD, BEAUTIFUL ROSES

- + It was not possible for the tribes of Israel to imagine the extent of corruption of the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 19-20)
 - The children of Benjamin became corrupt children of Bileal
 - Shamefully, they raped a concubine of a Levite all night
 - And in the morning they found her fallen at the entrance of the house, dead with her hands on the threshold
 - The Levite divided her body, and distributed its parts to the tribes of Israel.
 - All the tribes attacked Benjamin, and almost wiped out the whole tribe (Judges 21: 3)

- + From that tribe, came king Saul who disobeyed the Lord;
 - He disregarded the ark of the covenant; and in his affliction he sought the counsel of the medium and not God
 - Great was the bitterness that dwelt on the people of God because of this tribe.

- + In the midst of those serious thorns, God planted beautiful roses
 - That bore the fragrance of love and holiness;
 - What a rose, cared for by God, like Jonathan the son of Saul?
 - He did not care for inheriting the throne from his father;
 - As long as God has chosen David the man of God to inherit the throne;
 - He loved David like himself; and gave him his garment and sword;
 - He did his best to save the sweet psalmist of Israel from the hands of his evil father Saul.

- + Many of the relatives of Saul; the mighty men of valor,

For the sake of the Lord, have forsaken Saul, and joined David;
They preceded many tribes to enthrone David over all Israel'
They became David's men and guards; for he was the man of God.

- + When the tribes joined Jeroboam who divided the kingdom of Israel;
Benjamin persisted on being attached to the kingdom of Judah;
They were like roses of love and faithfulness to God, and to His
commandments and ordinances;

- + Yes, indeed, Benjamin will testify on the great day of the Lord;
That God planted them as a joyful garden that bears the sweet fragrance
of Christ;
In the midst of a tribe that had its serious sins and faults;

- + Teach me, O Lord, how not to despise any congregation for the sake of
those corrupt among them;
For in the midst of the darkness, there is always the light of Your grace
shining on many;
In the midst of the dense darkness, splendid stars glitter to testify to Your
grace.



CHAPTER 9

THE GENRALOGIES AND THE RETURN FROM CAPTIVITY

RECORDING THE END OF GENEALOGIES

Historically, this chapter comes at the end the second book of Chronicles; But by putting it here, the author intends to confirm that the return from captivity is an extension of the Israelite nation; And that God, in His love for His people, does not wish to separate between the people before captivity and after it. And the way, the worship in the tabernacle of meeting and the temple, before the captivity, was characterized by order, together with joy and exultation, So it will remain after captivity.

The author put this chapter here, to show his care for the people in his time, and their need as a nation for the return to God, so that what dwelt upon their fathers, who fell into captivity because of their idol-worship, would not dwell upon them;. The author feared lest those returning from captivity, would get preoccupied with the formal reforms, and with care for material issues at the expense of the divine commandment.

In the previous chapter we saw the beginning of royalty according to the body (Saul). Here, the author shows us the ultimate desolation of the people; when Judah was captivated to Babylon because of their treason against God.

According to human mind, Judah, geographically, was on the way between Babylon and Egypt, at a serious location between two strong competitive nations; Yet its desolation was not because of its geographical location, nor of taking the side of one of them against the other; as much as it was because of its treason against God.

Here in this chapter, he talks about the return of a weak few to Jerusalem and Judah, as mentioned in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

This chapter came bound to the eleventh chapter of the book of Nehemiah, although differs from it in significance. Here, the author reveals what is not proclaimed by Nehemiah; namely that some of the children of Ephraim and Manasseh, who were probably left in the land of Canaan after the captivation of their tribes, came to Jerusalem and resided in it together with the children of Judah and Benjamin.

The ninth chapter binds between the past, since Adam, until the fall of Jerusalem and the captivation of Israel, and the present with the return of some from captivity. If the past of Israel was glorious, captivity would not be able to kill such a past; and those returning from captivity would enter into the same glorious procession, as a people committed to belong to God, the secret of their life and glory.

It is befitting of the believers not to let themselves be destroyed by captivity and its bitten events; but to put their hope in God who cares for His people and pours the heavenly joy into their hearts.

The author refers to four groups of those who returned from captivity: the people, the priests, the Levites, and the servants of the temple. Among the people, he referred to Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh; showing that all Israel were, therefore, represented in those returning; as Judah and Benjamin represented the south; while Ephraim and Manasseh represented the north, being of the most important of the northern tribes.

Most of the list here appears again in Nehemiah 11, being a list of the heads of households who lived in Judah in the days of Nehemiah. However, the list mentioned in Nehemiah disregarded Ephraim and Manasseh.

At the end of the ninth chapter, the genealogies of Saul were mentioned again, turning from the genealogies to the story with which the book is preoccupied; namely, establishing the kingdom of David; which, although had taken the position of leadership as a royal tribe, yet, its foremost care was the temple and the worship of God.

The story of Saul came without details; for its goal was that his life ended by his bones cast in disgrace by the enemies; before some good people collected them, together with the bones of his children, to bury them.

Saul sinned, by not listening to the word of God (1 Samuel 13: 8-15; 15: 1-33); and sought the counsel of the medium (1 Samuel 28: 7-19).

This book presents to us two very important persons: Saul, the first king of Israel, as an example of how a king should not be; showing a practical model of the fruit of sins and its results in the life of the later kings (2 Chronicles 12: 2; 21: 10; 25: 20); And David, an ideal king; as a living example of how a king should be.

It starts by a great statement concerning keeping the genealogies:

“So all Israel was recorded by genealogies, and indeed, they were inscribed in the book of the kings of Israel; But Judah was carried away captives to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness” (1)

Obviously, the genealogies of each of the tribes of Israel, were recorded and kept in the temple until the people were taken into captivity; but the records were carried to Jerusalem. And when the temple was rebuilt by the hands of the few who returned from captivity, they brought the records back to it; and by the time the Lord Christ was born, those records were intact. We can imagine that the enemies of the Lord Jesus had surely attempted to look attentively into his genealogy; For, the gospel according to St Matthew wrote the genealogy of St.

Joseph, from whom the Lord Jesus has taken the legal title of the throne of David; while the gospel according to St. Luke wrote the genealogy of the virgin St. Mary, from whom He took the genealogy of the blood for the throne of David. We know that those genealogies were not disputed by anyone, because they were very accurate, and at the disposal of whoever wished to examine them.

Obviously those records of genealogies were destroyed during the destruction of the temple in the year 70 AD by the hands of the Roman Titus; but what concerns us is that the book of the Chronicles followed the genealogies up to the time of captivity. And after the return of the few from captivity, the records of genealogies continued until the coming of the Lord Christ. Allowing for them to disappear after His life on earth; God intends to confirm to us that He is (very man of very man); and that the Lord Jesus Christ came as a descendant of Adam; as He is the second Adam, with no third one after Him. There are only two families: the family of Adam, and the family of God; the family of Adam is lost; and all of us were born in it, sinners and sojourners from God; which is obvious if we look at the world around us; as the whole human race are within the family of Adam; and "In Adam all die" (1 Corinthians 15: 22). But we have hope in Christ, the last or the second Adam, the Head of the other family; namely the family of God; for He creates many in this new family; and this genealogy goes back to Him alone "*the One born from the Spirit*"; For all those who believe in Christ the Savior, have been born from the water and the Spirit (John 3: 5) through the holy sacrament of baptism; belonging to the family of the last Adam. In this family there is life; for the Lord Jesus said: "*I am the Life*"; and He also said, "*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*" (John 10: 10) . The journey in Him shall be a journey to heaven, to His very presence

The rest of the ninth chapter concentrates on the tribe of Levi. By which ends the genealogy, the longest in the Holy Book; with nothing like it in the literature or the history of the world; starting from the first Adam, and ends in the last Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is important to notice certain omissions in the genealogies;

as for example, those of Cain and his family, on account of that his genealogy came to an end by the great flood; as is mentioned in the seventh chapter of the book of Genesis

The author left the genealogy of the tribe of Benjamin at the end of the list, to move from it to the story of the people, and to talk about Jerusalem that was on the southern border of the tribe of Benjamin.

The author describes their numerous responsibilities (23-34); giving special interest for the singers of praise in the temple (14-16); whose list of names came directly after that of the priests (10-13). He showed great appreciation to the choir of the temple; among their leaders were Asaph (15) and Jeduthun (16). There are some difference between the genealogies here and what came in Nehemiah; as the lists here and there include some names and leave some others, in Nehemiah. As for the numbers, they differ with the different times. The gatekeepers of the temple had an important role in keeping its sanctity.

1- Heads of fathers' houses from captivity	1 - 9
2- Priests from captivity	10 - 13
3- The system of the singers of praise	14 - 16
4- The system of gatekeepers	17 - 27
5- The duties of the gatekeepers	28 - 32
6- The duties of the singers of praise	33 - 34
7- The genealogy of king Saul	35 - 44

1- HEADS OF FATHERS' HOUSES FROM CAPTIVITY:

“So all Israel was recorded by genealogies, and indeed, they were inscribed in the book of the kings of Israel. But Judah was carried away captive in Babylon because of their unfaithfulness” (1)

Here, he tells us that the previously mentioned genealogies were collected from the books of the kings of Israel and Judah; not those written in the Holy Book, but in the civil records, which are trustworthy.

Together with one's personal responsibility for his own works, he is committed to pray for the sake of the sanctification of the congregation as a whole; lest the wrath of God would dwell upon all.

By "*all Israel*" he means Israel and Judah.

Captivation happened because the people as a whole have fallen into idol-worship; despite the continuous warnings to them by the Lord through His prophets.

As even those who did not pervert to idol-worship, have also fallen into captivity, it is befitting of the believer to cry out to God in repentance, and to return to Him; not just for his own sake, or that of his family, but for the sake of the whole congregation. Indeed, we shall not be judged for the sins of others, even those very close to us; but, with love, we are committed to desire, seek, and do our best for the salvation of all.

"And the first inhabitants who dwelt in their possessions in their cities were Israelites, priests, Levites, and the Nethinim" (2)

By "*the first inhabitants*", he means the first to return from captivity; for this chapter conforms to the eleventh chapter of Nehemiah.

"The Nethinim" A Hebrew name, meaning (the dedicated); came in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, to refer to the Gentiles who were assigned to serve the temple, like the Gibeonites (Joshua 9: 27), the captivated Midianites (Numbers 31: 47); and those assigned by David to help the chiefs in their ministry of the temple, and of the priests Levites (Ezra 8: 20); who were wood-cutters and water carriers. Although it was David who initiated the job of the Nethinim; yet the name

followed them later on; yet was only mentioned in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, and only once in the book of the Chronicles (9: 30). The number of the Nethinim was not sufficient for all services in the temple, particularly in the days of king Solomon.

“Now in Jerusalem, the children of Judah dwelt, and some of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim and Manasseh” (3)

The two tribes of Judah and Benjamin were the most prominent among those returning from captivity (Ezra 1: 5).

“Jerusalem”, Not considered a part of the promised land in the days of Joshua the son of Nun; was, accordingly, not given to any tribe, but remained in the possession of the Canaanites; particularly the ‘Jebusites’. Having been called ‘Jebus’, it was a stronghold, difficult to overcome; but the armies of David took it over in the year 992 BC; and he made it the capital of his kingdom (2 Samuel 5: 6-7). Hence, Jerusalem, contrary to other cities inhabited by the Israelites, was dwelt by several tribes.

Moving the Ark of the covenant into it, after making it the capital, Jerusalem became a religious center; and after the temple was built by Solomon, it became the dwelling place of priests, Levites, and other liturgical ministers (10-12).

By *“the children of Benjamin and the children of Ephraim and Manasseh”*, mentioned here, he means people of the tribes close to Jerusalem to the north, who worshipped the Lord, and united with Judah (2 Chronicles 30: 10, 18).

“Uthai the son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Imri, the son of Bani, of the descendants of Perez, the son of Judah” (4)

“Uthai”; A Hebrew name, meaning (he surpassed Jehovah); one of those who returned to Jerusalem after the captivity

“Ammihud”; A Hebrew name, meaning (My uncle is revered)

Omri; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (successful)

Imri; A Hebrew name, an abbreviation of ‘Imriah’

Bani; A Hebrew name, meaning (a building); probably an abbreviation of ‘Banaiah’

Perez; A Hebrew name, meaning (a gap).

“Of the Shilonites: Asaiah the firstborn and his sons” (5)

“Asaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah worked), the firstborn of the Shilonites (5)

“Of the sons of Zerah: Jeuel, and their brethren – six hundred and ninety” (6)

“The Shilonites”; The inhabitants of Shiloh; a family of Judah that resided in Jerusalem after captivity.

“Jeuel”; A Hebrew name, meaning (heals) or (keeps); More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- Father of Gibeon, a Benjamite ancestor of Saul
- 2- A descendant of Judah

“Of the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hassenuah” (7)

“**Sallu**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (consecrated); a Benjamite.

“**Meshillam**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (who got his reward); more than one bore this name, among whom were: The Benjamites: Meshillam son of Hodeviah (7), and Meshillam son of Shephatiah (8)

“**Hodaviah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (glory be to Jehovah)

“**Hassenuah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the hated)

“Ibneiah the son of Jeroham, Elah the son of Uzzi, the son of Michri; Meshullam the son of Shephatiah, the son of Reuel, the son of Ibrijah” (8)

“**Ibneiah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah builds), son of Jeroham and father of Reuel; they were probably two persons.

“**Elah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (An Oak tree)

“**Michri**”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (a price); a Benjamite, grandfather of Elah.

“**Shephatiah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah made judgment); a Benjamite who dwelt in Jerusalem after captivity.

“**Reuel**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (friend of God); a Benjamite chief

“And their brethren according to their generations – nine hundred and fifty-six. All these men were heads of a father’s house in their fathers’ houses” (9)

The names mentioned here, particularly those who returned to Jerusalem, were preoccupied with worshipping God with a flaring zeal. Even though the temple was not yet rebuilt; yet that did not dampen their zeal to worship God.

2- PRIESTS FROM CAPTIVITY:

“Of the priests: Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, and Jachin” (10)

“Jedaiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah knows)

“Jehoiarib”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah protests) or Jehovah strives); a descendant of Aaron, a member of the first group of priests in the days of David; and his family dwelt in Jerusalem.

“Jachin” A Hebrew name, meaning (abides); chief of the twenty-first group of priests in Jerusalem.

“Azariah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the officer over the house of God” (11)

“Azariah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Whom Jehovah helped); he was a great priest; Azariah got a special interest, although his role was supervising the cleanliness of the temple. The Holy Book cared to include his name in the genealogies, the same way it cared to include the names of priests and Levites who were responsible for teaching and singing praise; and even leaders who enjoyed high honor in the congregation. God’s appreciation for man is not based

upon the kind of work he does or his position in the society; as much as the purity of his heart and his faithfulness in doing his work. That is why The Lord commended those on the right hand on the great day of the Lord, saying: “*You were faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord*” (Matthew 25: 21).

“**Hilkiah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is my portion)

“**Zadok**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Just or righteous); a priest descendant of great priests.

“**Meraioth**”; Meaning (disobedience); a priest (11); son of Ahitub.

“**Ahitub**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (brother of kindness)

“Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchijah; Messai, the son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshillemith, the son of Immer” (12)

“**Adaiah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (adorned by Jehovah)

“**Jeroham**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (on whom God has mercy); the son of Ibneiah who dwelt in Jerusalem (8); a priest of the house of Malchijah.

“**Pachur**”; Probably an Egyptian name, meaning (portion of god Hurus); a founder of a family of priests; some of whom returned from Babylon.

“**Malchijah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah is the King)

“**Messai**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah’s work); a priest

“**Adiel**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the adornment is for God); son of ‘Jahzerah’, father of Messai, one of the heads of a priestly families.

“**Jahzerah**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (take care)

“**Meshillemith**”; A Hebrew name, meaning (punishment); a priest descendant of Immer

“**Immer**”; A Hebrew word, meaning (sheep); a priest in the days of David; the sixteenth group of priests were his descendants; and he probably was the ancestor of the priests mentioned in (1 Chronicles 9: 12).

“and their brethren, heads of their fathers’ houses – one thousand seven hundred and sixty. They were very able men for the work of the service of the house of God” (13)

Being the heads of their fathers’ houses, they were mighty men of valor, not in battles against enemies, nor in material possibilities, but in the service of the house of the Lord and in confronting vanity. It is as though the house of the Lord is a battle field; and it is befitting of the ministers of God to be mighty men of valor to stand against the devil himself, and the hosts of darkness.

3- THE SYSTEM OF THE SINGERS OF PRAISE:

Twenty-four groups of Levites practiced the singing of praise in the house of God, with an elaborate order and system; not as a job for earning their living, but as worship from hearts dedicated and consecrated to the Lord; whose mission was to present an experience of the deposit of heavenly life. The singers of praise were fathers who presented to the people the joyful and exultant life; and who found their happiness in the happiness of the people in God, the source of joy.

“Of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the sons of Merari” (14)

“Shemaiah”; Meaning (Jehovah hears); a Levite, supervisor over the outside work of the house of God in the days of Nehemiah (14)

“Hasshub”; A Hebrew name, probably meaning (of whom God thinks); a Merari Levite

“Azrikam”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God arose to help me); More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- The son of Azel; a descendant of Jonathan son of Saul (9: 44)
- 2- The son of Hashabiah, the son of Merari; a Levite

“Hashabiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah ordained or judged);

“Bakbakkar, Heresh, Galal, and Mattaniah, the son of Micah, the son of Zichri, the son of Asaph” (15)

“Bakbakkar”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a researcher); a Levite

“Heresh”; A Hebrew name, meaning (mute and deaf); a head of a Levite family working in the tabernacle in the year 445 BC

“Galal”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God rolled over....) a Levite. More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- A Levite (15)
- 2- Another Levite (16)

“Mattaniah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (A gift from Jehovah); a Levite singer, of the children of Asaph.

“Micah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Who is like Jehovah?); More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1-The son of Mephibosheth or Merib-Baal, grandson of Jonathan (9: 40-41)
- 2- A Levite, son of Zichri son of Asaph (15)

“Zichri”; A Hebrew name, meaning (mentioned); a Levite

“Asaph”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a grant); one of the Levite gatekeepers of the temple; responsible for the east gate through which the king used to enter (170)

“Obadiah the son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun, and Berechiah, the son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, who lived in the villages of the Netophathites” (16)

Most of the priests and Levites returning from captivity dwelt in Jerusalem (34); but few of them dwelt in the villages around it, for lack of space.

“Obadiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (servant of Jehovah). More than one bore this name, among whom were:

- 1- Son of Azel, a grandson of Jehoshaphat, son of Saul (44)
- 2- Son of Shemaiah, son of Elkanah; who dwelt in the villages of the Netophathites (16)
- 3- A Levite gatekeeper of the temple in the days of Nehemiah; probably the same Obadiah the son of Shemaiah (16)

“Jeduthun”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a thanks-giver) or a (praiser); a Levite; one of the three great singers appointed by David; and founder of a musical

family in the temple; his group worked in the temple after it was rebuilt after returning from captivity.

Berechiah"; A Hebrew name, meaning (blessed by God); a Levite son of Asa (16)

Asa"; A Hebrew name, meaning (the comforter) or (the physician); might be an abbreviation of 'Jehovah Asa', namely (the Lord healed); A Levite son of Elkanah who dwelt in the villages of the Netophathites after returning from captivity.

Elkanah"; A Hebrew name, meaning (God created) or (acquired); a Levite who dwelt in a village of the Netophathites.

The Netophathites"; Netopha was a town in Judah 5 miles south of Bethlehem (2: 54; Nehemiah 7: 26). After captivity 56 of its inhabitants returned to it. At the beginning it was not a portion of the Levites; but some of them and some singers dwelt in it after the return from captivity

4- THE SYSTEM OF GATEKEEPERS:

The gatekeepers occupy a prominent position among the officers of the temple (17-26), that goes back to the time of the wilderness; then continued their work in the days of Samuel and David in the tabernacle (23). They were known for their faithfulness (22); and were all descendants of Korah.

"And the gatekeepers were Shallum, Akkub, , Talmon, Ahiman, and their brethren. Shallum was the chief" (17)

Ahiman"; A Hebrew name, meaning (my brother is agrant); a Levite gatekeeper; responsible for the eastern gate through which the king enters

“Until then they had been gatekeepers of the camps of the children of Levi at the king’s gate n the east” (18)

The gatekeepers guarded the four entrances of the temple; opened the gates in the morning for those who enter to worship, and close them at night. They carried out, as well, daily chores in the temple, like cleaning, preparing the offerings and sacrifices, keeping away any unclean thing from entering into the temple; directing the worshippers to the desired locations, instructing them not to behave contrary to what befits the holiness of the sanctuary; and guarding the treasuries of the temple.

With all these duties, it was befitting of all who work in the house of the Lord to be faithful and loyal..

“Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his brethren, from his father’s house, the Korahites, were in charge of the work of the service, gatekeepers of the tabernacle. Their fathers had been keepers of the entrance of the camp of the Lord” (19)

The system of gate-keeping and other services in the house of the Lord was inherited from fathers to sons; since the days of David.

“Kore”; A Hebrew name.

“Eliasaph”; A Hebrew name, meaning (My father gathered plenty or an increase)

”Korah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (terror). His descendants lived and were famous in the service of the temple

“The Korahites”; the descendants of Korah; some of them were gatekeepers (31)

“And Phinehas the son of Eleazar had been the officer over them in the time past; the Lord was with him” (20)

“Phinehas”; An Egyptian name, meaning (the Nubian); the senior officer over the gatekeepers of the tabernacle; The weapon of Phinehas son of Eleazar was that *“The Lord was with him”*.

“Eleazar”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God helped)

“Zachariah the son of Meshelemiah was keeper of the door of the tabernacle of meeting” (21) ...

“Meshelemiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (whom Jehovah rewards); father of a gatekeeper in the days of David.

“All those chosen as gatekeepers were two hundred and twelve. They were recorded by their genealogy, in their villages. David and Samuel the Seer had appointed them to their trusted office” (22)

It was not allowed for anyone to be counted among the gatekeepers of the temple, unless he is registered in the records of genealogies, that confirm his descendance of Abraham.

If the prophet Samuel died before the enthronement of king David; yet it is obvious that he had partaken in organizing the worship; although this is mentioned nowhere else in the Holy Book.

“So they and their children were in charge of the gates of the house of the Lord, the house of the tabernacle, by assignment” (23)

The priests and the Levites , beside dedicating much time and effort in worshipping, they took care of the tools of service; helped by their families who did many works *“to let all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Corinthians 14: 40). All of them worked hard to let the congregation, when they come to worship, feel that they encounter the King of kings, in the fittest way.

“The gatekeepers were assigned to the four directions: the east, west, north, and south” (24)

King David, himself, desired to partake of the service of gate keeping the temple saying: *“A day in Your court is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness-”* (Psalm 84: 10)

“And their brethren in their villages had to come with them from time to time for seven days” (25)

On Saturdays, the group of gatekeepers who served for a week was replaced by a new group. They dwelt in their villages until the time of their shift to come to Jerusalem to serve.

“For in this trusted office were four chief gatekeepers, they were Levites. And they had charge over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God” (26)

“And they lodged all around the house of God because they had the responsibility, and they were in charge of opening it every morning” (27)

5- DUTIES OF THE GATEKEEPERS:

“Now some of them were in charge of the serving vessels, for they brought them in and took them out by count” (28)

Bringing the serving vessels in, and taking them out, were elaborately handled by weight and number, for they were very expensive (Ezra 8: 24-34).

“Some of them were appointed over the furnishing and over all the implements of the sanctuary, and over the fine flour and the wine and the oil and the incense and the spices” (29)

“And some of the sons of the priests made the ointment of the spices” (30)

“Mattithiah of the Levites, the firstborn of shallum the Korahite, had the trusted office over the things that were baked in the pans” (31)

“Mattithiah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (gift from Jehovah); A Korahite Levi, was responsible for the things that were baked in the pans (31)

“Shallum”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a reward); chief of the gatekeepers of the sanctuaries (17-19)

“Mechullam” member of the family of (Zadok), the high priest; a predecessor of Ezra, lived before Nebuchadnezzar put Jerusalem under siege.(11)

“And some of their brethren of the sons of the Kohathites were in charge of preparing the showbread for every Sabbath” (32)

Every Saturday, they used to take the old showbread away, and replace it with new bread (Leviticus 24: 8)

6- DUTIES OF THE SINGERS OF PRAISE:

“These are the singers, heads of the fathers’ houses of the Levites, who lodged in the chambers, and were free from other duties, for they were employed in that work day and night” (33)

They were relieved of doing any other work; of paying taxes, and of military service.

There were several groups of praise-singers; not for the duration of minutes or hours during the day, but all day and night. They were Levites, great leaders, heads of their fathers’ houses; for the ministry of singing praise was not a secondary ministry, but an essential work, that raises the people and the leaders up to the level of heavenly angelical choirs; it was befitting to practice it, not as a kind of routine or entertainment, but as a living encounter with God, praised by the heavenly hosts.

“These heads of the fathers’ houses of the Levites were heads throughout their generations. They dwelt in Jerusalem” (34)

Singing praise was a perpetual ministry that produces a heavenly joyful atmosphere. Having been completely dedicated to minister day and night, the singers of praise used to dwell in Jerusalem.

In verses 35 – 44, we notice the commitment to do everything decently and in order in the service of the house of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14: 40).

7- THE GENEALOGY OF KING SAUL:

“Jeiel the father of Gibeon, whose wife’s name was Maachah, dwelt at Gibeon” (35)

The author then goes back to the genealogies of king Saul, to set the stage for the battle of Gilboa (1000 BC), at the beginning of the next chapter, in which Saul died, and David was enthroned a king.

“Gibeon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (hill); the main city of the Horites of Canaan. After several generations, when Saul killed the Gibeonites, justice was done by killing and crucifying his seven sons. Gibeon became a portion of the Benjamites; and its common-lands were given to the children of Aaron. It was inhabited by the ancestors of Saul for some time, where they had influence (35)

“Maachah”; A Semite name, meaning (injustice or oppression); the name of Jeiel’s wife, from whom Saul descended.

*“His firstborn son was Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab”
(36)*

“Abdon”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the enslaved)

“Zur”; A Semite name, meaning (a rock); son of the founder of Gibeon,

“Baal”; A Semite name, meaning (lord), (master), of (husband); the name of a Canaanite god, son of god ‘El’, and husband of the goddess ‘Baalh, or Ashetoreth; known as god ‘Hadad’, of the fields, and fertility of livestock.

“Ner”; A Hebrew name, meaning (light or lamp); son of Jeiel and Maacha, and father of ‘Kish’ father of ‘Saul;.

“Nadab”; A Hebrew name, meaning (generous) a chief of his father’s house who dwelt in Gibeon.

*“Gedor, Ohio, Zechariah, and
Mikloth” (37)*

“Gedor”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a stronghold or a walled place); an ancestor of Saul.

“Mikloth”; A Hebrew name, meaning (disobeyed) (37-38)

*“And Mikloth begot Shimeam. They also dwelt alongside their
relatives in Jerusalem, with their brethren” (38)*

“Shimeam”; A Benjamite, son of Mikloth, who dwelt in Jerusalem.

*“Ner begot Kish, Kish begot Saul, and Saul begot Jonathan,
Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-Baal” (39)*

“Jonathan”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Jehovah gave)

“Malchishua”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the king is salvation)

“Abinadab”; A Hebrew name, meaning (The Father is generous)

“Esh-Baal”; A Hebrew name, meaning (man of Baal); the former name of Ishbosheth son of Saul (49)

*“The son of Jonathan was Merib-Baal, and Merib-Baal begot
Micah” (40)*

“Meri-Baal”; Also called Mephibosheth; a Hebrew name, meaning (taking idols away)

“The sons of Micah were Pithon, Melech, Tahrea, and Ahaz” (41)

“Melech”; A Hebrew name, meaning (a king); son of Micah, grandson of Mephibosheth

“Tahrea”; A Hebrew name, meaning (crafty); a descendant of Saul by Jonathan

“Ahaz”; A Hebrew name, meaning (he took hold, or the Lord took hold); a descendant of Jonathan (42)

“And Ahaz begot Jarah, Jarah begot Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begot Moza” (42)

“Jarah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (honey comb); a descendant of Saul (42)

“Azmaveth”; A Hebrew name, meaning (death is strong); the son of Jehoiadah a descendant of Jonathan, son of Saul; In 1 Chronicles 9: 42, it came that this ‘Azmaveth’ was the son of ‘Jarah’.

“Zimri”; A Hebrew name, meaning (like a wild bull); a descendant of Jonathan son of Saul.

“Alemeth” A Hebrew name, meaning (hiding); a Benjamite, son of Jehoiadah; a descendant of Saul.

“Moza begot Binea, Rephaiah his son, Eleasah his son, and Azel his son” (43)

“Moza”; A Hebrew name, meaning (Exodus); a descendant of Saul (42-43)

“Binea”; Son of Moza, a descendant of Jonathan, son of Saul (43)

“Eneasah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God did); a descendant of Jonathan and Saul.

“And Azel had six sons whose names were these: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan; these were the sons of Azel” (44)

“Bocheru”; A Hebrew name, meaning (firstborn); son of Azel

“Ishmael”; A Hebrew name, meaning (God hears)

“Sheariah”; A Hebrew name, meaning (the might of Jehovah); a descendant of Saul

“Hanan”; A Hebrew name, meaning (compassionate), (merciful) or (generous); son of Azel; a descendant of Jonathan son of Saul.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 9

MY HEART AND BODY SHOUT BY THE LIVING GOD

+ My God, my sins and those of my fathers have corrupted the joy of the Spirit in the congregation, as well as in my heart;

By returning and attaching to you;

You will give me back, more than what I lost;

And will bring me and my brethren to the deposit of heaven.

+ By returning from the captivity of sin to the higher Jerusalem;
I shall enjoy, together with my brethren, union with You;
I shall not be preoccupied with whether I am a regular member of the
people;
Or a priest, or one of the singer Levites;
Or a gatekeeper of Your holy house;
As all of them are almost like a heavenly hosts;
Our hearts, together with our bodies, will shout to You, O the Living God;
You pour Your holiness upon all; O Sanctifier of all;
Your Holy Spirit works in all;
To bear the feature of faithfulness!
For indeed, we shall become members of Your body, O Son of David.

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ANNEX # 1 OF 1 CHRONICLES 9

QUICK TOUCHES OF SOME PERSONALITIES THAT CAME IN THE GENEALOGIES

ADAM (1 Chronicles 1: 1) As what he got was beyond the imagination of the
heavenlies; and how he ended up was beyond ours, we came to be in need of a
new Adam to belong to, instead of the first Adam (Genesis 2-3)

SHETH (1: 1) He was born to Adam and Eve after the murder of their son Abel to
help and comfort them. He was born according to his father's image (Genesis5:

3). In that he was a symbol of the Son of God, who is One with the Father. But there is great difference between the symbol and the symbolized.

ENOSH (1: 1) The first to teach mankind *“to call on the name of the Lord”*
(Genesis 4: 26)

ENOCK (1: 3) A living example of those who attach themselves to the Heavenly One, and quickly depart to the Lord.

METHUSELAH (1: 3) Although he lived to reach 969 years of age; the highest of any man on earth, yet he ultimately died.

NOAH (1: 4) Obedience to God has its amazing reward; by it we enter as though into a new world. The great flood that happened was a symbol of the new birth by baptism; and the ark was a symbol of the church (Genesis 6-9),

ABRAHAM (1: 27) The practical living faith turned his life into an enjoyable journey with God (Genesis 11-35)

ISAAC (1: 28) His acceptance of being slain for the sake of God, made him a symbol of the sacrifice of the Lord Christ (Genesis 21-35)

ESAU (1: 34) Violence turned his life and that of others into bitterness (Genesis 25-35)

AMALEK (1 39) Evil corrupts the life of the individual as well as of the congregation (Exodus 17: 8-16)

JACOB (2: 1) Although he was the Man of the divine promises, Yet, as it is the case of all men, he had his weaknesses that disturbed his life (Genesis 25-30)

JUDAH (2: 3) Getting married to a Canaanite girl “*daughter of Shua*” (Genesis 38: 1-3); proves that being chosen as a royal tribe, of whose descendants the Word of God was to incarnate, is not set upon human righteousness, but through the grace of God that turns that faulty action into good. As by his marriage to a Canaanite girl, he opened the door of hope before the Gentiles; that salvation is presented to all.

TAMAR (2: 4) God realizes His plan even through our faults (Genesis 38)

PEREZ (2: 5) God deals with us, regardless of our familial background (Genesis 38: 27-30)

BOAZ (2: 12) Sowing compassion toward the widow ‘Ruth’ and her mother-in-law, he enjoyed the mercy of God; and among his descendants came Jesse, then David; then the Son of David (Ruth)

JESSE (2: 13) Being a godly man, he got the grace that David the first king of Israel came as his son. The living believer has his activity upon his descendants.(1 Samuel 16)

DAVID (2: 15) Although the Lord Himself testifies to him, that he was After God’s own heart.(1 Samuel 13: 14); yet he had his own sins, but with every fall into sin in his life, he presented repentance with tears, to become of more splendor.

JOAB (2: 16) Those who seek the authority of the world, will come out of it naked (2 Samuel 2: 13; I kings 2).

AMNON (3: 1) Surrendering to carnal lusts destroys man’s life (2 Samuel 13).

ABSALOM (3: 2) His love of authority made him lose everything; and his life tragically ended up (2 Samuel 13-18)

ADONIJAH (3: 2) Not perceiving the position of God in his life, made him lose even his temporal life (1 Kings 1-2)

BATHSHUA (3: 5) (or Bathsheba). Holding fast to God's promises, realized her heart's desire (2 Samuel 11-12; 1 Kings 1-2)

SOLOMON (3: 5) Seeking wisdom from God, He granted him what he did not seek: of glory, authority, and wealth (1 Kings 1)

JABEZ (4: 9-10) His mother so called him, on account of that she delivered him with pain; But he was called more honorable than his brothers; The secret of his greatness was that he Made God the center of his life and work.

OTHNIEL 4: 13) The first judge of Israel; reformed the people, and realized peace in the land (Judges 1: 9-15' 3: 5-11)

CALEB, SON OF JEPHUNNEH (4: 15) One of the twelve sent by Moses to spy the promised land; and, together with Joshua the son of Nun, he came back to confirm the realization of God's promise of the possibility of taking over the promised land (Number 13=14; Joshua 14-15)

REUBEN (5: 1) Through a passing carnal lust, he lost true perpetual blessings; particularly his firstborn rights (Genesis 35: 22; 37: 49: 3-4)

AARON (6: 3) He accompanied his brother Moses in his whole ministry. Moses represented the Word of God; and Aaron represented the worship (Exodus 4; Numbers 20)

NADAB (6: 3) Together with his brother 'Abihu', offered profane fire in his censor; and were consumed by fire from the Lord (Leviticus 10: 1-2)

ELEAZAR (6: 3) His abidance in faith made him a role model (Numbers 20: 25-34; Joshua 24-33)

KORAH (6: 22) Rebelling against the leaders appointed by God, is counted as rebelling against God himself.(Numbers 16)

JOSHUA (7: 27) Joshua could never cross over with his people to the promised land, without the ministry of Moses; And the ministry of Moses would never be consummated without Joshua.

SAUL (7: 27) He started by a spirit of humility; but through his love of authority he lost all his privileges (1 Samuel 8: 31)

JONATHAN (8: 33) In his love and loyalty to David, he had no hatred for the one appointed by God to replace his father Saul on the throne (1 Samuel 14-31)

ANNEX # 2 OF 1 CHRONICLES 9

THE PROCESSION OF OUR JOURNEY TO HEAVEN

1- ADAM – JACOB (Ch. 1)

-- God cares for me, as though I am like Adam on the day He created him; But I shall have no place in the procession without my brethren (the holy congregation); God cares for the whole congregation, as well as for every member of it.

2- JUDAH (2: 3; 4: 23)

-- The commitment of the existence of kings and leaders (the royal tribe)

-- As the kings and leaders have their own weaknesses, it is befitting of them to wash the feet of their subjects.

-- There is no success of the kings and leaders except by the dwelling of Christ in them; the Shepherd and Savior of mankind; From that tribe came the incarnate King of kings, the Savior of the world.

-- No one is above the law. Even David, the beloved king fell under chastisement; and certain kings of his descendants were taken captives.

3- SIMEON (4: 24 - 43).

-- His name means (listening); He who listens to the commandment will have his place in the procession; and will be cherished by God.

4- REUBEN (5: 1 – 10)

-- He lost his privilege as firstborn, for he defiled his father's bed

-- His position of leadership was given to Judah

-- Joseph was given the enjoyment of the two portions (Ephraim and Manasseh)

-- Although he destroyed himself and his tribe, yet he was rewarded for his holy touches.

-- The Reubenites did not suffer for the sake of their father's sin

5, 6- GAD (5: 11-22); MANASSEH (5: 23 – 36)

-- Together with Reuben, God gave them their heart's desire (the eastern bank of the Jordan, rich in pasture land for their livestock; instead of agricultural land).

-- The 2 ½ tribes lived in the east as though one entity.

-- They had conquest over the Hagarites, for the sake of their unity, strive, and trust in the Lord.

-- Having fallen into idol-worship after receiving the promised land from the hand of God, they were the first to be taken into captivity.

7- LEVI AND THE CITY OF REFUGE (2)

-- The Lord being their portion, the cities of refuge became their cities. Every priest is committed to be a city of refuge.

-- The spiritual leadership had to be in the midst of all the tribes to minister to all without feeling that they are more exalted, or isolated from them.

-- The king, as well as the priest, each has his own role; and they both work in harmony together.

-- As there were great leaders for the edification of the congregation, there were, as well, corrupt leaders who destroyed a multitude.

-- As there is no one without sin, they should not deify themselves, nor be deified by the people.

-- Their language is singing praise day and night, to stir up the spirit of joy, and to present the deposit of heaven in their practical life, together with joy and seriousness in worship.

-- They had no portion in the promised land, to have their sight concentrated upon the Creator of heaven and earth.

8- ISSACHAR (7: 1 – 5)

-- The tribe of Issachar, perpetually working, “rejoice in their tents” (Deuteronomy 33: 18).

9- BENJAMIN (7: 6 – 12)

-- His father Jacob described him as a ravenous wolf (Genesis 49: 27). Saul the son of Jesse the Benjamite, not faithful to God, has been a tyrant who devoured his people like a ravenous wolf to lambs, instead of caring for them like a father to his children.

-- Many of the mighty men of valor who were around Saul, were drawn to David, and showed him every faithfulness and loyalty.

-- With the dissension of the kingdom, the tribe of Benjamin attached themselves to Judah in the southern kingdom of Judah.

10- NAPHTALI (7 – 13)

-- In his love for freedom, he was likened by his father to “a doe” (a female deer) let loose in an open wilderness and in the valley, with no hurdles, and moves wherever it wishes. (Genesis 49: 21)

11- THE SECOND HALF OF MANASSEH (7: 14 – 19)

Of the descendants of Manasseh, there was Zelophehad who had no sons but only daughters; who sought their right to inherit their father (Joshua 17: 3)

12- EPHRAIM (7: 20-49)

The author concentrated on the genealogies of Joshua the son of Nun (27), the most prominent member of that huge tribe; who was, in many aspects, a symbol of Jesus Christ (20-29).

13- ASHER (30: 40)

His father prophesied that he will be rich; and Moses said that he is the most blessed of sons; and prophesied that he will dip his foot in oil (Deuteronomy 33: 24). Both prophesies were realized; as the tribe of Asher enjoyed fertile land rich in olive trees from which oil was extracted. The produce of his land was so plentiful that they exported their surplus to the other tribes. That was beside their location on the sea coast that enabled them to import goods to sell to the other tribes. This tribe refers to the flood of grace in the life of those who spiritually strive.

14- BENJAMIN (8: 1 – 40)

Genealogy here brings us forth to Saul and his household, to show how the first king of Israel was chosen according to the human mind; with features sought by the people in their king, by which they could boast of him

among the nations and the kings around them. But, because he failed to realize the portrait of the divine kingdom in his life, in his worship, and in his dealing with his people; there was need to send him away to leave the

stage for king David who was chosen according to the choice of God and the counsel of the divine grace.

15- THE INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM AFTER CAPTIVITY (9)

Here the author intends to confirm that the return from captivity is an extension of the Jewish nation; and that God in His love for his people, does not wish to discern between the people before and after captivity; And as

worship in the tabernacle of meeting and in the temple, before captivity, was done decently and with order, together with joy and exultation; so it will be after the return from captivity.



THE SECOND DIVISION

SAUL'S DEATH OR SUICIDE

(1 Chronicles 10)

CHAPTER 10

THE DEATH OF KING SAUL AND GIVING THE THRONE TO DAVID

The revival of hope for rebuilding the fallen down tabernacle of David (Acts 15: 16).

The previous nine chapters revealed the following facts:

1- The essence of the Old Testament is God's plan for salvation for man; namely for bringing man back to how he was before falling; to restore the image of God in him; regardless of his race, culture, possibilities, and country. God longs for gathering together all mankind from all peoples and nations, in unity and harmony, that bears the reflection of God on it.

This could not be realized except by the Word of God descending incarnate to our world; offering Himself a sacrifice of love and atonement; and setting His kingdom in the hearts, being the Savior, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. That made the author record the genealogies from Adam down to after the Babylonian captivity.

The Jewish people have been anticipating the coming of the Messiah, to reign forever; but owing to the long period of captivity, the loss of hope of setting a king of the descendants of David, and the return to the destroyed temple in Jerusalem, the records of the house of David were lost from the minds of many, despite the attempts of some prophets, even during captivity, to open the door of hope in the realization of God's promises of the divine Messianic salvation.

2- Although humanity was characterized with corruption since the fall of Adam and Eve; yet, in every generation there was a few who longed to be attached to God; concentrated in one individual, or one little family in the

whole world. There was a time when only one person – Abel -- walked along the way of God; then only one – Seth -- in the following generation; the Enoch, etc. And there was time when the whole world was corrupt; with the exception of one family of eight persons – that of Noah.

God cherishes such few; and makes covenants with them; as He did with Noah and Abraham. Yet, at the same time, not despising the corrupt majority, God set a plan for the salvation of the world, by delivering His only

begotten Son, who incarnated in the fullness of time; to embrace, from all peoples and nations, a holy church which partakes of the eternal exultation of the heavenly hosts..

3- If there was one person (Enoch), or two (Enoch and Elijah), qualified to be taken temporarily to heaven; yet they will eventually come back to earth to martyred in the days of the antichrist at the end of times. All humanity

submitted to death; and on its behalf, the apostle Paul says: “*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me of this body of death?*” (Romans 7: 24). And

in the name of all nations and people with no exception, the

apostle says: “*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this death?*” (Romans 7: 24) .It is as though those genealogies since Adam, cries out saying: [Who is the Physician who is able to raise us from death?

And when will He come?!].

4- He ends the genealogies with the genealogy of king Saul; yet he mentions only one thing about him, namely, the episode of his death or suicide, which he quoted from the first book of Samuel, chapter 31, a word by word;

adding only two phrases: "*So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord; and also because he consulted a medium for guidance; but he*

did not inquire of the Lord, therefore He killed him" (13, 14). That is what dwelt upon us, we sinners, to be called "*sons of disobedience; ... without God in the world*" (2 Ephesians 2, 12).

5- The kingdom of Saul came to an end with complete failure; And God, with His grace, intervened to transfer the kingdom to David the son of Jesse. The author of the book, mentions the sudden death of Saul, after being

rejected by God, and makes it an introduction to the episode of David that occupies all the remainder of the book.

6- Now, starting the history of David and his descendants of kings, the two books of the chronicles concentrate on the house of the Lord, and not on the royal throne. As a consummation of what came in the books of Samuel

and kings, the two books of the chronicles are preoccupied with bringing us forth into the experience of eternity; namely, the attachment to God, and singing His praise, without ceasing, together with the heavenly hosts,

Why is the talk about Saul's death?

After parading the genealogies in the nine chapters, to reveal that the Almighty God records the names even of those whom time wiped out from the memory of the earth; the author of the two books of the Chronicles intend to talk about the prophet David, the man of God, who had set everything to establish the worship, which is the shadow of the heavenlies. Hence, he had to talk about the death of Saul, to confirm the following facts:

- 1- That God who sent Samuel to anoint the young man David a king, will enthrone him in the previously assigned time.
- 2- David's hand did not stretch to destroy the kingdom of Saul, despite the intense and persistent attempts of Saul to get rid of him in every possible way.
- 3- David did not stretch his hands to harm the man anointed by God; but it was the pagans who did; For evil destroys itself by itself; The evil Saul and his family was destroyed by the evil enemies.
- 4- God allowed for Saul's sons to be killed, so there would be no struggle between David and any of them after the death of their father; especially that he loved Jonathan the son of Saul as himself.
- 5- Saul's life ended by committing suicide; It was his evil will that destroyed his own life, and that of his family.
- 6- Saul committed suicide, together with his armor-bearer so that neither his own strength, nor leaning upon the human arm, had rescued him.

- 7- The .Palestinians bared Saul and his sons naked; as though he came out of the world naked in shame and disgrace.
- 8- Having disobeyed God, and resorted to the devil to seek his counsel, his weapons were put in the house of the devil, as though to let him have his heart's desire.
- 9- For his eyes were not raised up to the God of heaven ; His head was nailed in the house of Dagon; as though in the lower pit.
- 10- As Saul had done good to the people of Jabesh Gilead, God allowed them to do good to his bones.
- 11-The throne was taken away from Saul and His sons, for he disobeyed God and resorted to the devil; to be delivered to David, the man of God, who loved the Word of God, and did not endure the devil and his worship.

The first event in the book:

In the first nine previous chapters, the author of the first book of the chronicles, did not mention a specific event; but he was preoccupied with mentioning in some detail, at the beginning of the tenth chapter, the serious battle that occurred between the Israelites and the Philistines; which ended with the following results:

- 1- The Israelites fled before the Palestinians (1)
- 2- Many were killed in Mount Gilboa (2)
- 3- King Saul was wounded, and his sons were killed (3-4)
- 4- The king and his armor-bearer committed suicide.

- 5- The Palestinians occupied the cities of Israel)7)
- 6- The corpses of Saul and his sons were bared naked, and the enemies took the head of the king and his sword away.
- 7- The head of Saul was nailed in a pagan temple.
- 8- The reason for what happened was shown as Saul's treason to the Lord, and his resort to seek the counsel of the devil.
- 9- The episode came to an end by delivering the kingdom to David.

So the author begins by that episode of the death of Saul despite the existence of many others that touched the life of the fathers patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, beside other men of faith before them. For the mind of the author was only preoccupied with the battle between God and the devil; and with that, if man attaches himself to the devil, he would become a refugee, will lose his honor as a king, will fall into a condition of despair, will get naked of the grace of God , will lose the weapon of faith, and will become ridiculed by the devil himself, to whom he resorted, to fulfill his pleasures and needs.

But the Wholly Goodness, turns even the evils into a chance to grant us goodness and sets the Son and the Lord of David a king in our depths (Luke 17: 21); which preoccupies the whole book.

The death of Saul and his sons:

The talk about the death of Saul and his sons came in (1 Samuel 31: 1 – 13).

The author concentrated on the death of Saul the first king of Israel, whose beginning was good, while his end was a tragedy; on account of that he was unfaithful and disobedient to the Lord (13-14).

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(1 Samuel 13-31) give us an account of how Saul gradually perverted; how he dared to offer a sacrifice, taking on himself the priestly task by force; How he envied David and attempted to kill him; How he did not make use of the several chances presented to him by God to repent; how he resorted to the devil to help him; and finally, how he ended his own life by committing the sin of suicide.

If Saul's armor-bearer was faithful even to death, and preferred to die rather than to see his master in disgrace; how could we betray our Lord Jesus Christ who died for our sake?!

Here we see the distinction made by the divine inspiration between the books of Samuel and the kings, on the one hand, and the two books of the Chronicles on the other hand; How, In the books of Samuel and the kings we find many things about king Saul; narrating his whole history; While in the first book of the Chronicles, we see the point of view of God, presenting only one chapter on Saul, then dedicating the remainder of the first book of the Chronicles and a part of the second one to the history of the house of David. David was the subject of the two books of the Chronicles, and not Saul.

As a matter of fact, because the author of the Chronicles was interested in the reign of David, in Jerusalem, and the temple, as the chosen tools of God for salvation; he quickly passed through Saul's life, only mentioning his shameful end, to open the door before the enthronement of David. For Saul's death, the book revealed the following two main reasons:

- 1- His disobedience of the words of God.

- 2- Resorting to the medium, and not to the Lord to seek His counsel; God allowed for his death, and gave the kingdom to David, the son of Jesse (13, 14). But by going back to (1 Samuel 13: 8, 14), we find that the main disobedience, for which Saul was rejected, was daring to offer a burnt offering, and an offering of peace, by himself, not waiting for the prophet Samuel or for a priest to do it.

Saul did not seek God's counsel before the battle of Gilboa; With two years since the death of the prophet Samuel, and the absence of any indication of setting another prophet in his place, the only way for Saul to ask the counsel of God was through the high priest; by offering a sacrifice or the Orim and the Thummim (Exodus 29); Hence Ezra the scribe and priest stated that the reason for the divine punishment on Saul was his

disobedience of the priestly system put by God; to which the king, as well as his subjects should be bound and submitted.

A comparison between (1 Chronicles 10) and (1 Samuel 31):

- a- In 1 Samuel 31: 1, it came that the Palestinians nailed the body of Saul to the wall of Beth Shan And here it is said that they nailed his head in the house of Dagon; Both narratives consummate one another.
- b- Here the author did not mention that the people of Jabesh Gilead have burned the corpses of Saul and his sons before burying their bones.
- c- In the book of Samuel it came that they buried their bones underneath a tamarisk tree, while in the book of the Chronicles, it came that they buried them underneath the terebinth tree. It is probable that people in those days called that tree by either names.

1- The sons of Saul killed on Mount Gilboa	1 -- 2
2- Saul commits suicide on Mount Gilboa.	3 -- 7
3- Defaming and ridiculing Saul and his sons	8 -- 10
4- Men of Jabesh Gilead bury the bones of Saul and his sons	11 -- 12
5- The reasons behind Saul's death	13 – 14

1- SAUL'S SON KILLED ON MOUNT GILBOA:

“Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa” (1)

After parading in the previous chapters the genealogies of the children of Israel from the beginning of creation to the Babylonian captivity (586 BC), the author returned to the beginning of the kingdom of Israel. He did not start by the enthronement of Saul, but by his death; to bring us forth to the era of David, being the king chosen by God, and whom God promised to make his descendants reign forever. That was realized by the coming of the King of kings, the son of David, who reigns over our hearts forever, and sets His church a queen who sits on his right hand. Commenting on what came in this chapter, the Jewish historian Josephus says that, by beginning his talk about Saul by that battle, the author intends to say that nothing in Saul's life was worth mentioning; he reigned for twenty years without any good fruit; and ended his life by his own hands, yet by the allowance of God; as though He killed him.

That period was among the darkest in the history of Israel; The people insisted on having a king, which saddened the heart of the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 8: 6). Despite some conquests over surrounding nations, yet the king sinned, and instead of repenting his sins, he was only preoccupied with his own personal honor before the people. His life ended by the fall of the people, together with their king before the Philistines. Namely, the ultimate result of the people's

persistence of having a king, and Saul's persistence on his personal honor, was destruction of both the king and the people.

- + What folly?! Could that proud man not perceive that his glory will eventually go away and evaporate like a dream? And that greatness and authority are nothing but deceptive mirage?!

- + The (Pharisee) prayed to himself, and not to God; for the sin of pride closed him shut on himself.

- + He is committed not to glorify himself, nor to utter what commends it, or to find pleasure in hearing the commendation of others; but to do everything in secret, not for the sake of appearance before people, but only seeking God's commendation; meditating in the Lord's glorified and awesome coming; as well as meditating in his own exit from this world, and in the blessings set for the righteous, and the fire set for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25: 41).

(St. Basil the Great)

As the people's heart was only preoccupied with temporal things, and not with the kingdom of God; they have got a king according to their heart's desire; a lover of the temporal things, who, accordingly lost, together with his people, both the temporal and the eternal

According to St. Basil the Great, the work of the serpent (the devil), is to corrupt our nature, to keep us from looking upward, but to bow down like animals toward the dust, seeking the earthly things He counsels us, saying: [As the head of animals look down toward the earth, but the head and eyes of man are created to look up toward heaven; It is therefore befitting of us to seek what is up; and with our insight go beyond the earthly things]].

"Then the Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchshua, Saul's sons" (2)

Saul sinned, and the catastrophe dwelt upon his people; and upon his own sons who reaped the fruit of their father's works.

People often wonder, saying: [What is the people's fault? And what is the crime of the sons?! God allows this, not to punish the people on the sins of their leader, nor the sons on those of their father, but to keep the people, as well as the sons, from perversion behind the sins of the leaders and the parents. That was confirmed by the words uttered by the Lord Christ, saying: "*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me*" (Matthew 10: 37)

+ Yes, the Holy Book exhorts us to obey our parents; but says that whoever loves them more than Christ will lose Himself. Behold! The enemy who persecutes me to deny Christ, carries a sword to kill me; Shall I think about the tears of my mother?! Shall I despise the ministry of Christ for the sake of my father; to whom I am not even bound to bury, if I am a minister of Christ (Luke 9: 59-60); although, as a true minister of Christ, I am indebted to do that (the burial) for all.

(St. Jerome)

2- SAUL COMMITS SUICIDE ON MOUNT GILBOA:

“The battle became intense against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded by the archers” (3)

Misunderstanding the longsuffering of God, Saul assumed that, being the king, he is the one with authority, submit to no law, nor is responsible before anyone; But the divine justice caught up with him, and confronted him in the proper time, to take his authority away, to deny his family their honor as a royal house; and to deliver the throne to David whom he persecuted.

- + Many of the extremely slothful men abuse God's compassion to increase the weight of their sins, and of their slothfulness, saying: [There is neither hell nor punishment to come. God will eventually forgive all our sins]. To close up their mouths, the wise Ben Sirach says: "*Do not say His mercy is great; He will forgive the multitude of my sins*" (Sirach 5: 6); and, "*Great as is His mercy, so also is His chastisement*" (Sirach 16: 12).

- + Now, if the laws of men are elaborately observed, how much more are those of God?! Someone may say: "But God is Good" ... For how long shall we utter such folly? ... Listen to the holy Book, say: "*Do not say His mercy is great; He will forgive the multitude of my sins*" (Sirach 5: 6). He rather counsels us to say "*His mercy is great*", perpetually; with the goal stirred by the apostle Paul with all kinds of evidences; meaning: Do not marvel at God's compassion, while you go on committing sin, saying "His mercies will take away my sins"; But be motivated not to despair because of your sins, and to repent; as "*the goodness of God leads you to repentance*" (Romans 2: 4); and not to a greater evil!

(St. John Chrysostom)

- + The Lord, on the tongue of His prophet says: "*My son, do not add a sin to another, by saying 'God's mercy is great'*" (Sirach 5: 5-6); not knowing that

“the goodness of God leads you to repentance” (Romans 2: 4). Who is merciful like God who forgives all the sins of those who return to Him; who makes the wild olive tree partake of the fat of the natural olive tree into which it is grafted? Yet, who is firm like Him, to cut off even the natural branches for their lack of faith? (Romans 11: 17-24).

(St. Augustine)

Saul often aimed his spear toward David to kill him but the spear never reached David, for the Lord kept him safe for the sake of his pure heart. King Saul, on the other hand, a spear of an enemy soldier aimed at him, inflicted him instantly with a serious wound; He drank from the same cup he filled for David to drink.

“Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, ‘Draw your sword and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me’. But his armor-bearer would not for he was greatly afraid.

Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it” (4)

a- Here we notice how, as much as Saul diligently sought to get temporal honors, he perceived that if he falls into the hands of his enemies, he would be bitterly abused and disgraced. That is how the lovers of great honors

usually end up being subject to ridicule and reproach!

b- He who does not give glory to God in his success, the non-believers would submit him in his life, and abuse his corpse after his death.

c- Having disobeyed the divine command many times, In the last moments of his life, he gave his armor-bearer a command to draw his sword and thrust him through with it; lest the enemy would come and abuse him; but his armor-bearer disobeyed him.

“And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died” (5)

“So Saul and his three sons died; and all his house died together” (6)

Saul and his sons, assuming that, being a royal family, they would never be touched, they all fell under the same verdict in one day.

“And when the men of Israel who were in the valley saw that, they had fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook their cities and fled; then the Philistines came and dwelt in them” (7)

By faith, the children of Israel enjoyed the promised land, with the spirit of conquest, power, and success; And by sin, they have lost much, and destruction dwelt upon them.

3- DEFAMING AND RIDICULING SAUL AND HIS SONS:

“So it happened the next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa” (8)

“They stripped him and took his head and his armor, and sent word throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among the people” (9)

That was a custom followed also by the Hindos Indians; who following their conquests on their enemies, they carry the good news to their idols in a great procession and celebration.

“Then they put his armor in the temple of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon” (20)

“Dagon”; Of the most prominent gods who, according to the belief of its worshippers, was the one who sends to them the abundant harvests. Accordingly, they used to build for it temples wherever they settle down in agricultural lands in Canaan. When draught happen to dwell, they would cry out to him, seeking rain; and in case of more affliction, they would offer him their children as sacrifices to please him. They also used the temples to humiliate their

captives with every possible way, for amusement, counting that as a way of glorifying their gods, and of proclaiming their power.(Judges 16: 23-30) .

3- MEN OF JABESH GILEAD BURY THE BONES OF SAUL AND HIS SONS:

“And when all Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul (11)

“All the valiant men arose and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons, and they brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days” (12)

The valiant men of Jabesh, not forgetting how Saul had rescued their city (1 Samuel 11), they intended to pay his good deed back after his death. If God allowed for the chastisement of Saul, even in the way he died; yet He also allowed the valiant men of Jabesh Gilead to take the bodies of Saul and his sons and to carry them to Jabesh. Despite their knowledge of the evil deeds of Saul, yet they felt a commitment to give him and his sons their due of honor, having been their leaders and rulers. ... So it is befitting of the believer to give honor to whom honor is due, whether in the church, the nation, the work, or in the army (1 Thessalonians 5: 12-13; Romans 13: 1-7). The prophet David, as well, did not bear any feelings of gloat or revenge toward Saul, despite the bitter hatred that he later felt against him.

4- THE REASONS BEHIND SAUL'S DEATH:

“So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and because he consulted a medium for guidance” (13)

The two reasons for his death were:

1- His unfaithfulness against the Lord; He disobeyed; and did not keep the word of God (1 Samuel 13, 15). This denial was unfortunately the common feature of all the kings of Israel (the northern kingdom), and of some of the kings of Judah

2- He sought the counsel of a medium for guidance, instead of inquiring it of the Lord (1 Samuel 28). According to the author, an action that corrupted all the aspects of his life.

“But he did not inquire of the Lord; therefore He killed him and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse” (14)

Although Saul sought the counsel of God before (1 Samuel 28: 5-6); here he did not. This contradiction reveals the actual intention of his heart. For he sought the counsel of God, when he had no other way; and so did it in deadly literality,

without true trust in God; for Saul, well known for his selfishness, sought his own honor and popularity, rather than the glory of God; and was perpetually characterized by the spirit of arrogance and rebellion.

“God killed him” although he was the one who destroyed his own life (1 Samuel 31: 3-4), by his persistent stubbornness and rebellion (1 Samuel 15: 22, 23). When the grace of God forsook him to realize his evil will, he committed suicide.

Despite the numerous chances to get rid of Saul (1 Samuel 31: 3-4), yet David did not stretch his hand against the Lord’s anointed, although he had the promise of God to get the throne. And when Saul died, he lamented him with every love and faithfulness, with no haste to replace him on the throne. In faith, he did not rush the events, but anticipated the proper time according to the will of God.

Saul’s death and the setting of the new man:

The end of king Saul represents the end of ‘the old carnal man’, who had to die, to be replaced by David, the representative of ‘the new spiritual man’ who carries the image of his Creator. As according to the apostle Paul: *“That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness”* (Ephesians 4: 22-24).

- + *“The royal daughter is all glorious from within”* (Psalm 45: 14) ... The man who prays to *“the Father who sees in secret”* (Matthew 6: 6); and who works, without the goal of getting the glory of men, but for the sake of that of God (Matthew 6: 10), will, like the royal daughter, be *“all glorious from within”*; he would not seek the clothes befitting of him who has the image of his Creator; according to the words of the apostle: *“Since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him”* (Colossians 3: 9-10); *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering”* (Colossians 3: 12). Such a man would be adorned within in his inner man. The apostle exhorts us to *“put on the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 13: 14), not on our outer man, but that God’s mind would have an utter authority over our minds. Yet I believe that the clothes are weaved by the edifying word, specially if it is accompanied with positive work. The way the twines are weaved; it will be with the word accompanied with positive work; it will be like the twines of the holy fabric of the soul, weaved with the words of virtue and the work according to it.

- + *“Sing to the Lord a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy”* (Psalm 33: 3); Namely, worship the Lord, *“ in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter”* (Romans 7: 6).

He who understands the law, not according to the oldness of the letter, but perceive it with a spiritual concept, can sing a new song; The old covenant has grown old; and a new song appeared to us, with the new instructions from the Lord; who *“renews our youth like an eagle’s”* (Psalm 103: 5); *“Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day”* (2 Corinthians 4: 16); *“reaching forward to those things which are ahead”* (Philippians 3: 13); to be renewed more and more; and to pray perpetually to God a truly new song.

By the word “new”, is described an exceptionally new thing. When we describe the incarnation of the Lord that surpasses all nature; you sing a new song. And when you describe the birth of the world and its overall renewal, after getting old with sin; you sing a new song. The same way when you talk about the resurrection; you truly sing a new song.

(St. Basil the Great)

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 10

**LET MY OLD MAN DIE, AND SET MY NEW MAN ACCORDING TO YOUR
IMAGE**

- + In the water of baptism, You crucified my old man with all his lusts;
And You granted me the new man according to Your image.
With every day my old man is crucified with all its work;
Make sin bitter in my mouth, so I would not desire it, nor be enslaved by it;
Let me, every morning be attached to You more and more;
To have Your splendor transfigure in my mind, heart, and all my senses;
To be truly counted as a member in Your body, O Son of David

- + Let Saul, his sons, and all his household die;
Destroy every corruption in me;
Let David live and reign in my heart;
Set Your kingdom in me;
To enjoy a royal authority even on my thoughts;
Take away from me everything foreign from You;
Grant me to become truly Your holy Jerusalem.

- + Come, O Son and Lord of David;
Proclaim Your glory in me;
To turn my depths into a new heaven;
Into which no corruption nor sin can crawl;

Being renewed every morning, my soul will exult by You.

ANNEX # 1 TO CHAPTER 10

BETWEEN DAVID AND SAUL

By

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

According to St. Jerome, the two books of the Chronicles are a summary of the whole Old Testament; to redirect our sight, by the Holy Spirit of God, to the holy history from Adam to the fall under captivity, with a divine promise of the return from captivity; to reveal the need for the Son of David, the incarnate word of God, the Savior of the world, who, alone, is capable of setting the kingdom of God within us. (Luke 17: 21).

We should not marvel that the two books of the Chronicles, out of 65 chapters, have dedicated only one chapter (10) for Saul, the first king of Israel; in which he talked about his death; while it dedicated 19 chapters for the reign of David (1 Chronicles 11-29); and mentioned his name more than 220 times in the two books; which reveals the interest of the two books in the person of David. They are not, though, defensive chapters of the Davidian

royal throne; but they set us forth to that of the Son of David, the King of kings; to let us enjoy an exalted royal spiritual life. What preoccupied the first book of the Chronicles in Saul's history, was his death, so that his evil thoughts would have no place in our hearts, but to let us follow the lead of the person of David the righteous king

That is what motivated me to present the main views about the persons of the two kings, as mentioned in the three sermons (of the statues) by St. John Chrysostom.. To understand what St. John Chrysostom presented concerning David and Saul, we have to recognize the circumstances in which he gave those sermons:

THE SERMONS OF THE STATUTES:

The sermons of St. John Chrysostom were bound to what were called “the event of the statutes”, directly after which he most probably gave his sermons.

In the year 378 BC, the central government of the Eastern Roman empire was preparing to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the reign of Emperor Theodoseus, and the fifth anniversary of the partnership of his young son Arcadius on the throne. And as such kind of celebration needs a voluminous financing, an imperial decree was issued to collect a new extra tax from the people, that so seemed too high to cause a popular rage all over the country, but no one dared

to protest; Yet in Antioch (the capital), while reading the decree in the common square, although some verbally expressed their feeling of protest, yet the governor refrained from giving the order to attack an unarmed crowd.

In the midst of such huge crowd of all kinds of people, the situation exploded out of control, to turn into a revolution in an instant, during which some set forth to break down the statues of the emperor, the empress, and their son, and to cast them in the mire and trash. Once that instant out-cry subsided, and the mob waked up from their drunkenness, and realized the enormity of what they have done, intense fear came upon all in anticipation of the punishment sure to come upon the entire city and its population.

Hearing about what took place, the emperor dispatched two eminent leaders: Allebichus and Caesarius, who, arriving to the city, they declared the annulment of all the special privileges of the city; moving the capital to Latakia; closing down all the theaters and clubs; putting a number of the elites under arrest, confiscating their possessions, and expelling their families out of their houses; The two leaders intended, as well to burn down the whole city, and to kill all the population, if it was not for the intervention of some monks and hermits, among whom was the hermit Macdonius, who came down from the mountains and monasteries, to meet the two leaders and to seek a delay of the execution of their order pending their intervention with the emperor.

According to 'Baur', St. John Chrysostom, who was ordained in the 26 of February 381 AD; namely, one year before those events; out of his feeling of fatherhood toward the whole world, believers and nonbelievers, exhorted Father Flavian, Patriarch of Antioch to go to Constantinople, to seek amnesty on everyone from the emperor. While Father Flavian felt his commitment to intervene, to appease the wrath of the emperor upon the city, the pagan elites were so scared to do anything, which was something against their reputation in the population.

While the father Patriarch hastened to Constantinople, despite his old age and his frailty because of fasting during the holy lent; the monks and hermits were appealing to the leaders in Antioch. The whole population, scared stiff in anticipation of what will come upon them, hastened to the church, where the priest John Chrysostom poured upon them the pearls of his heart and mouth, to appease their hearts, torn off with scare, and to provoke them to repent and return to God; not for fear of death or of losing their earthly possession, as much as for longing for the eternal light through the limitless divine mercies.

At the beginning of his ministry, St. John Chrysostom gave a series of 21 sermons; that drew the popular attention to him in Antioch and out of it; by which he made use of the horrible situation as a chance for preaching and teaching. And, instead of fear that prevailed on the hearts of all, many pagans converted to

Christianity; and the Christians tasted God's love and peace through the true repentance; hence the catastrophe turned into a blessing for many.

Once in Constantinople, the Patriarch hastened to the imperial court, despite his utter exhaustion, encountered the emperor, and said to him:

[I come to you, not only as an ambassador of the people of Antioch, but an ambassador of God, as well. In His name I come to tell you: If you forgive the wrong done by your people, Your heavenly Father will forgive your sins and transgressions. ... Remember the awesome day of God to come, when all of us are committed to give an account of our deeds.... All the ambassadors who come to your presence, come with gold, precious gifts, and enormous wealth; As for me, I have nothing to present to you other than the holy statute of Jesus Christ; and the example He gave us on the cross, when He forgave those who crucified Him]

Here, the heart of the emperor was so filled with the fear of God, to say: [If our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, for our sake, became a slave, and delivered Himself to be crucified on the cross; If He sought from His Father to forgive those who crucified Him, How can I dare hesitate to forgive my enemies?!

Returning to Antioch with the good news of amnesty, the population came out to receive their patriarch with cheers and exultation; and they all celebrated the

glorious feast of the Resurrection. As for St. John Chrysostom, he recited the verses of thanksgiving and praise to God; for the people of Antioch were dead and came back to life; and were lost, and are now found; and in his sermon # 21, he did not forget to describe Father Flavian as a Christian hero, who endured labor, and risked his own life for the sake of his children. Yet much of the favor was referred to St. John Chrysostom, whose “sermons of the statutes” have drawn both Christians and pagans to God;

Sermons on David And Saul by St. John Chrysostom:

If the famous sermons of the statutes have drawn the sight of the Christian world to St. John Chrysostom, as a luminous star; We should not forget his three sermons on David and Saul, he gave on the same occasion, either before or after the return of the Patriarch with the good news.

In those three sermons, St. John Chrysostom concentrated on what came in (1 Samuel 24) concerning Saul, who, together with three thousand men, chosen from all Israel, chased David to kill him; And when Saul unknowingly entered alone into a cave where David was hiding, and could easily killed him; David’s men counseled him, saying: *“This is the day of which the lord said to you: ‘Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you’.* Refusing their counsel, David arose and secretly cut off a

corner of Saul's robe. Now it happened afterwards that David's heart troubled him because he cut Saul's robe" (1 Samuel 24: 4, 5)

Those sermons came to reveal the exaltation of the person of David, and his role in turning Saul who persisted on getting rid of him, to come to acknowledge his righteousness, and to confirm the deliverance of the throne to him. Those three sermons present to us several aspects of the person of David.

Why did St. John Chrysostom talk about David and Saul?

Some may wonder: why did St. John Chrysostom talk about David and Saul in that specific occasion, when all were anxiously waiting for the return of the father Patriarch carrying, either a decree of amnesty, or a verdict of death! ... What was going on in the mind of the Patriarch? ... Who represented David, and who represented Saul?

1- The priest St. John Chrysostom's mind was only preoccupied with the enjoyment by both the emperor and the people of the living fellowship with God; that all would care for the purity of their heart, for the perpetual growth of their Christian practical faith; and that no party would ever fall into anger or self-righteousness.

2- In his three sermons, St. John Chrysostom confirms the work of the divine grace in the life of believers. For it was not possible for David to pay evil back with good; hatred with love, and Saul's haughtiness with humility, unless the grace of God works in him.

3- St. John Chrysostom was preoccupied with showing the power of the gentle word in the heart of both the speaker and the listener; and the possibilities of man to change the life of the wicked, however cruel their hearts are, and however corrupt their thoughts.

Those three sermons will remain a spring from which the believer draws the water of knowledge, as long as he is still in the body, seeing in the darkness of this world, and the sorrowful events confronting the church, as well

as the believer, a chance for the life of the church as a whole, and the believer as a member, to glitter like a star that reflects the splendor of the light of the Sun of Righteousness; and for the believer to set forth from glory to glory, drawing many with him to the heavenly glories.

4- The saint also referred to the concept of leadership in the life of the prophet David; who had an active role in the life of the military leaders around him, and led them by the spirit of meekness, turning the battle fields into

centers of worship and testimony, where tolerance and compassion are practiced even toward the enemies.

The prophet David and emperor Theodoceus:

According to some, although emperor Theodoceus was wrong to order too high a tax on the people, to cover the expenses of the celebration of his enthronement and the partnership of his son therein, yet he likened the prophet David in certain aspects, of which are the following:

1- The people of Antioch, in their wrong reaction to the high tax, breaking down the statutes of the king and his household, liken what Saul and his men did in dealing with David, intending to kill him and his men for the sake of

nothing wrong on their part.

2- The way David was under the pressure of his men who sought from him to get rid of Saul who persisted on killing him; So did the counselors of the emperor, who sought from him to burn the city down, so as not to lose

control over the whole empire.

3- Preparing his men to adopt his good measures through their company with him; turning the cave as though into a church; in which he, as a leader, turned as though into a priest or a bishop; The same way, the emperor

committed himself to forgiveness, to teach his people by the good example, to forgive their brethren,

4- Saul slandered David, in spite of the fact that he saved him from many risks with faithfulness and courage; and here David spares the life of him who intended to kill him, It was befitting of Saul to recognize his shameful attitude, and to repent. The same way, as the emperor forgave his people, it was befitting of them to repent and return to God.

5- David's heart troubled him, because he felt that cutting Saul's robe proves that he bears in his depths some grudge against Saul; which is against the purity of his heart, and his hope for eternity. By telling his men that it is not befitting of him to stretch his hand toward God's anointed, he rebukes himself, and seeks from God not to allow him to have in the depths of his heart and mind, any trace of grudge or hatred. The same way with the emperor, although he forgave the city, he was committed to search his own depths lest there would be some traces of grudge against his people, that might corrupt the salvation of his soul.

A practical cure, and A deep thought:

1- The writings of St. Chrysostom, as a godly father, a shepherd, and a man of the Holy Book, were characterized by concentration upon the practical aspects of the life of believers, together with deep interpretation of the

Word of God. He was known for binding between the practical behavior in Jesus Christ, and the trust in the work of the free divine grace. He saw in the gospel of Christ, the practical guide to all aspects of his daily life, together with the meditation in the heavenlies, and the enjoyment of the knowledge of the divine secrets.

2- The saint calls on us, in our practical life, to follow the lead of the blessed prophet David; which would not be possible to realize, except by a close study of David's life, of his thoughts, and secrets in the Lord.

3- In his three sermons, St. John Chrysostom deals with some seemingly difficult issues.

4- Being a living leader, St. John believes that a faithful and an honest believer in the Lord, would never cease to stir up the spirit of leadership into those under his care, and into those around him.

5- The saint is keen on provoking the perpetual spirit of repentance, and of continuous growth in the life of believers.

6- The main line in the three sermons is revealing the features of the personality of the prophet David, and his upright or "sound values"; Yet, every now and then, he presents, certain positive and negative training steps, for the

believer to enjoy a living and integral personality. He, sometimes deals with certain well known popular illnesses; and some other times, he talks about the sanctification of the tongue and its activity in the inner life; or deals

with some faulty social phenomena, like going to immoral theaters that are against the proper edification; Or deals with certain familial problems. He is preoccupied with the integral life of man on all aspects.

THE FIRST SERMON

1- David's care for "the sound values";

St. John Chrysostom often repeats the expression: "sound values". What does he mean by it?

- + When the body of man has a painful infection that lasts long, and is difficult to get rid of, he would be in need of a high professional help from an able physician to treat him, to uproot the cause of the infection. You can see the same way with the soul, when you have to uproot certain ailments that have run deep and settled for long in it; which one or two days would not be enough to reform.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Choosing the expression “sound values” reveals St. John’s care for entering into the depths of the soul, mind, and heart. Although man could practice some good works, yet they may not come out of sound values, nor emerge from his emotions, and senses; namely from his inner man, set upon true and growing knowledge.

By His incarnation, our Christ, becoming a complete man, seeks from us to sanctify our whole inner and outer being. His gospel does not disregard the human mind which He gave us, but His Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads it, to be always exalted.

In the introduction to his first sermon on ‘David and Saul’, St. John intends to show the difference between the two personalities; namely, that, although both bear the same human nature, prone to weakness, yet the prophet David cared much for the soundness of his spiritual well being; unceasingly crying out to the heavenly physician, capable of healing that nature; but, at the same time, he was keen on caring for the salvation of his soul, on the persistent strife, depending upon the grace of God.

Although David had his own faults, yet he cared for uprooting them by the divine help, by his own strife, by his desire for the continual growth, and by holding fast to the holy sound values. Saul, on the other hand, although he

had some seemingly good works, yet he did not care for the purity of his heart, and for the glory of God in him; he was only preoccupied with his popularity and outer appearance before men.

2- David's pure heart:

If St. John Chrysostom, at the beginning of his talk, revealed the need for a spiritual Physician, capable of healing the soul, together with our commitment to continuous strife; Now he presents to us as a role model, a righteous man, to whom God Himself testifies to the purity of his heart, namely, the prophet David.

It is befitting of us, while imitating this righteous man, to be preoccupied with the testimony of the One who searches the heart and mind, When God testifies to the purity of heart of someone, he would not fear how men see him, nor even how he sees himself; The apostle says: *"For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things"* (1 John 3: 20). And St. Clement of Alexandria says: [God's authority is greater than the conscience that belongs to the soul; for God's love knows every thing].

The purity of our hearts does not depend on the judgment of our consciences, that could deceive us, but we should seek the judgment of God Himself, before whom nothing is hidden; and sing: [*"Darkness is not dark to You ... To You it is like the light"*; it hides nothing from You].

+ Let us now present to you a role model of a righteous man, to imitate and to follow his lead. Who is that man to whom we refer when talking about mercy, but him who has got a testimony from up high; about whom the Holy Book, on the tongue of the Lord, says: "*I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart*" (Acts 13: 23; 1 Samuel 13: 14; Psalm 89: 20).

Now, as this is the testimony of God Himself, there is no need for further discussion; for God does not judge out of partiality, nor of hatred, but bases His judgment upon the actual purity of the soul.

(St. John Chrysostom)

3- David exalts to the values of the new covenant, while still under the shadow of the law:

in the introduction to his sermon, St. John Chrysostom referred to that we are in need to perceive the seriousness of the illnesses of our souls, and our need for the expertise and possibilities of the divine Physician, to resort to Him with persistence. The sign of the soundness of our soul, goes farther than our outer behavior; but touches the purity of our hearts, as testified by the One who

searches the heart and mind, and testified to David the son of Jesse; and revealed the level reached by that righteous man under the shadow of the Mosaic law.

The highest desire of the men of God under the shadow of the law was to walk according to the Mosaic statute that forbids them to unjustly oppress anyone; then to go to a higher level of tolerance, which is to pay back the oppression of someone against them, not by greater oppression, but by one of equal volume, without going far in vengeance; something that was very hard to commit themselves; for their desire was to avenge themselves with a harsher reaction, so that the aggressor would not oppress them again.

The righteous David, through the grace of God, could even surpass that level, to ascend to a higher level. He did not pay back Saul's evil against him with an equal evil, nor with a lesser one, and not even with forgiveness, but exalted to pay him back with good; by which he ascended to the commandment of the new covenant. He believed that by so doing, he will not only annul Saul's evil, but will turn his heart's eyes to long for practicing good instead of evil, love instead of hatred, and mercy instead of violence.

It is befitting of us, in the era of grace, to follow the lead of the righteous David, who could not endure to feel offended against Saul, who did his utmost best to

kill him; but, in the purity of his heart, intended to love him, and give him good instead of evil, to which Saul himself testified (1 Samuel 24: 17).

+ Behold, you can see, being in the era of grace, how marvelous it is to be liberated from even the feeling of grudge against the oppressors and their corrupt ways; after the amazing example given to us by the Lord Christ who forgave His crucifiers while on His cross; When, in the old covenant, on the contrary, the statutes allowed for plucking an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth (Leviticus 24: 20); and for paying the oppressor back with what is equal to his oppression. Who among the listener does not marvel for the presence of such a righteous man – David, who exalts himself beyond the Mosaic statutes, to reach up to the measures of the new covenant?!

(St. John Chrysostom)

4- David never went astray from his goal:

What is amazing in the personality of the righteous David, is that his exaltation to the values of the new covenant, while living in the old covenant, was not just a mental philosophy that he may debate and defend, but rather a practical way of life. That exaltation cost him much, a price he paid with joy and pleasure, in the following ways:

a-The perseverance and longsuffering he put in his heart to endure with pleasure and without grumbling, set him a king of authority over his mind, heart, senses, and emotions; by which, according to St. John Chrysostom, he was worthy of being crowned with the crown of perseverance.

b- Revealing those exalted values, not by idiotic debates, but by practicing the forgiveness in a way that surpasses human nature.

c- Holding fast to his position, with no diversion to the right nor to the left. It was impossible for the military leaders, the chosen mighty men of valor around David, who were fugitives fleeing from Saul from one place to another, to see a chance to get rid of him, and not to use it. Seeing Saul enter the cave alone, they hastened to give David the good news of the golden chance to kill the evil Saul, and to receive the throne according to the promise of God .But they were shocked to hear David refuse to stretch a hand against Saul, or to allow any of them to do. According to their military logic, and even to human one, Saul the aggressive will never change his position, and the only way is to get rid of him by killing him. They revealed their thoughts to David, yet he, in the purity of his heart, rejected their logic, and did not pervert from his exalted life in the Lord, to the right or to the left.

According to St. John Chrysostom, David alone had the conviction of confronting evil with good; while all those around him, the military leaders who have for long, suffered the oppression of Saul, and were longing to have rest from their suffering; specially when they perceived the extent of his envy, jealousy, and evil desire to get rid of David. The only solution according to them was to kill him once and for all; and that the chance within their reach is unique and will never happen again.

They tried to convince David that killing Saul, will not only save him and all of them from their troubles, but will rather realize God's plan, by delivering Saul to their hands.. But David, with his godliness, could confirm to them that God, by delivering Saul to their hands, has granted them a chance, not to kill him and save themselves from his oppression, but rather to exalt their life by forgiving him. David, believing that goodness is stronger and greater than evil; and that light scatters darkness; could convince them to forgive Saul, and not to touch his life. By that David never diverted from his goal under all circumstances.

- + That godly man concentrated on one thing, which is to get the crown of perseverance, and of the high values of the amazing supernatural forgiveness. That godly man, was not only unmoved by the counsel of those around him, but succeeded in drawing them to his side ... particularly when they were, not regular people, but military leaders who were totally exhausted, and who lost every hope of having comfort

because of the many troubles Saul caused them; and who were completely convinced that they could end all their troubles in an instant by killing their enemy. Nevertheless, under such an enormous pressure, that noble man could overcome all of them, and could even convince them to follow his lead and forgive their enemy.

Notice that they did not try to remind him of all the evil deeds that Saul did against him, and that he persist on having him killed; for they knew for sure that David did not care for all that; but they resorted to remind him of the decree granted to him by the Most High; and that it is God Himself who delivered him to his hands. They tried to convince that by killing Saul, he would serve the will of God, and consummate His ordinances. Yet the more they say, the more was his persistence on forgiving him; being convinced that by delivering his enemy to his hand, God grants him a chance to prove how he could walk in perfection. He was not preoccupied with getting the throne, and enjoying royalty; Although he perceived that by forgiving Saul, he would, most probably go back to his old tricks, which would for sure subject him to greater risks, yet he did not intend to destroy him..

(St. John Chrysostom)

5- David was very particulate concerning his spiritual behavior:

Although David did not stretch his hand to kill Saul, who did his best to kill David and his men; but he only cut off the corner of his robe; yet his heart troubled him (1 Samuel 24: 4, 5). He felt that, although he did not cause Saul any harm, yet what he dared to do was as a sign that he had a grudge against Saul in the depths of his heart, for which he was truly sorry. According to St. John Chrysostom, David, feeling that a tempest of grudge had blown within his depths; that threatened to sink the (ship) of his heart; he hastened to wake up and to resort to God to grant him tranquility and peace in his depths. Although no one around him felt that David's heart troubled him; yet he, himself, felt as though he is a captain of a chariot, and he was about to lose control of the horses pulling it, that would end up by his perdition. Being an alert and watching leader he had to hasten up regain control over the horses before it is too late. Even though no one around him felt anything that went on in his heart, to judge him; but he was keen not to distort the image of his Creator which he bears, by any unbecoming behavior.

- + What David did was what any of the saintly men of God would normally do; who, being watchful and alert, they stand aright before they fall, and control themselves before committing any sin

“His heart troubled him”, for cutting the corner of Saul’s robe, and said to his men: *“The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord’s anointed”*. Namely; even if I happen to have the inner intention, I wish the Lord would have mercy on me; and does not allow me to consummate such a sin. Knowing for sure that such sound measure surpasses the possibility of human nature, he sought the grace from up high to keep his hands pure of defilement.

(St. John Chrysostom)

6- David’s amazing view of Saul who intends to kill him:

Despite the fact that Saul had the intention of killing David with any possible way, yet David did not see him as an enemy, but as a little son, who acts in ignorance. Hence his reaction was to try to save Saul from the feelings of envy, hatred, and anger, that prevailed upon his depths.

- + The righteous man directed his prayers to a direction, contrary to what his men sought; he prayed to God not to allow him to avenge himself; saying: *“The Lord forbids that I stretch my hand to the Lord’s anointed”*; talking about his enemy as though a son to him.

It was a great chance for Saul to embrace David as a son, and not as a competitor; even though the women sang for him as being the conqueror of tens of thousands, while describing Saul as the conqueror of thousands. Yet Saul's evil eye made him, instead of embracing David as a son, to consider him a serious threat to his throne. While David, much junior to Saul in age, and much less in position and possibilities, with his simple eye, dealt with Saul like a father toward his son. The young man became a father, and the grown up man became like a son.

7- David and his simple pure eye:

The first time king Saul came to know the young man David, and to perceive his exalted possibilities, has been through David's living faith in the Lord of hosts, on the battle field before the mighty Goliath; an encounter from which David came back victorious, and presented the sword of Goliath to the tabernacle of meeting, as a sign of his thanksgiving to God, and confessing that it Was God who actually conquered.

David, although much younger than Saul, and less than him in position and possibilities, with his pure eye, he dealt with Saul like a father toward his son. The young became a father, and the older one became a son.

That fatherhood that seems contrary to nature and tradition, poured in David's heart, and mind, understanding and wisdom. Forgiving Saul, not killing him, and forbidding his men to kill him, David dealt with Saul like a father dealing with his son. Admonishing Saul, but not intending to hurt his feeling, he provided him with excuses that his attempts to kill him came as a result of the counsel of those around him. Speaking to Saul, like his son, he intended to take reproach away from him, by not referring his actions to an evil heart, nor a corrupt will, but to a bad counsel. That is how wise fathers should do with their children, to open before them a way to reconsider their behavior, and to change their unbecoming actions, to think instead with the spirit of friendship and love.

David presented two basis for forgiving Saul:

- a-The first is that what he did was because the bad counsel of wicked men around him; proclaiming that he wishes to save him of them.
- b-That even if Saul has done what he did on his own; being the Lord's anointed, no one has the right to stretch his hand to him; For the sake of the Lord Himself, Saul should be honored.
- + He not only forgave Saul, but he provided him, as well, with excuses for his actions.

See how David was understanding and wise. Despite knowing for sure that there was nothing good in Saul's life, yet he would not allow himself to accuse him of doing him anything wrong; although the mighty men around him were convinced of what is contrary to this, having actual experience of his evil actions.

Taking another direction as a basis for his forgiveness, Saul referred to Saul's legal position as "the Lord's anointed". It is as though he said to those around him: Well! He may be repulsive, he may be all bad; he may embrace an intense feeling of hate and jealousy against me and all of you. Yes! But he is the king, appointed by God to rule over us; Above everything he is "*the Lord's anointed*"; he got his honor, not from here on earth, but from up high. You, therefore should fear Him who gave him his authority.

If we fear the officers appointed by the king, even though they may be corrupt, greedy, and oppressors, and if we do not despise them for their evil, but honor them for the sake of him who set them on us, It is befitting of us to do the same in what concerns God.

(St. John Chrysostom)

8- David and his wide heart:

Comparing between Saul with his narrow and closed heart, and David with his wide heart, even toward him who insults him; Saul with his narrow mind and dark heart, did never utter David's name on his lips, but said to his son Jonathan: "*Why has the son of Jesse not come to eat?*" (1 Samuel 20: 27); he called him "the son of Jesse" to show his despise of his origin, having a simple and poor father, a shepherd of sheep. David, on the other hand, when his men sought his permission to kill Saul, did not call Saul by name, nor called him "the son of Kish" to despise him, or even "the king", but called him by a more honorable title: "the Lord's anointed". How far is Saul's heart from David's heart!

According to St. John Chrysostom, the gentle words and nice expressions, even of those who oppress us, would actually appease the anger in our hearts, and would change our feelings from grudge to love. The best healing for the spirit of anger in our hearts toward our oppressors, is to sanctify our words,

- + Saul could not call that saint (David) by his name; because of his intense animosity toward him. On a certain celebration of a feast, he asked: "*Where is the son of Jesse?*" (1 Samuel 20: 27), out of his hate of his name, and in an attempt to destroy the reputation of that righteous young

man, by referring to his poor father; not perceiving that , it is not the status of the parents, but the exultation of the soul, that make man famous and righteous.

Anyway, David, on the contrary, did not treat Saul likewise, despite his father's poor and humble status; and he even, in complete innocence, did not call his name without his title as the king, and his high authority.

My beloved, I wish you follow the lead of that righteous man; and learn from this lesson; I wish you never call your enemies by bad names, but refer to them with honor. I wish your mouths get used to utter the good words, that the soul itself would accordingly change; for words themselves are the best remedy for the anger of the heart.

(St. John Chrysostom)

THE SECOND SERMON

A call to cherish the prophet David:

With wisdom, St. John Chrysostom began his second sermon on "David and Saul", by blessing those who listen to him, for the sake of their cherishing the person of David.

Quoting the words of the apostle St. Paul: "*who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also approve of those who practice them*"

(Romans 1: 32); St. John Chrysostom comments on this phrase, saying, that those who approve of those who practice evil are worse than those who practice them. He probably means that those who practice evil, may fall into it, probably out of ignorance or weakness; whereas those who approve of them, persist on commending evil by an evil will and intention.

Commending those who practice evil is worse than practicing it. That is why St.

John does not bless David alone on his sound values, but he blesses, as well, his listeners, for commending those sound values.

According to St. Clement of Alexandria: God says that whoever does such things, and whoever approves those who do them, are hated by Him.

+ You see that, not only practicing virtue, but also approving and admiring those who practice it, will earn a valuable reward. And likewise, not only practicing evil, but also approving those who practice it, are worthy of

punishment After presenting a list of every kind of evil, accusing all those who disobey the statutes of God, Paul goes on to say about those who practice them: *“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself, for you who judge practice the same things”* (See Romans 1: 32; 2: 1).

You see that he shows that those who commend the sinners are worthy of a greater punishment, on account of that their commendation comes from a corrupt mind, and an incurable defiled soul.. He who shows remorse after committing a sin, will be healed from it; whereas he who commends evil and those who practice it, denies himself the healing that is realized by repentance. The way those who approve will partake of the same punishment, and probably more, those who commend and admire the good will partake of the crowns they earn.

You can see in the Holy Book how God said to Abraham: *“I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse”* (Genesis 12: 3); The same you see in the Olympic games; that it is not only the winner for the sake of his strife and effort, who is adorned with the crown, but even those who admires and encourage him, will enjoy satisfaction and pride.

That is why I bless, not only the righteous David for his sound values, but I, as well, bless you all for the sake of cherishing him. He fought, conquered, and was crowned, and you, who were glad for his conquest, will earn a great deal of his crown.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Here, St. John Chrysostom reveals the reason behind the care of the church to celebrate and cherish the feasts of the saints, by which she intends to exhort the believers to cherish those who walk in the Lord Jesus Christ, to admire the work of God in and with them, to imitate them, and to partake of their heavenly crown; She intends, as well, to exhort the believers not to commend those who practice evil, lest they would partake of their eternal punishment. He who seeks the intercession of the saints, following their good example, would truly partake of their glories and their crowns; and by following their lead, would become a living icon of the Lord Christ.

9- Is David, a leader of a battle, or a guardian and a keeper of his enemies?

Seeing how David tried hard to convince his men of the necessity to forgive Saul, and not to harm him in any way, whatever the consequence are, St. John

Chrysostom stood confused how could he judge his amazing position: Is he a leader of a battle, or a guardian and a keeper of his enemies: How, while caring for the salvation of his military companions, he counted himself a guardian of Saul, not to protect him of being killed by his military aids, but of the eternal perdition.

+ According to the historian, David, courageously *“restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul”* (1 Samuel 24: 7); with the intention of taking away their longing to shed his blood; By refraining from stretching his hands toward his enemy, and forbidding those around him to do it, he acted as a guardian and a protector of his enemy.. You can say that, in that moment, it was David himself, and not Saul, who was in danger.

Actually, there was no chance for controversy; for while David was preoccupied with his efforts to save Saul from their intentions; he did not fear for his own safety from his military aids; he managed to appease their anger and their longing to shed blood; while the accused (Saul) was sleeping all the time. And while David was defending him, God decided to reward him.

(St. John Chrysostom)

10- Is David, a leader of a battle, or a teacher, a priest, a bishop, or an altar of the Lord?

Again, the St. John Chrysostom stands in awe, marveling in his depths. He sees David as “a good teacher”, who was preoccupied, not only to refrain from stretching his hands to harm Saul, but, as a godly teacher, he cared, as well, not to let any of his disciples in the Lord, stretch his hand to evil. If his military aids accompanied David to defend him against the evil attempts of Saul to kill him, he, as well, accompanied them to keep them from committing or even thinking of any evil. The way he cared for his own salvation, he also cared for that of his beloved disciples.

He saw the godly David as a priest or a bishop. Wherever he was he counted himself in the presence of the Lord, and in a holy temple. The cave in David's eyes was like a holy church, where he practiced teaching as a priest or a bishop to his congregation; And he also talked later to Saul, to guide him to the way of his salvation; he preached the truth, and cared for the salvation of all.

David practiced teaching, not only by works, but also by talking to his aids, as well as to his opponent. In the eyes of St. John Chrysostom, he was like a priest or a bishop offering a sacrifice of love, meekness, and mercy; He also saw him like a ransom; delivering, by his forgiveness, his own life to the one who sought

his soul; And he saw him, as well, as a holy altar, and a temple of the Lord; where he did not allow for any unbecoming thought to exist.

+ You can see that, without the work of God, David could never manage to have the authority on those high things stirred up around him. It was the grace of God that put those convincing words on his lips. Because he has already conformed them in the past, and therefore, he found them in the crucial moment, ready to respond positively to his counsel. You can see that he was not acting in his capacity as a leader whose word may not be questioned, but as a priest who preaches; and the cave as a church.

After giving a sermon, as a bishop, he offered a magnificent and not a regular sacrifice, not offering a bull as a sacrifice, nor a lamb, but what is greater, he offered to God meekness and mercy, slaying the hidden hate, killing the anger, and bringing to death the members on earth. He acted as a ransom, a priest, and an altar; he offered to God the thought of compassion, mercy, and meekness.

(St. John Chrysostom)

11-David enjoys a unique spiritual conquest:

According to St. John Chrysostom, one of the healthy values adopted and cherished by David was his enjoyment of an inner conquest by the Lord working in him. The believer sets forth from a conquest to a conquest in a battle, in which the field is the heart, the weapon is the Lord, and the enemy is the devil and his works, and the crown is set in heaven.

According to the saint, this battle entered by David was so unique and secret, that his battle against Goliath could not be compared to it for the following reasons:

- a- His former battle was against a fierce human being, who ridiculed God, and defied His people; while the later was against the devil and sin.
- b- The weapon of the former battle was a little stone and a sling, but in the name of the Lord of host; while the later was without weapons.
- c- The spoil of the former battle – the sword of Goliath – was kept in the tabernacle of meeting; while that of the later was kept in the paradise; namely, in the soul of David, that will set forth to the High Jerusalem.
- d- At the end of the former battle, David and Saul came back to be received by women dancing and singing for the conquest, while at the end of the later, the heavenly hosts came out in admiration of David who reached such an exalted spiritual level.
- e- In the former battle we did not see any sacrifice offered to God, while in the later a valuable sacrifice was offered by David, which brought pleasure

to God, a sacrifice of brotherly love, with the spirit of humility. For by refraining from killing Saul, and forbidding his men to kill him, is counted for David as a sacrifice that God smells as sweet fragrance; which is called by St. John Chrysostom “an exalted sacrifice”/

f- The later battle does not need a memorial to commemorate that conquest ; for it is recorded in heaven, where the name of the conqueror is written in the book of life.

+ Saul waked up and left the cave, knowing nothing of what happened; then David followed him (1 Samuel 24: 8), looking up toward heaven with eyes free of anxiety; and happier than he was after slaying Goliath and cutting the head of that fierce man.

The later battle was actually more magnificent than the former; for its spoil was more royal, the great gain was more glorious, and the memorial was more admirable.

In the former battle he needed a sling and stones, and to proceed to the line of battle; while in the later, it was the mind that did everything; the conquest was realized with no weapons; and the memorial was set with no blood shed. In the later battle he did not come back with the head of his fierce enemy, but bringing his anger and his inner grudge to death.

In the later battle He placed the spoil not in Jerusalem, but in heaven, the Higher city.

In the later battle, there were no women dancing and singing; but there were angelic hosts admiring his sound values and his pure spirit.

In the later battle he actually caused many scars to the enemy: On one aspect, he saved Saul's life, and on another aspect, he afflicted the true enemy with many strikes.

(St. John Chrysostom)

12- David enjoys the crown of righteousness, and not the crown of Saul:

According to his companions, David's conquest had to be killing Saul, and receiving the crown of the kingdom; while David perceived that his battle was *"against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this age"* (Ephesians 6: 12). David's war was not to avenge himself against Saul who entered into an unwarranted animosity, but was against the inner grudge toward him, which he wished to get rid of.. As we said before, David came out of the battle, with a heart full of pleasure, on account of that he conquered the devil; set his memorial in the Higher Jerusalem, and carried his spoils up to heaven.

Here, St. John Chrysostom compares between David, bearing the crown of conquest; not through challenging the fire of a furnace like the three young men,

nor the hungry lions like Daniel, but the destructive fire of sin, the hungry lions of covetousness, and the more dangerous faulty feelings.

- + As you can see, how that creature (the devil) becomes happy and joyful to see us having grudge toward someone, entering into battles, and stirred up against each others; And how he, being an enemy of peace, an adversary of good relations, and a father of jealousy, is shocked to see us enjoying exalted peace, in full control of our inner feelings.

In the ancient wrestling arenas, the emperor used to deliver the crown of conquest into the right hand of the winner, instead of putting it on his head; Here we see David carrying on his hand a crown more precious than the whole world – the crown of righteousness; We see him, not clothed with a scarlet robe, but with supernatural mercy, which is more splendid than any robe. We see God crown his right hand that managed to draw the sword without covering it with the blood of fierce anger. We see him coming out of the cave with an amazing splendor, the way the three young men came untouched out of the fire of the furnace, and the way Daniel came out of the lions den. David confronted more vicious lions put everywhere in the cave ; namely, his grudge toward Saul because of his past attempts on his life; as well as those he expects in the future. Yet he managed to shut the mouths of those lions; teaching us that there is

nothing that give more security than forgiving the enemy; and there is nothing more dangerous than planning revenge against them.

I here proclaim that David is blessed, not on account of that his enemy is cast underneath his feet, but that he spared his life when he was within his hand; by the power of God on one aspect, and through his sound values on another aspect.

Those around David looked at him, not as they do at a mortal man, but as an angel, even before God; for he, personally reaped here a greater benefit than what his adversary did, and gained a more splendid victory than if he killed Saul.

Think of this inside your soul; when your enemy is within your authority, forgiving him is better and of more benefit than killing him. For he who kills, in many circumstances, judges himself, will have an evil conscience, and the ghost of his crime will chase him day and night; while he who forgives will exult be joyful; anticipating a greater reward for his perseverance from God.

(St. John Chrysostom)

13-David's humility before Saul to whom he granted His goodness:

As the virtue bears its reward in it, the way sin bears its corruption in it; heaven recorded, as though on an eternal memorial how David challenged even his feeling of grudge toward him who intended to kill him; and how he pleasantly forgave him, refrained from causing him any harm, and called him "the Lord's anointed". According to St. John Chrysostom, David got the deposit of this crown while still in this world, not by receiving the throne, but by his inner conquest, his humility before him whom he has forgiven; and talking to him with the spirit of compassion and love.

- + Let us see what happened after that: "*David also arose afterwards, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying: 'My lord the king'; and when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down*" (1 Samuel 24: 8). That behavior was a sign of an extraordinary soul, that is not puffed up by the goodness it gives to a neighbor, nor despise those whom they do a favor like slaves. But David showed more self control even after doing good; because he does not refer the goodness he did to himself, but to the divine grace. For this, he, although he saved the life of his adversary, he bowed down before him, addressed him as the king, and referred to himself as his servant; by which he managed to bridle his fury, appeased his hate, and took away his envy.

(St. John Chrysostom)

With wisdom David asks Saul to reconsider his behavior:

St. John Chrysostom wonders why David told Saul: “*Why do you listen to the words of men who say: ‘Indeed David seeks your harm?’*” (1 Samuel 24: 9). How could he say so when he knows that everyone bear for him love and appreciation? St. John Chrysostom could not imagine that, around Saul, there is anyone who would utter one word against David, on account of that, in the depths, they all bear feelings of love and admiration toward David. According to him, he so said to make Saul reconsider his behavior, and to perceive that what provoked him to this animosity and hatred is not men, but his own evil mind. For, even Jonathan the son of Saul was in a relationship of intense love with David, and the military people around Saul admired him; what Saul, therefore, bears of animosity and malice was coming from his wicked depths.

David, not intending to destroy Saul’s psyche, hinted to him that what he does is according to the counsel of the wicked. He is as though he does not blame Saul, but provides him with an excuse for his aggressive attitude; a

way, according to St. John Chrysostom, often followed by parents in dealing with their naughty child when he or she misbehave.

- + A father would often sit alone with his child who goes far in his misbehavior; and although he is totally sure that what the child does is out of his own free choice, yet he tends to put the blame for his misbehavior on others, and not on his child. Hearing this, it would be easier for the child to gradually turn his behavior around, and responds to his father's advice.

The apostle Paul did the same thing when he wrote to the Galatians (Galatians 1: 7). After a long talk, and several direct accusations against them, at the end of his epistle, he wrote: "*I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind, but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is*" (Galatians 5: 10). Intending to appease the charges against them, to encourage them to raise them to a position of self defense.

That is exactly what David did when he tried to convince Saul that his animosity toward him is because others tell him that David seeks to harm him. And in his self defense he said to him: "*Look, this day have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch*

my hand against my Lord, for he is the Lord's anointed" (1 Samuel 24: 10) Namely, my behavior today is my best defense against the false accusations of those people; which are more convincing than any words I may say.

(St. Jhn Chrysostom)

14- True feelings without any false compliment:

David's behavior reveal how his depths are full of love and compassion.

He was in no need of defending himself before Saul by words, for his behavior testified to him in a better way.

He indeed, cried out to God to grant him more purity; when his heart troubled him for cutting off the corner of Saul's robe; but God turned even that action into a practical testimony for David's compassion, more convincing to Saul and those around him than mere words.

David's compassion persisted even until Saul's death. For, hearing of the death of Saul, his three sons, and his armor-bearer in the battle, David was not preoccupied with that it was high time to receive the throne for which he was anointed by the prophet Samuel while still a young boy; but his heart burned with

grief, and he and those around him tore their garments, cried, lamented, and fasted until the evening on Saul and his son Jonathan (2 Samuel 1: 11-12).

- + As the will of the judge (Saul), and the witnesses (those around him) were corrupt, and were more inclined to doubt any words David might say; That is why God allowed for the existence of such an undisputable evidence that would mute their mouths and make them in great shame; Namely, the cut off corner of Saul's robe. That silent proof says: If I was not standing very close to you while sleeping in the cave, I would not be able to cut the corner of your robe.

Can you see that, if it was not for the grudge that David had in his heart, for which he was troubled, we would not be able to recognize his sound values. For by such action, he has got the undisputable proof of his good intention toward his enemy. With such a true and clear testimony, he called his enemy to be his judge and witness; saying to him: "*For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you; Yet you hunt my life to take it*" (1 Samuel 24: 11). By saying this, David was meek and free of any haughtiness; but his eyes concentrated on only one thing; namely the Lord's judgment...

When he heard that Saul fell in the battle, he tore his garment, threw dust over his head, fasted until the evening, and lamented with this lamentation over Saul and Jonathan his son ; a lamentation only said by a father on his only son. He cursed the mountains of Gilboa that received the blood of his beloved friends, saying: "*O mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, nor let it be no rain upon you; for the shield of the mighty is cast away there*" (2 Samuel 1: 21). He kept repeating the two names (Saul and Jonathan) again and again; saying: "*Saul and Jonathan were beloved and pleasant in their lives and in their death; they were not divided*" (2 Samuel 1: 23). Not being able to kiss their corpses, he makes up by mentioning their names again and again, in an attempt to appease his grief on the great catastrophe.

THE THIRD SERMON

St. John Chrysostom gave this sermons before the arrival of the Patriarch of Antioch with the imperial decree of amnesty; when the people were anticipating the news, disturbed, confused, and with tears. Hence the saint sought from them to look at David who was not disturbed by what dwelt upon him because the animosity of Saul, but loved him together with his son Jonathan; and faithfully shed tears on them when they died. The people of Antioch, according to the saint should likewise, think of the emperor with love and admiration; should partake of the righteousness that David loved in the Lord, and enjoy the sound and exalted values which he adopted and lived.

In the midst of that bitter affliction, there was a group of people who thought that their comfort would be realized through their enjoyment of unethical houses of fun and theaters, instead of taking refuge in the house of God, where they would enjoy joy and peace, and be spared of the destructive grief and despair. That is why St. John Chrysostom began his third sermon drawing the attention of his listener to the danger of that faulty tendency that stirs up covetousness, corrupt the purity of mind and heart; and produce a spirit of dissension even within the same family; and by reminding them of how David set forth in exaltation that goes beyond all forms of perseverance in his dealing with king Saul, who persisted on oppressing David, seeking his life.

Frequenting the lowly theaters:

Those lowly theaters were known for their seduction to abominations through the songs that stir up evil lusts, unbecoming body movements, and scanty clothing that seduce man to fall into adultery; that man would not find his happiness in his family life; and deny himself of the church angelical atmosphere. And as the church refuses such way of life, faltering between the two ways of life, she bans such people of partaking of the holy communion.

Here St. John Chrysostom, while showing how the church longs for their repentance, to return to the holy life in the Lord; he condemns the violent views

of the followers of 'Novatian', who deny the possibility of forgiveness for sins committed after baptism.

He began his third sermon by saying: [I tend to think that many of those who have formerly deserted us to the banned theaters, are present with us today. I should like to tell them that those who came to be out of the holy gates, should not remain out for long, but will be well received if they reform their ways .with good conscience ... The shepherds are able to separate the lambs infected with dermal disease, away from the whole ones, to keep the serious infection from spreading to the rest of the flock].

The saint calls the people of Antioch to perseverance; and instead of criticizing the emperor with stinging words, for increasing the taxes on them, they should be adorned with longsuffering and endurance, and address him with gentleness, for their own benefit. And to those who claim that they went to the theaters to appease their feeling of affliction because of the acts of the emperor, he calls them to seek, instead, the divine comfort through repentance, and to follow the lead of the longsuffering of the prophet David.

A call to follow the lead of the saints: Paul the apostle, 'Job' the righteous, and David the longsuffering:

Of the most prominent features of the writings of St. John Chrysostom, his bonds with certain personalities of the Holy Book, and his love for them; in particular, St. Paul the apostle, 'Job' the righteous, and David the longsuffering. Of his words: [You know that, while chasing a certain topic, I suddenly fall on Paul, who takes away from what I am talking about, and keep me attached to him until the end. I keep reading the epistles of the blessed Paul twice a week, sometimes three or even four times, when we celebrate the feasts of the martyrs and the saints. I truly enjoy this spiritual trumpet, and rush with enthusiasm to hear his voice dear to me. I completely adore him, as though he actually exists before by insight; I hold him, and talk to him]

According to Anianus of Celeda, of the fifth century, St. John Chrysostom, was not talking about St Paul, but he was as though raising him from the dead, to make him a living example of the Christian perfection.

But in the period of St. John's life, when he was overwhelmed by temptations, he found in the righteous 'Job' a close friend; he loved him as a partner in sufferings; and forgetting himself when to write about him, he says:[It often so seems to me that my love to that hero, sweeps me away from the topic I talk about].

+ Think about how the portrait painters, in order to materialize the true features inside and outside of their subject, they keep close to him for two or three days, to absorb all the secrets of his personality. Now, as our goal

is to give a portrait of David, not of his body, but of his spiritual beauty, we shall bring him to sit close to you, to look at him, and to let his perfection, meekness, and every single virtue in him, be printed upon each one of you.

Ultimately, if the bodily portraits gives the looker a kind of comfort, how much more would the portrait of the soul. While, for the former you have to sit before it in the right atmosphere and illumination; there would be nothing like that for the later portrait; which you can see wherever you are; for it is perpetually in your mind, and before your insight. If you put the portrait of David before you to look and stir at; with time looking at the portrait of virtue, you will gain a complete healing, and will enjoy the sound and pure values.

(St. John Chrysostom)

15- By loving his enemies, David brought joy to men, and gladness to the heavenies:

Here, St. John Chrysostom compares between those who oppress us, bear animosity toward us, and cause us harm, and the multitude of evil attempts that king Saul made against David, in spite of the goodness and compassion of the

later. What excuse can we present for ourselves, while living in the era of grace, and not under the shadow of the Mosaic law like David?!

Looking at how the tamer of the lions, the kings of the forest, turn the vicious beasts into domesticated pets; St. John tells his listeners that by the gentle word and the acts of love, we can, likewise, tame our enemies, and turn their wild nature to friendship, intimacy, meekness, and love.

By our longsuffering toward our enemies, we lose nothing, nor be oppressed, but, on the contrary, would enjoy a good reputation, beloved by everyone, and a subject of God's pleasure.

What David endured of troubles and persecutions by Saul, did not cause him any bitterness, but made out of him the man of psalms and praises; not only in his era, but to this very day; he became beloved even by the heavenly hosts, who cherish those who love their enemies, and those whose hearts are full with joy through praising God. David became more glorious on earth and in heaven; and still is by his amazing example and his sweet psalms; Whereas Saul, by his dark and bitter soul, lost his throne, and, together with his three sons died a shameful death; and anticipates an eternal punishment.

+ No one should say: I have an evil, corrupt, stubborn, and disgusting enemies; For however you may describe them, they would never reach

the level of Saul with his several attempts on David's life. What can you say? Have they confiscated a part of your land? Have they entered into your possessions by force? Have they trespassed your dwelling place? Have they taken your servants away? Have they brought you down to poverty?... Well, they still did not made attempts on your life, the way Saul persisted on doing several times against David's life. And even they attempted once, yet they did not do it again and again: And if they repeated their evil deeds several times, yet they did not fall under your hand, and you forgave them as often.

It is impossible for someone under the shadow of the old covenant, to reach a level of longsuffering and forgiveness; But now, in the era of grace, it should be only natural. David did not hear the parable of the ten thousand talents, and that of the hundred denarii (Matthew 18: 23-30); he did not hear the Lord's prayer that says: "*If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you*" (Matthew 6: 14); He did not see the crucified Christ, nor the flow of the precious blood, nor heard or became blessed by the sound values; He did not enjoy the blessings of the amazing sacrifice; nor had communion of the blood of the Lord. But he, instead was raised under the shadow of the imperfect statutes that did not require such measures; Nevertheless he gained the climax of the sound values of the era of grace.

While you grumble and complain for material losses, David, on the contrary, although he fears of what may happen in the future, and perceives that sparing the life of that man will surely make life insecure for him, and he may perish, yet he did not cease to give care to his enemy and to protect the man who bears such animosity toward him. Who among us can claim that he has more perseverance?!

As for you, you must apply this lesson to the circumstances through which you go through these days. You must perceive that it is possible to reconcile with anyone who bears animosity toward us if we intend to. If taming can turn the most vicious beast into a lamb in meekness, what excuse may we have if we claim that men could not be tamed or drawn to be more compassionate toward us?! ... Concerning animals, ferocity is natural; while, concerning men it is against nature. If we can overcome nature, what excuse may we have when we claim that the freedom of will could not be controlled ... I wish we concentrate on one thing; not on the harm that may come on us from our enemies, but on how we may keep them from harming our souls. David, despite having been a chased fugitive, and a target of plots to end his life, has become more famous, feared than Saul himself, and

even loved by men and God. Are his psalms not sung until this very day? Has he not become famous on earth and more so in heaven? Are not a multitude of goods waiting for him in the kingdom of heavens?! ... On another aspect, What benefit has that miserable fellow got by his evil deeds? Has he not lost his throne? Has he, together with his sons died a horrible death? And what is more serious than the eternal punishment that is waiting for him?!

16- By loving his enemies, David was exalted to the rank of martyrs:

We did not hear that David grumbled against God who allowed for the existence of Saul to oppress him so violently. He counted his existence one of the blessings of God on him; for, by praying for his sake, and seeking mercy for him from God, he was raised up to the rank of martyrs, and earned a multiple crown. While Saul was counted as though has killed David again and again, David, on the other hand, was counted as being martyred again and again; He was counted as a martyr of love, perseverance, and longsuffering.

We often lose much through the false complements of friends; Whereas our enemies motivate us to recognize our faults, if they rightly criticize us; or give us the chance to enjoy the blessings of perseverance and martyrdom.

+ If your enemy plans to destroy your life, and even seeks to have you killed; That will be counted for you as martyrdom, if you pray for him, and seek from God to have mercy on his soul. Let us perceive how David spared the life of him who sought to pin him to the wall with his spear (1 Samuel 19: 9, 10); despite perceiving that he will not resume his old tricks to try to kill him; for which David got a multiple crown. Paul the apostle says: "*By the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily*" (1 Corinthians 15: 31).

Many feel that if they are defamed by their enemies, it would be worse than death, and would not be possible to endure. .. Let us examine carefully such a claim. ...Have they called you an adulterer and fornicator? ... If they rightly said that, you should hasten to mend your ways. And if they were wrong, laugh it out be joyful and exultant, but do not despise them; keeping in mind the Lord's words concerning this: "*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake, rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven*" (Matthew 5: 11, 12); And, "*Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, if they revile you and cast out your name in evil*" (Luke 6: 22, 23)

Even if what they claim is right, if you amiably receive their words, without reviling them back or doing them harm, but sigh in bitterness and

condemn your sins; you will reap a reward not less than what you may get if you receive a false and unjust insult.

Friends often compliment us for the sake of benefit; while enemies display our sins, which we do not see because of our love for ourselves, before our eyes; by rebuking us they motivate us to perceive our need of reform; by which their animosity would be a source of great benefit; and for which they earn our gratitude for letting us perceive our sins, What would be an easier way to get rid of them?!

(St. John Chrysostom)

In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector (Luke 18: 14), St. John Chrysostom portrays the Pharisee attacks the tax-collector even in his prayer, saying that he does commit such many and serious sins as he does.

Yet the tax-collector did not admonish him with a single word, nor justified himself, as many would do, but with a contrite heart, he raised his eyes to heaven, and beat his breast, saying: : "*God, be merciful to me, a sinner*", by which he went down to his house justified.

- + Can you see how he received the reproach, purified himself, recognized his sins, and forsook them? How, unintentionally, his enemy benefited him? How the tax-collector hastened to cast himself on the ground, sat on dust, and gave his goods to the poor?

If we receive the rebukes and reproaches of our enemies with a sound spirit; they would be of benefit to us, whether they are true or false. Why should we then be disturbed? Why should we cry?.... If you do not harm yourself, O mortal, no friend or enemy would be able to harm you. Those who plot to kill us, are doing us a favor; they weaving for us a crown of martyrdom; So why should we hate them?!

I wish we would not say: So and so has disturbed me, or made me behave badly; because we are responsible for our own behavior; I mean, if we intend to show the sound values, not even the devil, himself, would be able to do otherwise, or make us angry, which is obvious in the case of David.

(St. John Chrysostom)

17-The mild voice shakes both the speaker and the listener:

Comparing between the persons of David and that of Saul, St. John Chrysostom draws out attention to the voice of David, which, according to him, has overcome all the feelings of hatred in his own heart, and the animosity in that of Saul.

Commenting on Saul's words: "*Is this your voice, my son David?*" (1 Samuel 24: 16), St. John says: Saul did not say: [Are these your words], but said: "*Is this your voice?*". Man may utter soft and nice words, but his voice may not bear the spirit of love and compassion; and his words would not have their activity, neither in the life of the speaker, nor in that of the listener. David's voice reformed his own depths, and with his heart disturbed for cutting off the corner of Saul's robe; he cried out to the Lord to grant him the spirit of love and strength; and it reformed the depths of Saul; he who could not before utter the name of David by his lips, now, with contrition says: "*O my son David*".

David's voice opened the door of competition between the hearts of David and Saul; each of them intended to honor the other. David who, instead of avenging himself against Saul when he was helplessly sleeping before his eyes, forgave him, and says to him now: "*I am your servant, O my Lord King*"; And in contrition, Saul said to David: "*You are more righteous than I*".

Moses, by his voice, reacting with the power of the cross (the rod), divided the sea, to stop the water dead on both sides; and by his voice he brought them back to their nature.

His disciple Joshua, by his voice commanded the sun and the moon to freeze on their path, and they obeyed.

The prophet Elijah, by his voice, heaven ceased to give rain; and by his voice it resumed giving it; and several times he sought fire and it obliged.

The disciples and the apostles , by their voices, in the name of Jesus Christ, drove the demons out, and healed the sick.

How much we need to bear the voice of the Son of David inside us; to work in our hearts, to become an icon of the heart of our Lord Jesus, the Lover of humanity; who works, as well, in the hearts of those we encounter, to enjoy, together with us, the kingdom of heaven in their depths.

According to St. John Chrysostom, David, who is younger than Saul, by his perseverance and longsuffering, he dealt with king Saul like a father toward his son; he refused to avenge himself against him for his numerous attempts to kill him; and the fruit of that godly and meek voice, was that Saul was drawn by the spirit of repentance, and in tears, feelings of fatherhood toward David stirred up, and called him his son.

+ In the darkness of the night, we may not be able to recognize our own friends; but in the daylight we recognize their faces from afar. That is the natural way concerning animosity. As long as we are adversary toward someone, we hear his voice in a different way, and look at their faces in disgust; but once we forsake our grudge against him, his voice that

seemed before repulsive, will strike us as pleasant and compassionate; and our look at him would bear longing and grace.

Likewise, when there is a storm, the dense cloud would not let us see the beauty and splendor of the sky; but once the sun shines, even for some moments, everything would become cheerful and pleasant.

When feeling grudge against someone, it acts like a cloud before our eyes and in our ears; to make the sound and vision different; but when we use one of the sound values, it takes away animosity, and scatters the cloud of hatred, to make vision and hearing sound.

That was the experience of Saul, once the cloud of animosity was scattered; he recognized David's voice, saying " *Is this voice, my son David?*". What kind of voice was it? It was the voice that cast the mighty Goliath down, saved the city from danger, and restored to everyone peace and freedom; and brought forth amazing benefits.

Actually, the voice which cast that horrible man – Goliath – down to the ground, was the power of prayer; for David, before slinging the stone, cried out: " *You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies*

of Israel, whom you have defied" (1 Samuel 17: 45) ; then he aimed the stone at the man, by which he destroyed his atrocity.

Why would you marvel, if the voice of a righteous man destroy the enemy and drive the demons out?! ... If by his voice, Moses divided the sea and brought it back to its nature (Exodus 14: 21, 26); ... If Joshua the son of Nun commanded the sun and the moon to freeze in their path, and so they did (Joshua 10: 12-13); ... And if the three young men quenched the power of fire by their songs of praise (Daniel 3: 24, 50 LXX).

Being encouraged by hearing David's voice, Saul said: "*Is this your voice, my son David?*" to which David answered: "*I am your servant, O my Lord king*". There came a competition: who would give the other more honor: one of them made the other a son of his; and the other called him his Lord.

What David intended to say was this: I only care for one thing: your happiness and progress in virtue. You call me your son, and I love you and adore you; Have me as your servant, on one condition, if you take away from your self your grudge against me; if you stop doubting my intentions toward you; if you cease to think that I plan and plot against you; for by this, we would consummate the apostolic commandment "*in honor giving preference to*

one another" (Romans 12: 10); Contrary to what men, worse than beasts, generally do, when they do not endure to initiate commending one another, believing that it is a shame and reproach to commend anyone ...

What is more stupid than such an attitude, arrogance, and ignorance?! ... If you initially commend someone, God, who is greater than all, will commend you.

I wish we do not anticipate to get honor first, but hasten to honor our neighbor; I wish we initiate the commendation. Do not assume that this is a worthless virtue; For if we disregard it, we would destroy a multitude of friendships, and create a multitude of animosities. I wish, my beloved, we do it with zeal; the way the apostle Paul exhorts us to do, saying: "*In lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself*" (Philippians 2: 3).

(St. John Chrysostom)

18-David's mild voice brought forth tears to the eyes of the stony-hearted Saul:

We stand in awe before the prophet Moses when he struck the rock in the wilderness with his rod, to bring forth a fountain of water to quench the thirst of

his people; According to the apostle Paul, that rock followed them, and it is Christ (1 Corinthians 10: 4); by whose cross He brought forth the life-giving water of divine grace.

According to St. John Chrysostom, David likened Moses; his rod was his love, compassion, and mild words, by which he struck the stony heart of Saul, to bring forth tears from his eyes. It is befitting of us not to marvel when we see how the hearts of men have turned into stone; for by the spirit of love, humility, meekness, and compassion in Christ Jesus, the hearts will be softened, and present repentance to God with tears and the contrition of heart.

+ That is what David did by initiating giving honor; and when his oppressor honored him back, he responded by a greater honor, saying "*I am your servant, O my Lord king*". Now, look at how much benefit did David get by showing such a humility, as Saul could no more endure to hear David's voice without weeping bitterly, proclaiming by his tears the uprightness of David's spirit, and his sound values. What is more blessing than when David managed to reform us enemy in so short a time; gaining a soul thirsty for blood and killing; and transforming it to wailing and sighing?!

I actually admire him more than I admire the prophet Moses who brought water forth from a solid rock; for David brought forth a flood of tears from stony eyes. .. The former overcame nature; while the later overcame the

free will.... The former miracle happened by striking the rock with a rod; and the later by striking the heart wit words; not to cause any harm in it, but to grant it purity and meekness; which is far exalted. ... Having been worthy of great admiration and commendation because he did not cover his sword with the blood of his enemy; he was worthy of greater crowns by changing the will of that man, by making him a better man; and by drawing him to his gentle ways.

His later goodness is greater than his former one.... Granting the gift of life could not be compared to leading him to sound values; drawing him away from grudge and folly that could have led him to commit a horrible crime of murder.

19-By compassion, David overcame the ferocity of his enemy:

The apostle Paul says that he fought with beasts at Ephesus (1 Corinthians 15: 32); And the prophet David tamed king Saul by his mildness and compassion; and took away from him the spirit of ferocity, cruelty, and stubbornness.

- + When your enemy becomes under your authority, do not be preoccupied with how to avenge yourself, and after submitting him to several humiliations, to get rid of him; But, you should, instead, be preoccupied with how to care for him, how to draw him by compassion, to overcome his ferocity.

Actually, there is nothing of more activity than compassion. It is written: “*A gentle tongue breaks a bone*” (Proverbs 25: 15); And: “*A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger*” (Proverbs 15: 1). By this, it is obvious that it is you, and not your enemy, who can make him furious against you, or reconcile with you.

When you see your enemy, or think of him, forget all his harmful deeds of which you suffered on his hands, or what you heard about him; and it happened to come to your memory, throw them away to the devil. But you should rather try to remember any good deed he happened to do to you; For by so doing, you will certainly dissolve your animosity toward him.

When in anger, we shall not be able to utter anything edifying; but if we get rid of this feeling, we shall never utter any wounding word, nor even allow others to do. This is not hard to do; for what is said will annoy us because of the feeling of animosity we have in our heart. If we hear the same words said by our friends or by little children, or we would hear them not in distorted concept, nor with a mind prioly full of anger; but we would, rather, laughingly brush them off.

The enemy testifies to David's compassion:

St. John Chrysostom would not cease to call us to follow the lead of the prophet David in his compassion toward Saul whose heart was as hard as a rock, and more ferocious than lions. Now he reveals the activity of compassion in that violent king; who was drawn by David's compassion, to accuse himself, not only of being evil, but of what is worse, that he paid goodness back with evil, instead of forsaking his wickedness. Saul's heart was not changed by debate and conversation, but by mere compassion, that turned him over from a killer who persisted on seeking the life of the righteous David, to call him his son. The heart of that ferocious wolf turned over to be that of a meek lamb; the fiery furnace of his heart, to dew that quenched the fire of anger.

+ What actually happened was that the aggressor harshly accused himself; when his accuser uttered nothing against him. The aggressor did not say: [You did me good], but said “*You have rewarded me with good*” (1 Samuel 24: 17); namely, you have paid back my evil plots, my violence, and my limitless evil acts, with great compassion; for which I did not change to a better man, but I persisted to oppress you; Instead of changing my attitude toward you, you persisted on yours, and treated me with more compassion.

How many crowns is David worthy to have for the wisdom of his words?!... We actually see the virtue of David, not only from his words, but rather from what Saul himself said. Saul said: “*Is this your voice my son David?*” (1 Samuel 24: 16)... What a huge and sudden change! He who would not endure to call him by his name, instead of hatred, he counted him as his son! What could be more blessing than what David did, who turned a killer into a father, the wolf into a lamb, the furious into peaceful, who filled the furnace of fire with heavy due; and appeased the heat of wrath.

David’s words pierced the heart of that furious man, and realized a great change. He did not say: ‘Are these your words my son David?’, but said: “*Is this your voice my son David?*” (1 Samuel 24: 17). The way when a father hears the voice of his son coming from afar, he would become emotional to hear his voice, even before even seeing his face. That is

exactly what Saul felt when he heard David's voice, his animosity was wiped away, and he perceived that David is righteous.

Let us listen to what Saul said: *"You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil"* (1Samuel 24: 17). Do you see how Saul condemned his evil?; how he commended the righteous man? And how he apologized without pressure from anyone? ... You should do the same: When your enemy is in your authority, instead of accusing him, apologize to him, to make him accuse himself. For if we accuse him, he will hasten to defend himself, whereas if we apologize to him, he will be moved by our compassion, and accuse himself.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Why did David parade his good deeds toward Saul?

David knows when to keep silent, and when to speak; And when he speaks, he knows what to say, why he say it, and the limit of his talk. He did not parade his goodness and his good attitude toward Saul, seeking a reward, nor to defy Saul, or to ridicule him, but to exhort Saul to follow his lead.

Finally, if Saul's mouth so uttered, it was David's wisdom that planted that in his heart; saying: "*You have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the Lord delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me*" (1 Samuel 24: 18). By so saying, he testified to him about another virtue; that he presented to him goodness, and did not keep silent about it, nor disregarded it, but instantly mentioned it, not to boast what he did, but to let Saul know how he (David) cared for him and was preoccupied with him, not with his wickedness and evil.

He referred his goodness toward him, not to seek reward. For if you do likewise and proclaimed what you did without a good purpose, you would be ridiculing your opponent to whom you did good; whereas if you do it to convince your opponent of his fault; and how he misunderstood your position toward him, that would be for his benefit.

That was what David did, He did not seek glory for himself, but intended, by commending himself, to uproot the hate from Saul's heart, for his benefit, and not to boast his own goodness.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Saul perceives that God will reward David:

Saul, with all his possibilities, stood unable to reward David for what he did to him. He perceived that the compassion and forgiveness of the crimes he committed against him, was to God himself, who, alone, can reward him. He perceived that even if he give him his throne for the sake of what he did to him, it would be not enough. By that Saul teaches us that no human reward can pay back man's love of his enemy.

+ Counting God Himself as the Debtor, who will pay David's goodness back; he says: "*For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore, may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day*" How will he reward him for what he has done to him; Even if he present to him his throne itself, it will not be enough; for he gave him his life itself. By that he taught everyone that the reward that comes from God becomes greater, when we present limitless goodness to our enemies, while we receive from them evil instead.

Then he said: "*Now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. Therefore swear to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's house*" (1 Samuel 24: 21)

How would this be, tell me O Saul!? You still have the armies, the wealth, the weapons, the horses, the men, and all the royal sources; whereas that man is alone, a fugitive, with no city to dwell in it, homeless. How could this be? ... Do you so say because of his behavior, even if he is helpless; unless God Himself is on his side; for then he would surely be stronger than all men.

Do you see how Saul gained sound values after being crafty?

Do you see how he could go beyond his own evil, and change to be a better man?

Let us, therefore, not despair of our salvation, even if we fall into the depths of evil; for we can again have control over ourselves, and be in a better shape, and forsake evil.

(St. John Chrysostom)

king Saul begs David not to cut off his descendants:

When in a good relationship with the king, man anticipates that the king would grant him of his generosity, according to his possibilities; But here we see king Saul begs from a fugitive!

- + Saul said to David: “*Therefore, swear now to me by the Lord, that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father’s house*” (1 Samuel 24: 21).

The king so seeks from a regular citizen! ... The one with the crown begs the fugitive for the sake of his descendants! ... If he asks him to swear, it is not for a lack of trust in him, but because he perceives the seriousness of the harm that might dwell upon him; ... he let his enemy become a guardian of his descendants; put his offspring within his hands; as though by his words he made those words intercessors before God.

How was the reaction of David? Did he bitterly scoff that situation? No, but he instantly consented and granted his enemy his request. And after Saul’s death, he did not kill his descendants, but offered more than he promised; for he let a descendant of Saul, who was lame, be a permanent partner at his table; did not count his royal banquet would be disgraced by such a handicapped child; but, instead counted it an honor and a subject of pleasure (2 Samuel 9). By such an act of compassion, those who attended the banquet have got a marvelous lesson in the sound values; knowing that he who has got such an appreciation was a descendant of Saul, who caused David so much harm. ... It would have been a marvelous thing, if David has given his order to assign food and

sustenance for that lame child; How much more to let him attend his banquet in person; It is indeed a supernatural example of sound values.

I know for sure how it is difficult for you to love your enemies; how much more it would be to love their children? ... David, on the other hand, not only cared for Saul while still alive, but after his death took care of his descendants. ... What banquet is more sanctified? The host is an angel more than human; who embraces the offspring of him who has made a multitude of plots to end his life; then departed and he took his place.

Do likewise, O beloved, Care for the descendants of your enemies while their parents are still living and after their death. For, while still living, you would gain their parents; and by caring for the descendants of the departed, you would gain much of God's goodness, be adorned with limitless crowns, and become the subject of prayers by everyone; even by those who watch you do. That would be for your benefit for your enemies will feel indebted to defend you, on the great day of judgment; You will have an atonement on many of your sins; and will be qualified for the great reward; Even if you often fail to fulfill the part of the Lord's prayer saying: *"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespasses against us"*; For you will surely get forgiveness for your sins, live here with a good hope, and everybody will love you.

Finally, those who see how you love your enemies and their descendants;
How would they not seek to be your beloved friends? How would they not
pray for your sake? And if you get such goodness from God as a response
of their prayers, Who will be more blessed than you are?

AN INSPIRATION FROM “DAVID AND SAUL”

AN ENJOYABLE JOURNEY WITH THE PROPHET DAVID

+ Grant me to be in Your company, O the one with sound values;
When your law is the purity of heart, and the uprightness of the soul;
When you do not allow anyone to occupy your depths except the Holy
One.

When You sing his praise day and night, and offer him the sacrifice of
thanksgiving;

You brought joy to all humanity by your love and compassion;
And enjoyed the commendation of God, not that of men;
Your heart, O son of Jesse, is like the heart of your God, the Lover of
mankind.

+ I saw you love silence more than talking;
In your silence, I see you the exultant icon of heaven;
And in your talk, I see you kindle my heart with love for God and for men;

You drew my heart, both by your silence and by your sweet words and praises.

+ I marvel how could you be a man of suffering, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, at the same time!

You had your guitar, even while were a fugitive;

With every morning you used to play two psalms, even in the time of affliction;

And with every evening, you would not close your eyes before praising your God.

= Allow me to whisper in your ears, wandering: How could you convince the military men around you;

To forgive Saul who bore such bitterness toward you?

How could they respond to you, when they had such an experience of that evil king?

How could they obey you, when they perceived that Saul's heart would never change?

+ You answered me: Why should you wonder; when every day, in my sufferings they saw me exultant?

Perpetually feeling that heaven is not far from me; I told them nothing of Saul's evil deeds;

They used to see me pour tears before my God, saying:
I cry out to You, to grant me the pure heart and the upright soul;
I pray for the sake of the sanctification of the whole people;
I beseech You to open the eyes of the king and his men, to get attached to
you.

+ I was sad for Saul's sake, because he did not perceive how much I loved
him;

I was ready to die, and he and all the people would live;
Not for a single day, I felt that the throne was my portion; nor my heart
was preoccupied with the glory of the world.

+ Sometimes with a bitter soul, lifting my heart up to my God, the bitterness
turn into sweetness;

I complained against myself whenever a feeling of grudge passed through
me; and with tears I would cast myself down, saying:

O My Lord, behold, men manage to tame lions;
And nature, obediently, was in the service of your people;
Would it be difficult for You to turn the ferocity of Saul into gentility?
Would it be impossible for you to shine in his heart, to scatter his
darkness, and drive away the prince of its hosts?

Let Your grace work in him; to for my sake, but for that of his heart, mind,
and soul.

+ My men approached me with exultant hearts;
To give a great and unique piece of news;
Behold, the Lord who promised you the throne, realized his promise;
Behold, Saul is sleeping alone in the cave;
Come, draw your sword and cut off his head, as you did with Goliath;
Behold, God delivers him to you today, to sit on his throne;
You will have rest all the days of your life, and we will have it together with
you;

I told them to keep silent; and said to them, 'Far from me to sin and stretch
my hand to the Lord's anointed;

They answered me; You are not avenging yourself; It is the Lord who
delivered him into your hand.

+ I approached Saul, and cut off the corner of his robe while sleeping;
Then my heart troubled me, for perceiving that I have some feeling of
grudge against him;

When I cried out to my God to take away from me every thought that would
not please Him;

My heart found comfort; and the grace of God covered me up.

+ Saul came out of the cave, and I followed him;

I called his name, and prostrated myself before him; and said: "*I am your servant, O my Lord king*";

I asked him to look at the corner of his robe, to perceive how he was within my hands;

Not intending for him to be crushed before me, I cast the blame on those around him. For distorting my image before him;

Then he cried, for feeling my compassion and my love for him;

For the first time he called me "his son David"

He perceived that I shall receive the throne , and begged me not to harm him; and after his death not to harm his descendants.

+ Having narrated such a story about him, I perceived why the Lord incarnated from his seed;

Why the Creator of heaven and earth, is called "the Son of David";

For God cherishes love; the love of man for all mankind.

+ O my God; grant me the loving heart of David;

Grant me that all the doors of my soul would open before humanity; to know no one as an enemy;

To love all, to serve all, and to desire death for the sake of all.

+ I sat in silence with my soul; and cried out in my depths.;

Bless you, who, by your love of your opponents, you were counted among the martyrs;

By your love of your enemies you became an instructor to the military around you;

By love you were adorned with unique conquests;

By love you stroke the stony heart of Saul, that his eyes flowed with precious tears;

By your amazing love, the cave turned into a church, and you became a teacher, priest, and altar;

By love you bear a heavenly citizenship, to set forth on the day of the Lord to the High Jerusalem, as though to your home;

To stand before the divine throne, as though in your dwelling place;

Pray for me, to bear the feature of love from the heavenly Son of David.

ANNEX # 2 TO CHAPTER 10

**OF THE SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS
ABOUT DAVID AS A SYMBOL OF THE LORD CHRIST**

1- David visits his brothers; and the Lord Christ visits mankind:

Caesarius, bishop of Arles presents to us a symbolic interpretation of the episode of David and the mighty Goliath, according to St. Augustine, in which it came:

- + When Jesse sent his son David to visit his brothers, it so seems that Jesse was a symbol of God the Father, who sent His only begotten Son, about whom it is written: *"I will declare Your name to my brethren"* (Psalm 22: 22). Truly, Christ came to visit His brethren, as He said: *"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (Matthew 15: 24). "Jesse said to his son David: *'Take now for your brothers an ephah of this dried grain, and these ten loaves, and run to your brothers at the camp'*" (1 Samuel 17: 17). As the 'ephah', is three measures, In those three measures we understand the secret of the Trinity, which is clearly understood by Abraham, when he was qualified to perceive that secret in the three person under the oaks of Mamre, and gave the command to knead three measures of flour (Genesis 18: 6). Jesse gave his son the same three measures. In the ten loaves we perceive the ten commandments of the Old Testament. David, therefore, came with the three measures of grain and the ten loaves to visit his brothers who were in the battle; like the Lord Christ who came with the ten commandments of the law, and the secret of the Trinity, to liberate humanity from the devil.

(St. Augustine)

2- His brothers rebuke him in the camp:

- + Now, as David came, one of his brothers rebuked him, saying: "*Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep?*" (1 Samuel 17: 28). That brother who rebuked David, envied the symbol of our Lord; the same way the Jewish people slandered our Lord Jesus Christ.

Although He came to save mankind, they reproached Him. Do not you count what that envious brother uttered, the same as that the devil did by his lips, envying mankind? ... Is it not like saying to Christ: [Why did you leave the ninety nine sheep, and came to seek the one lost to bring him back to the fold, after You set him free by the rod of the cross from the spiritual Goliath, namely, from the power of the devil? ... Why did you leave those few sheep?

The brother uttered the truth, yet with an evil arrogant spirit. By leaving the ninety nine sheep, Jesus intended to seek the one and to bring him back to the fold; namely, to the company of the angels.

(St. Augustine)

3- David killed a lion and a bear: (1 Samuel 17: 34-37)

- + Like David who took hold of a lion; let us seek from the Spiritual David – Christ – to take hold of the lion, and to destroy the congregation of beasts.

(The scholar Origen)

- + Before David was anointed by the blessed Samuel, he killed a lion and a bear with no weapons, as he told king Saul by himself.

The lion and the bear, symbolizing the devil, dared to attack some of David's sheep, and he strangled them by his strength... That was a symbol, then, beloved brethren, that was realized in our Lord Jesus Christ, who strangled the lion and the bear, when He descended to Hades to liberate the saints from their fangs.

Listen to the prophet David supplicating to the Person of our Lord, saying:

“Deliver me from the sword; my precious life from the power of the dog”

(Psalm 22: 20). As the power of the bear lies in its feet, and that of the lion in

his mouth, that is way the devil is symbolized by these two beasts. Such was said concerning the person of Christ, to draw the church away from the mouth and hand of the devil.

(St. Augustine)

4- David kills Goliath; And the Lord Christ kills the devil, and uproots the authority of sin:

Caesarius, bishop of Arles consummates his symbolic interpretation of the episode of David and Goliath, according to St. Augustine, saying:

- + David found the Jewish people camping in the valley of Terebinth to war against the Philistines. Christ – the True David – had to come to lift mankind up from the valley of sin and tears. David found them in the valley confronting the Philistines; they were in the valley, on account of that the burden of their sins brought them down. Anyway, he found them standing and not daring to fight against the enemies; ... Why? Because David, the symbol of Christ has not come yet.

Indeed , brethren, who can fight against the devil before our Lord Christ liberates mankind from his authority? ... Now, the word 'David' means

(strong hand). Who is stronger, brethren, than He who overcome the whole world, armed by the cross, and not by a weapon?!

The Israelites stood 40 days against the enemies. Those 40 days refer to the present life during which the Christians never cease to war against Goliath and his army; namely, against the devil and his angels (the figure 4 refers to the four seasons, and the figure 10 to the fullness of time).

It is impossible to conquer, unless Christ – the true David – brings down His rod – the secret of the cross. The devil, indeed, was free before the coming of Christ; but by His coming, what came in the gospel was realized; namely, *“No one can enter the strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man”* (Matthew 12: 29). For this goal, Christ came and bound the devil.

Someone may say: If the devil was bound, why does he still has authority? Yes indeed, brethren, he has great authority; yet, only on his lukewarm and slothful followers, those who do not truthfully fear God. He is bound like a dog in chains, and cannot bite anyone, except for the soul that binds to him by her own will, by her trust in the ‘ego’; which is very serious. Now you can see, brethren, what idiocy for someone to be bitten by a dog in chains! If you do not accompany the devil to the pleasures and covetousness of this world, he would not dare to bite you. He could disturb

you by his barks, but he would never dare to bite you, unless you, yourself, give him the chance to do. He will not harm you by force, but through seduction; He does not rob us of our free will but seeks to do,

David came and found that no one of the Israelites dares to go fight Goliath on his own; There, the symbol of Christ (David) entered into the battle against Goliath armed only with a staff, by which he referred to what was realized in our Lord Jesus Christ – the true David – who came carrying His cross to fight against the spiritual Goliath, namely the Devil.

Notice, brethren, where the blessed David struck Goliath: in his forehead, where there was no sign of the cross. As the rod symbolized the cross, the stone by which he struck Goliath symbolizes our Lord Jesus Christ – the living Stone, about whom it is written: “*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone*” (Psalm 118: 22).

David stood over Goliath and killed him with his own sword; which refers to that by the coming of Christ, He will defeat the devil by his own sword. Indeed by his oppression and craftiness against Christ, the devil lost his authority over all the believers of Christ.

David put the tools of Goliath in his tent; And about us who were the tools of the devil, the apostle Paul says: “*Just as you presented your members*

as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness, leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness" (Romans 6: 19); And also: "*Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin*" (Romans 6: 13). Yes indeed, Christ put the tools of His enemy in his tent, when we, who were a dwelling place of the devil, were found worthy of becoming a dwelling place of Christ. Confirming that Christ dwells in us , the apostle says: "*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*" (Ephesians 3: 17); And, "*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Galatians 3: 27); And our Lord Jesus Christ says to His disciples in the gospel: "*Believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; (You are in Me, and I am in You)*" (John 4)

Striking Goliath in his forehead and not anywhere else, symbolizes to what happens to us: When the one who seeks baptism is crossed with the sign of the cross on his forehead, he is as though a strike on the forehead of the spiritual Goliath, a defeat to the devil. The newly baptized carries on his forehead the feature of the Spirit; as though he is sealed with the phrase "*a sanctuary for the Lord*", by which he enjoys the graces of the Lord Christ that sanctifies the mind (the forehead), as an entrance to the inner life of man.

Through the graces of Christ, the devil is driven out of our hearts; Hence we try as much as is possible, by His help, not to receive the devil again through our own free will, by our evil works, and our crafty fornicating thoughts; For if we do (receive him again), what is written will be realized in us: *“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says: ‘I will return to my house from which I came’, and when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with the wicked generation”* (Matthew 12: 43-45).

Now, having, by the grace of baptism, we have got rid of all evil, without prior worthiness on our part; let us then strive by the help of the Lord to get filled with the spiritual blessings. Whenever the devil intends to drag us to his ways, he will find us filled with the Holy Spirit, and bound to good works; and in us the words saying: *“He who endures to the end will be saved”* (Matthew 10: 22), will be realized.

(St. Augustine)

5- Saul seeks pinning David to the wall with his spear (1 Samuel 19: 10)

Saul aimed his wooden spear that ends with a deadly sharp point of iron at Saul to kill him, but the spear struck the wall and not David. Likewise, when the Devil attempted to get rid of the Lord Jesus, he aimed his spear against Him, namely the wooden cross and the iron nails; but he struck the wall, namely the body of the Lord Christ, and not His Godhead.

- + Once the evil spirits came out of king Saul, by the action of the music played by David, he hastened to aim his wooden spear, (that ends with a sharp iron point), to pin David to the wall, but the wall received the spear instead of David. Now we understand that the wall symbolizes the body of Christ, we see nailed on the cross. The Son of David, the Christ and King, did not suffer (by His Godhead); For the Godhead would not be affected by neither the cross nor the nails.

(St. Gregory of Nyssa)

6- David laid down through a window (1 Samuel 19: 12-16):

Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him and to kill him in the morning. And Michal, David's wife, told him and led him down through a window. Michal took an image and laid it in the bed, put a cover of goats' hair for his head,

and covered it with clothes; and said to the messengers who sought David: “He is sick”. And the messengers had come in, there was the image in the bed with a cover of goats’ hair for his head.

According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, David, in this episode, refers to the Lord Christ, on whom death could not prevail, but resurrected leaving the linen shrouds in the tomb.

+ The name ‘Michal’ means (reign); as sin reigned on our nature up to that time. The window refers to going back to the light that dawned on those who sat in the darkness and the shadow of death (Matthew 4: 16).

His image appeared on the bed; as the angel said to the women who sought the Lord Christ in the tomb: “*Why do you seek the living among the dead. He is not here, but is risen*” (Luke 24: 5; Matthew 28: 6).

Those who sought the Lord, saw the tomb in which He was buried, empty of His body, and saw only the linen shrouds put there. Therefore, we understand that David’s empty bed, with his image on it, and his escape from the window, refer to the Lord risen from the dead and coming out of his tomb; by which our death is taken away through the atoning sacrifice.

(St. Gregory of Nyssa)

THE THIRD DIVISION

KING DAVID

(1 Chronicles Chapters 11 – 29)

CHAPTER 11

AS A LEADER, DAVID WAS JOINED BY MIGHTY MEN OF VALOR

Although the tribes of the North only joined David several years after the death of Saul, yet the book does mention that, probably on account of that the author takes it for granted that the reader has a complete, and a clear knowledge of what came in the previous books of history; hence he only mentioned the events that realize the goal of the book. He did not mention the events through which David passed before he sat on the throne, nor the long war between him and Saul; or the events from Saul's death until all the tribes came to join David. He did not mention the coming of the men of Judah to anoint David a king on the house of Judah (2 Samuel 2: 4), until all the rest of the tribes of Israel came to

anoint David a king (2 Samuel 5); but only wrote to show the importance of the worship of God by clear spiritual mind.

The author began his talk about the kingdom of David when all the tribes gathered together in Hebron to seek him as a king. According to the author, there is no separation between the unity of Israel with all the tribes together, and reigning David a king; For David appeared as a king who cares for the whole people in a magnificent way, befitting of David, whom the prophet Samuel anointed, and whom the Spirit of God dwelt (1 Samuel 16: 13); when he was anointed a king over all Israel, and not on the tribe of Judah alone.

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1- THE ENTHRONMENT OF DAVID, THE MAN OF GOD, A KING:

What came in this chapter is quoted from the second book of Samuel, but the author disregarded what came in the first four chapters. He did not refer to the short reign of Ish-bosheth; not to the troubles of Abnir, and how Joab stretched his hand to kill him; but the author entered directly to the gathering together in Hebron -- the first capital of David before he took over Jerusalem – to proclaim hi a king. He, instead showed the whole Israel as one unit.

While the second book of Samuel presents to us in some detail how the prophet David got the royal throne; the book of the Chronicles only confirms that it is God who brought David to the throne, using many for that goal, even some of the tribe of Benjamin, the brethren of king Saul.

God, in control of history, turns all issues for the edification of his people, without forcing anyone to move against his will.

Yes, indeed, many have attempted to hinder the work of God and His plan toward His believers. But God turns, even evil to good; as it happened with Joseph the son of Jacob, to whom God turned the evil of his brothers into good for them and for Egypt.

*“Then all Israel came together to David at Hebron, saying:
‘Indeed we are your bone and your flesh’ (1)*

The book did not refer to a previous era of history, of making David a king on Judah in Hebron for seven and a half years, but it begins with the gathering together of all the tribes to enthrone him a king on all Israel; for God, and the divine inspiration looks at Israel as one nation formed of twelve tribes, on which David was enthroned a king, based on the following points:

- 1- His relationship with them, as they said: *“Indeed we are your bones and your flesh” (1)*, boasting their connection to him. The Son of David, on the other hand, came Himself to us and made us His bone and flesh; which the apostle confirms, saying: *“For we are members of His body, of His flesh and His bones” (Ephesians 5: 30)*. The Lord Christ presented Himself an example; as in His union with the church His bride, according to St. Augustine, He left the Father, emptied Himself of glories, and took the form of a servant (Philippians 2: 7), although He remains One with the Father in essence without separation. He, as well, left His mother ,

namely, the Jewish people, from whom He took the body through the Jewish St. Mary, to become one body with His bride.

2- For the sake of His behavior; refraining from stretching his hand to Saul who did his best to get rid of him. His love for his opponents drew them to him. According to St. Augustine, addressing the catechumens approaching baptism: [Love is the only sign distinguishing the sons of God from those of the devil. Let us adopt the feature of the cross of Jesus Christ; ... Let us all have the seal of baptism;... Let us all come to the church to build the walls of Jerusalem].

3- That was not realized by a human power, but according to the word of the Lord on the tongue of the prophet Samuel, who anointed Him through a command of the Lord (1 Samuel 16: 13). Now he was anointed a second time.

“Also in time past, even when Saul was king, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and the Lord your God said to you: ‘You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over my people Israel’” (2)

The command was issued by the Lord Himself. David as a king, occupied their hearts even before being enthroned, when Saul was a king. It is not the throne that made David a king, But it is God Himself who so made him, when he was still a boy long time ago.

What came in this book as a whole, and in this chapter in particular, consummate what came concerning David in the books of Samuel and the kings. What came in those books probably presented David as a man of faith, with strong personality, courage and exalted works by the Lord; But in the present book, David is presented as a godly man who loves worshipping the living temple.

In the previous books, we see David the saint and the sinner; yet faithful in dedicating his heart and all his depths to God.

Actually the two portraits of the person of David in the previous books and in the present one, are not contradictory, but one and integral portrait.

The book here did not refer to the short and failed period of the reign of Ish-bosheth, passing directly to the enthronement of David a king.

The second book of Samuel presented many details about how David reached authority; how God used the efforts of many, even of the family of Saul. But what the present book here is that it is God Himself who controls the events, and consummates everything according to His will.

Despite Saul's attempts to annul or to hinder the divine plan to give the throne to David, Yet God, who controls history, and cares for His people, executed His purpose in the proper time.

“Therefore all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord. Then they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the Lord by Samuel” (3)

Here he confirms that the enthronement of David was not a matter of chance, nor the fruit of the ability of David, but according to the plan and the grace of God; bound to a divine promise proclaimed to David, while still a boy shepherding his father's sheep.

David reigned on Judah seven and a half years before being enthroned on all Israel, taking over Jerusalem; and after twenty years from his anointment by the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 16: 1 -13). Every thing for God has its fixed time.

The divine promise was realized despite the difficulties David faced, that the promise seemed to be impossible to realize; and some even assumed that God's mercies have forsaken him; yet appeared in the proper time. David's troubles were allowed by God, to let him experience truly the love, care, and wisdom of God.

2- THE NEED FOR JERUSALEM AS A CAPITAL:

As all the tribes came together to enjoy David as king, there was the urgent need for a capital that befits the new nation.

Taking over Jerusalem, and making it a capital has been a wise movement by David and his men; as Jerusalem is close to the boundaries between the northern and the southern tribes, and is considered an active factor in the unity of the tribes together, with no stirring up of feelings of envy and jealousy between them. Jerusalem, being indeed the heart and the center of the people, was the proper location to establish the temple of the Lord, that represents the divine presence among the whole people. Its population during the reign of David were 2000, then increased to 5000 in the days of Solomon, then to 7000 before the captivation; but it most probably went down to 5000 at the time of writing this book. Before the desolation of the second temple in the year 70 AD, their number was more than 70, 000. Yet all across the changes of history, this city established by David as his capital remains the heart of the Jewish nation.

“And David and all Israel went to Jeruaem , which is Jebus, where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land” (4)

Much was mentioned about Jerusalem in the Holy Book. The holy city took its name after 'Salem' of Melchizedek, and from Mount 'Moriah', where Abraham offered his son Isaac to God; as that was the name Abraham called that Mount (Genesis 22: 14); There, the temple was built. The verses to follow speak about the establishment built by Davis around Jerusalem. He took over the stronghold

of Zion which was in the hands of the Jebusites up to that time, and called it 'the city of David' according to (verse 7), and (verse 6 of psalm 2): "*I have set My king on My holy hill of Zion*" (Psalm 2: 6). The city of David is actually the region of Mount Zion.

David chose Jerusalem a capital of the kingdom for political and military reasons; for its impartial location between the territories of the tribes; close to the center of the kingdom; and on a high mountain, which makes it difficult to attack it. The Jebusites did not expect that any power could invade them because of the strong walls of Jerusalem and of being surrounded by mighty rocks; they assumed that they were completely secure, not perceiving that God is the Rock that keeps His children safe, and the refuge for those who trust Him. The way David and his men set forth to Jebus that became Jerusalem, namely, the city of peace; So are we will dwell together with the Son of David, to turn the location into a new Jerusalem, which, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa is our new inheritance.

- + Our huge and renewable temple is our inheritance; whose secret of greatness is the Word (Jesus Christ); that was one day called 'Jebus', but, now, we made it 'Jerusalem'.

Jerusalem became a symbol of heaven; and the believer's heart is the second heaven; as it is written:

"I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21: 2)

"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" (Revelation 21: 10).

- + A city as identified by some, is a general assembly of beings in one orderly body, governed by law.... This identification accurately applies to the High Jerusalem ... the heavenly city. For, beside tens of thousands of angels, there is a church of firstborn who are registered in heaven (Hebrew 12: 23); where there is unceasing genealogies of the saints, and governed by the heavenly law It is impossible for the human nature to perceive the extent of preparation and order of this city; For *"Eye has not*

seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2: 9)... Mentioning it, David says: *“Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God” (Psalm 87: 3)*. And about what God promised that city, Isaiah says: *“I will make you an eternal excellence, a joy of many generations; ... Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders” (Isaiah 60: 15, 18)*.. Let us kift up the eyes of our souls, and search for the high goods befitting of the city of God.

- + The sheep are earthly, and bow down to earth; whereas man, as a heavenly being exalts above the sheep, both by his body form, and the honor of his spirit. The quadruped beast, with its head bowed down toward earth, looks always to its belly, and accordingly, follow the needs of its belly. You, man, on the other hand, has your head lifted up toward heaven, and your eyes look up high; Yet, in case you become a slave of your belly and your covetousness, you would become like beasts.... You are called to more noble things: *“Seek those things which are above where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3: 1)*. Exalt yourself above the world ... Address your talk to heaven; for your true citizenship is of the heavenly Jerusalem; and your countrymen are *“the church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” (Hebrew 12: 23)*.

(St. Basil the Great)

“Then the inhabitants of Jebus said to David ‘You shall not come in here’. Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is the city of David)” (5)

He tells us about how David took 'Jebus' or Jerusalem, which he called 'the city of David'. St. Jerome presents to us a spiritual concept of 'the stronghold of Zion', where we take refuge against outer attacks:

- + You have great understanding, and an inexhaustible storehouse of language; your style of writing is pure and easy, and your eloquence are mixed with wisdom. Your head is good, and all your senses are sharp. I ask you to add to all these qualities, the serious study and the knowledge of the Holy Book. For then, I can see you in your stronghold, looking down on those who may come to attack you; I see you together with Joab up there on Zion, singing on the roofs what you learned in the secret places.

(St. Jerome)

"Now David said, 'Whoever attacks the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain. And Joab the son of Zeruiah went up first and became chief'"
(6)

Only here, and not in any other book, we are told about how Joab became the chief of David's army (6-7); and how Joab repaired the rest of the city of Jerusalem (8). Joab, not mentioned in the book of Samuel, occupies here the first place after David. But we do not see him as a man of aspiration and hatred, but as the one chosen according to God's plan to take over the stronghold of Zion for the sake of king David. This book does not refer to Joab's struggle against Abnir, and to his revenge against that noble leader; and is silent concerning the lamentation uttered by the sad David: *"I am weak today, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too harsh for me ... The Lord shall repay the evildoer according to his wickedness"* (2 Samuel 3: 39).

This book, however, did not criticize Joab, concentrated on everything positive in his life, and disregarded the negatives; and did not even refer to David's curse on him (1 Kings 2: 5). What the book confirms is that God's plan concerning David has been realized, and that Joab and others were tools for realizing it.(10).

“Then David dwelt in the stronghold; therefore they called it the city of David” (7)

“And he built the city around it from the mill to the surrounding area; Joab repaired the rest of the city” (8)

The author refers the building of the walls; and to Joab the building of the houses, which is of less importance.

“Then David went on and became great, and the Lord of hosts was with him” (9)

The secret of the greatness of David was the Lord.

While Saul, using all his power and possibilities to the account of his ego, covetousness, popularity, and authority, he collapsed; David, on the other hand, seeking the enjoyment of the divine presence, he became greater and greater; for the Lord of hosts was with him. The secret of David's success was his trust in God, while the secret of Saul's failure was his arrogance, disregarding God (1 Samuel 15: 17-26). David was only preoccupied with the glory of God, and his attachment to Him; hence God lifted him up from glory to glory.

St. Augustine, sees in this verse the harmony between the free will, granted by God to man, and the divine work in the life of his believers, to grant them the will, the word, and the work. We do not disregard the role of David in his success, but this would not be possible without the grace of God that granted him a holy will, and the ability to work according to God's will.

- + The human will, without doubt, cannot resist the will of God, who *“brings it to pass”* in heaven and on earth (Isaiah 45: 11). The human will cannot keep Him of doing what He wishes to do.

That was how David has been. We read about him that *“David went on and became great, and the Lord of hosts was with him”* (9); And later it was said: *“Then the spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the captains, and he said: ‘We are yours, O David; We are on your side, O son of Jesse! Peace , peace to you, and peace to your helpers! For your God helps you”* (1 Chronicles 12: 18)

Could Amasai oppose the will of God, who through His spirit, God with whom Amasai’ was clothed, worked in his heart, to will, to speak, and to do.

The same way, the book later says: *“All these men of war, who could keep ranks, came to Hebron with a loyal heart to make David king over all Israel”* (1 Chronicles 12: 38). It is obvious and undeniable that they made David king by their own free will; Nevertheless, it is God who works in the human hearts according to His wish, and who works through their will. That is why the book says: *“David went on and became great, and the Lord of hosts was with him”* (9)

It was the Lord God who was with David, who brought those men forth to make David king.... How did God do that? Surely, not by chaining them with material chains, but rather by working in them, holding their hearts fast, and drawing them through their own will He created in them. Therefore, when God intends to set kings on earth, He holds fast to the wills of the people by His will which is mightier than the human will.

If this is the way, It is surely Him and nobody else, who presents good counsels, and make changes in the heart of whom He counsels, to make him worthy of the heavenly kingdom.

(St. Augustine)

Again St. Augustine confirms that God does not commit man to do according to His will by force; but, once man delivers his life in the hand of God, He will work on makin him will and do according to the will of God.

This chapter shows the greatness of the person of David, and those around him:

1- **David, a leader from God:** who God chose for the sake of the purity of his heart, and his faithfulness in the few, namely in shepherding the sheep of his father Jesse. Now, he is chosen by all the men of Israel, because they perceived that the Lord is with him. Saul on the other hand, although he was the actual king, yet he was not faithful to the Lord.

2- **David supports Joab to be a leader:** .Although David was an able leader, yet he could not do everything by himself. The successful leader chooses successful and faithful leaders to work with him.

3- **Heroes who were glorified by a simple deed:** Joab achieved a great job by defeating the Jebusites (6); Yet, what those three men did, by bringing water from the well in Bethlehem, by the gate (18) revealed their greatness.

4- **Great men may fall into things in which weak men would not fall:** Like when David had Uriah the Hittite killed (41) to take his wife.

3- A LEADER SETTING LEADERS:

1- Joab the chief: David said: "Whoever attacks the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain" (6); And Joab so did.

2- Three leaders: (11-19). "David said with longing: "*Oh, that someone would give me a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate*". What is this well but the work of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation of the

Word in Bethlehem, who opened the gates of heaven? "*So the three broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David.*

Nevertheless David would not drink it, but poured it out to the Lord". For what he demanded of the leaders is to the account of the Lord.

3- Three other leaders: With Benaiah the son of Jehoiada as their chief; "*who had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab;and a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day*" (22); and "*killed an Egyptian, a man of great height, with a staff*" (23). The lion refers to the devil (1 Peter 5: 8); and the Egyptian giant to the love of the world.

4- The mighty warriors: (26-47); among whom were those who by birth were from nations enemies of Israel, then became servants to the account of the kingdom of God; Of them was 'Zelek the Ammonite' (39), 'Ithmah the Moabit' (46), and 'Uriah the Hittite'

It is obvious that the personality of David with its godliness, courage, and faithfulness, has drawn many mighty men and military leaderships to work with him.

a- This chapter presents to us 'Joab' as the chief of David's warriors

b- The chapter also refers to a group called 'the three' (11), who seemed to have a special reputation as heroes.

c- Then there are 'the group of thirty'; the most prominent of David warriors in his early days', previously mentioned in (2 Samuel 23; 24-39);

most of whom were of the house of David, and some of other tribes.

d- The number increased through those who came from the other tribes. The book added 16 persons to the group of 'the thirty'; probably to confirm David's growing popularity.

A list of the leaders of the army was introduced at the early days of his reign; And in (2 Samuel 23), we find a similar list introduced at its end. Few names that came in Samuel were mentioned here; but many names have been added; as the chapter refers to 81 mighty men, of whom, twenty were referred to with no names (37 of them were mentioned in Samuel 23). Although, in the second book of Samuel, the mighty men were mentioned as supporters of David in establishing his throne; yet here, they are mentioned to recognize God's plan and work to establish the throne of His anointed.

Those mighty men came to David in diverse times; Some of them came while he was in the cave of 'Adullam' (15-19); and some came while he was in 'Ziklag'.(12: 1-22); and others came when he went to Hebron (20: 23-40).

"Now these were the heads of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the

Lord concerning Israel" (10)

Having confirmed that the secret of the greatness of David was because the Lord was with him (9), the divine inspiration directly started to talk about the warriors who were with him. When the believer is in a fellowship with the Lord of hosts, his success would not be confined to his own growth, but in those working with

him as well. It is not befitting of the great men to refer their greatness to themselves, in pride and haughtiness; but to God working in them and in those who work with them. God works by, and in us through His grace, that also works in those working with us. A sign of being in the company of God, is that He works by all; as He is **All in all**, who intends to work by all. ...

David was strengthened by God the Lord of hosts; and those working with him, and all Israel, were strengthened as well. God worked in the life of His people; by exhorting the faithful leader to set leaders perfect in every respect; who work, in turn, to the account of the whole congregation; and the congregation as a whole work to support the king or the ruler or the leader – an amazing fellowship between God and man; and between man and fellow man.

Those mighty men of David followed him during the period he was rejected; and now, having been enthroned, they, as well were raise up. Here we find something for our benefit.

David, is a symbol of our Lord Jesus, who calls His believers His people “*the mighty men whom He had*”. In His coming the Lord Jesus was rejected by many, whose own said: “We do not want this man to reign on us”. In the present day, Christ is rejected by the world; we live in the period of His rejection.

The following is a list of some of David’s mighty men of valor, and a little about their great works:

a- Jashobeam:

“And this is the number of mighty men whom David had, Jashobeam the son of a Hashmonite, chief of ‘the threes’. He had lifted up his spear against three hundred, killed by him at one time”

(11)

God granted him a supernatural conquest on the enemies of his people.

b- Eleazar the son of Dodo:

“After him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, who was one of ‘the threes’ mighty men” (12)

“He was with David at Pasdammim. Now there the Philistines were gathered for battle, and there was a piece of ground full of barley. And the people fled from the Philistines” (13)

“But they stationed themselves in the midst of that field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. And the Lord saved them by a great deliverance” (14)

Eleazar was faithful to David, accompanied him, even when he was deserted by others. The worst enemy of man is fear; while he who abides with courage trusting in God, will enjoy conquest. All those around Eleazar fled from the Philistines, but he abided in his place, and the Lord delivered him. He was a symbolic image of the Lord Christ, who, amid His passion, said: *“Indeed the hour is coming, yes has now come, that you will be scattered each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet, I am not alone, because the Father is with Me”* (John 16: 32).

If David and the mighty men of valor and the whole people are strengthened by the Lord of hosts; It is befitting of us all to strive and *“fight the good fight,* (2 Timothy 4: 7); not against men, but against the hosts of darkness (Ephesians 6: 12) to whom the pagan Philistines refer .

c- Three men in Adullam:

“Now three of the thirty chief men went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Edullam, and the army of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim” (15)

The episode of those three mighty men was written in the book of the Chronicles to reveal how David felt toward God, and how he cared for the life of his followers.

The three men referred to were from the thirty greatest and most courageous of the mighty men of valor in the army of David. Those three men were the ones who brought water from the well of Bethlehem, This episode bears a great symbol. David was raised in Bethlehem as his birthplace. To that well by its gate David often returned thirsty after a long day shepherding the sheep of his father, to quench his thirst from the water of that well. Now, besieged by the Philistines, said with longing: *“Oh, that someone would give me a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate” (17)*. Although it was just a wish, and not a command; yet those three *“broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David”*. But what is amazing is that *“would not drink it but poured it as a sacrifice to the Lord”*.(18)

Here are analogies in which we may contemplate: The Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem; And that water from Bethlehem is the water of life. All along the generations and centuries, mighty men of faith in the Lord, brought forth this water to the thirsty world. We notice how those men of David responded to his mere wish, for he would never give such a command, Behold, our Lord Jesus commands us to bring forth the water of life to the whole world, What is our response? Are we obedient to His command?

We also notice what David did with that water brought to him under severe and dangerous circumstances; Not being selfish, his men loved him, and were ready

to suffer for his sake, the same way he was ready to suffer for theirs. Because they had no water, he preferred to be like them. Psalm 22: 14 proclaims on the tongue of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross: *“I am poured out like water”*. He poured His life on the ground, and took His place as one of us – He took what is ours to give us what is His – He took our body and, by His goodness, gave us His Holy Spirit; and made us one with Him.

“David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem” (16)

“And David said with longing: ‘Oh that someone would give me a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate’ (17)

- + What did David desire by the water which he sought from Bethlehem; but the Lord Christ born in Bethlehem; the Son who is the water of life for those who seek Him? That See (David) did not seek the water of a fountain, for the Son of God was not the product of marriage. The water of the well originates from high altitude; the same as Christ came from up high, to become water to drink. The well is the Virgin St. Mary; for the water came down from up high, and did not emerge from the earth down. The woman in the prophecies is called “a well”; and the man ‘a mountain’; and let him who reads understand.

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

“So the three broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem, which was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless David did not drink it but poured it out to the Lord” (19)

They risked their lives to bring water to David from the well of Bethlehem; not seeking a word of commendation, their names were not even mentioned; they were only preoccupied with the gladness of David's heart.

It is befitting of us, when someone intends to give us a favor or a gift for the sake of God working in us, to give that favor or gift to God in the life of the needy. For what God gives us through them, is nothing but a deposit for us to give on our turn to others; He would then count it as though given personally to Him.

David would not drink that water, for he probably felt remorse on account of that he longed to drink water from the well of Bethlehem; he felt that it was befitting of him to care for those around him; who probably were in need of water more than he was.

“And he said, ‘Far be it from me, O my God, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of these men, who had put their life in jeopardy? For at the risk of their lives they brought it’.

Therefore he would not drink it. These things were done by the three mighty men” (19)

+ Those men risked their life to please David, and perceived that dedicating to him is a dedication to God; hence David poured the water out as a drink offering, showing that God alone is worthy of such a dedication. They presented the water to David, and he, in turn, presented it to God, for he counted that God alone is worthy of such a dedication.

When we serve others for the sake of God, we serve God Himself. And according to At. John Chrysostom, those who partake of the expenses of the preachers, partake of the work of preaching.

d- Abishai the brother of Joab:

“Now Abishai the brother of Joab was chief of another three. He had lifted up his spear against three hundred men and killed them, and won a name among these three” (20)
“O the three he was more honored than the other two men, therefore he became their captain. However he did not attain to the first three” (21)

The Holy Book tells us that he was steadfast with no hesitation in his faithfulness to David; he went with him to Saul’s camp (1 Samuel 26); accompanied him in fleeing from Jerusalem when Absalom rebelled against him (2 Samuel 16); he destroyed the rebellion of Sheba (2 Samuel 20); saved David from the Philistine giant ‘Ishbi Benob’ (2 Samuel 21); and served him with complete faithfulness (2 Samuel 10, 18; 1 Chronicles 18). With such courage and faithfulness, David’s men served him, how much more it is befitting of us to serve the Lord of David, the King of kings?

e- Benaiah the son of Jehoiada:

“Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Kabzeel who had done many deeds. He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. He also had gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day” (22)

The secret of the strength of those men was that the Lord who was with David was also with them. According to Joshua’s counsel: *“You shall hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day. For the Lord had driven out before you great and strong nations; but as for you no one has been able to stand against you to this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the Lord your God is He who fights for you, as He has promised you” (Joshua 23: 8-11)*

“And he killed an Egyptian, a man of great height, five cubits tall. In the Egyptian’s hand there has been a spear like a weaver’s beam, and he went down to him with a staff, wrestled the

spear out of the Egyptian’s hand, and killed him with his own spear”

(23)

His father was a brave priest (1 Chronicles 27: 5). Benaiah was a captain of David’s guards; replaced Joab as the chief of the army of David (1 Kings 2: 34-35). His conquests presents to us a portrait of the life of victory over the world (Egypt), the body (Moab), and the devil (the roaring lion); all of whom he conquered.

“These things Benaiah the son of Jehoiada had done, and won a name among three mighty men” (24)

“Indeed he was more honored than the thirty, but he did not attain to the first three. And David appointed him over his guard” (25)

“Also the mighty warriors were Asahel the brother of Moab, Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem” (26)

“Shammoth the Herorite, Helez the Pelonite” (27)

“Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, Abiezer the Anathothite” (28)

“Sibbechai the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite” (29)

“Maharai the Netophathite, Heled the son of Banah the Netophathite” (30)

“Ithai the son of Ribai of Gibrah, of the children of Benjamin. Benaiah the Pirathonite” (31)

“Horai of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite” (32)

“Azmapheth the Baharumite, Eliahba the Shaalbonite” (33)

“The sons of Hashem the Gizonite, Jonathan the son of Shageh the Hararite” (34)

“Ahiam the son of Sakar the Haraite, Eliphal the son of Ur” (35)

“Hepher the Mecherathite, Abijah the Pelonite” (36)

“Hezro the Carmelite, Narrai the son of Ezbai” (37)

“Joel the brother of Nathan, Nibhar the son of Hagri” (38)

f- Zelek the Ammonite:

Zelek the Ammonite, Uriah the Hittite (41) and Ithmahthe Moabite (41), by birth, were enemies of Israel, but they turned to become in the service of David the king of Israel.

We as children of the fallen Adam, entered into animosity with God; but with grace we became in Christ Jesus beloved children and good soldiers in the salvation army.

“Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Berothite (the armorbearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah)” (39)

“Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite” (40)

“Uriah the Hittite, Zabab the son of Ahlai” (41)

The names that came in verses 41-47 did not come in (2 Samuel 23)

Among his faithful men was Uriah the Hittite (41) a foreigner to Israel, who became his body guard; but unfortunately, David had him killed (2 Samuel 11); and married his woman; but with repentance he got up from his fall, and submitted to God's chastisements. He was one of the people wiped out by the Israelites when they took over the promised land (Deuteronomy 7: 1-2); But here we see him a warrior on David's side and faithful to him, before David plotted to have him killed to marry Bathsheba his wife (1 Samuel 11). In the book of Samuel, Uriah is shown as a witness on the sin of David; but here, the book of the Chronicles silently pass over David's horrible fall. The book, as well, does not mention Eliam the son of Ahithophel (2 Samuel 23: 34), whose father bound to betrayal against David.

“Adina the son of Shiza the Reubonite (A chief of the Reubonites) and thirty with him” (42)

“Hanan the son of Mashah, Joshaphat the Methnite” (43)

“Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jeiel the sons of Hotham the Aroerite” (44)

“Jediael the son of Shimri, and Joha his brother, the Tizite” (45)

g- Ithmah the Moabite:

“Eliel the Mohavite, Jeribai and Joshaviah, the sons of Elnaam, Ithmah the Moabite” (46)

Eliel, Obed, and Jaasiel the Mezobbaite” (47)

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 11

TEACH AND TRAIN ME, O LORD, ON THE SPIRIT OF LEADERSHIP

+ Teach me, O Lord of hosts, how to acquire the spirit of leadership;
For with Your love of mankind You wish all to be leaders;
You created a child, not to become a slave, but to be a king;
You are pleased with everyone who by You work with the spirit of leadership;
As long as You are with me, I shall walk with the spirit of surety and trust;
I seek from You to strengthen everyone for You;
So that all would live with the spirit of challenge against the hosts of darkness, the pain, and even death.

+ When shall we see Your people as a holy bride in you?!

When shall we see the striving church, crowned by You?!

When shall we see her enter exultant into Your divine bosom?!

When shall we see her cherished by the heavenlies, and rejoiced in her conquest?!

+ Grant us the grace, that everyone of us count the success of his neighbor as his own

By Your love, everyone will be strengthened;
And all will be strengthened together.



CHAPTER 12

WITH HIS CHARIZMA, DAVID DRAWS GREAT LEADERS TO JOIN HIM

In the previous chapter we saw how David was enthroned over all Israel, according to a divine plan previously proclaimed by the prophet Samuel when David was a little kid, and anointed him with the holy oil; Then about twenty years later, he was enthroned in Hebron a king over all Israel.

Here, the author makes it clear that David gradually reached the throne, like a fruit that stayed on a branch of the tree for sometime to ripen. David waited for a long time until the divine promise was realized, with no haste to reach it. For his heart was not on the throne, nor on the temporal glory, but in God and in the people. The divine promised was realized in two main steps:

- (1) The first stem in Ziklag, where he was a fugitive from the face of Saul the son of Kish, who sought to have him killed. There, men of valor gradually joined him, and it ended up by enthroning him a king over Judah (1-22).
- (2) The second step in Hebron, where leaders from all over Israel came to seek him a king over all the tribes of Israel; seven years after enthroning him over Judah (23-40).

The talk here concerns the period during which David was a fugitive from Saul's face, and took refuge among the Philistines, one of whose kings gave him Ziklag a possession (1 Samuel 27: 1-7) . Historically, taking refuge among the Philistines is considered as a point of weakness in David's life; Whereas the book of the Chronicles presents him as a shining star who drew even men of the tribe of Benjamin (the tribe of Saul), to cross over and join him.

We have already presented a quick comparison between David and Saul. In the present chapter we concentrate on the following points:

1- If we compare between Saul and David, the former, as a king made great efforts to find men of valor to join him; But many who did have forsaken him, despite all the privileges and possibilities he offered them as a king of authority. Whereas to David, on the other hand, even when he was hiding in Ziklag from Saul's face, men of valor came to join him, among whom were Saul's brethren of the tribe of Benjamin. As a man of God, he drew energies to work for him (1-2)

2- Some of Benjamin and Judah have previously opposed him; Now they came to join him; as, by the Spirit of God who dwelt upon Amasai chief of "the threes", and he said: "*We are yours, O David; We are on your side, O son of Jesse*"; David received them and made them captains of the troops. God turns even the adversaries into friends to work with David.

3- God granted them the spirit of unity, "*All the rest of Israel were of one mind to make david king*" (38)

4- They brought to him their possibilities: "*were bringing him food on donkeys and camels, on mules and oxen – provisions of flour, abundantly*" (40)

5- A spirit of joy prevailed on all, "*for there was joy in Israel*" (40)

While Saul the king exerted great effort to find men of valor to join him (1 Samuel 14: 52); strong and faithful men of valor were drawn to David the man of God, searched for him, even while he was a fugitive from Saul's face, to attach themselves to him. Men of valor, faithful, loyal, and of talents united with David for the edification of the holy congregation.

I wish we are drawn to the King of kings, seek Him, and attach ourselves to Him; for He lets the talents grow, which are actually His free gifts to us; to turn us into a spiritual army that shakes the kingdom of the devil, and destroys his authority. I wish we present to Him of what He has granted us, "*to have joy in the new Israel*".

Out of the believers, God sets the spiritual salvation army, whose only enemy is the devil and his angels. He trains His believers on the spiritual war; and grants, even the little children the possibility of conquest, to be said about the church that was like dry bones cast in the midst of the valley: "*Breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army*" (Ezekiel 37: 10). And about her, as well, it is written: "*awesome as an army with banners*" (Songs 6: 4).

- + Fight like men, like good soldiers; run diligently in your race, for the sake of the eternal crown in our Lord Christ Jesus, glory be to Him, forever, Amen.

(St. Basil the Great)

- + We are also allowed to conquer, looking up to our Prince of faith, walking along the same way He passed through for our sake ... We are not brought to death because of our struggle against death, but we are eternal because of our conquest ... Will death corrupt our bodies? ... Well, they will not stay corrupt, but will come to be in a better shape.

Let us therefore conquer the world; Let us run toward eternity; Let us follow the King; Let us erect a memorial of the conquest; Let us despise the pleasures of the world; We shall need no much labor to do that.

Let us turn our souls to heaven, to conquer the whole world; For when we do not covet for it, we would conquer it; If we scoff it, ... We, being just strangers and sojourners, I wish we do not grieve on anything concerning the world.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- + He who is wounded in war, would not be ashamed to deliver himself into a physician's hand; for he was wounded in battle; and once he is healed, the king will not send him away, but will count him among his men. So it is befitting of him who is wounded by the devil; he would not be ashamed to confess his ignorance, to forsake them, seeking repentance as treatment for his wounded soul.... He who is ashamed to show his wound, the infection will stretch over his whole body; But he who is not, his wound will be healed and will get back to the battle.

(St. Aphrahat)

- + In the regular battles, the leaders do not arm women, children, or elders. Whereas our Leader, the Lord Christ, distributes the royal weapon (the acquirement of Christ) equally on all; and will teach them the military tricks of the devil.

(Father Theodoret)

If David is truly a successful leader, he became more successful and stronger, on account of that he saw in the others leaders who work with him, whom he would never do without.

The previous chapter dealt with the individuals who were connected to David; The present chapter cares to talk about the tribes and their chiefs who made pacts with the king; those who came to him while he was in hiding (1-22); and those who came to Hebron after the death of Mephibosheth (23-40); *“when all the rest of Israel were of one mind to make David king”* (38); and *“there was joy in all Israel”* (40)

Many of those who came were suffering troubles and afflictions, and came to take refuge in David (1 Samuel 22: 1-2): The others, though, came to serve David, and to help him get enthroned promised to him by God.

The Benjamites recognize the kingdom of David:

Revealing the divine grace that covers up a multitude of sins, and weaknesses, the book of the Chronicles did not refer to the period before all the tribes recognized David as king in Hebron. For most of the tribes, then, looked at him as being the rejected king, who, in weakness of faith, escaped to Achish to seek refuge among the nonbelievers (1 Samuel 29-30)

Before that, men of the tribes of Gad, Judah, and Benjamin joined David while he was in a lowly situation, rejected by the majority. It is amazing that the tribe of Benjamin, to which the evil king Saul belongs, became attached to the tribe of Judah, and loving David, probably more than the rest of the tribes. While in Ziklag, men of valor of the brethren of Saul of Benjamin came to join David (2); And while in the stronghold (16), men of the tribe of Benjamin and Judah came to him (notice how Benjamin is mentioned before Judah); And when he was in Hebron, 3000 men came to him of the tribe of Benjamin, most of whom were guards on Saul's house (29). We may

dare to say that the men of the tribe of Benjamin were more zealous on the enthronement of David a king than the rest of the tribes. That is the work of the divine grace, exalted over any human thinking or planning, according

to which, we may expect that the tribe of Benjamin, if it does not take an opposing position against the recognition of the kingdom of David, would at least be hesitant in making a decision until they are sure that the rest of the

tribes have definitely recognized him a king.

The tribe of Benjamin that at a certain time before, was almost wiped out because of their sin (see Judges 20-21); now take a prominent place among the rest of the tribes in testifying to king David. Although they were Saul's

brethren, yet they were men with living faith and jealousy on the people of God, contrary to Saul himself.

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1- SAUL’S MIGHTY MEN OF VALOR JOIN DAVID:

“Now these were the men who came to David at Ziklag while he was still a fugitive from Saul the son of Kish, and they were among the mighty men, helpers in the war” (1)

When David with his great love for his people was denied a place in his own land, ‘Achish’ the Philistinian king gave him Ziklag as a possession to live with his family and those who joined him (1 Samuel 27: 5-7). Achish was happy to have such a famous Israeli warrior take refuge in him. David hid in Ziklag, where his movements were not all secret.

On the historical aspect, although David during that time had reached the climax of weakness (see 1 Samuel 27: 1-7); yet the book of Chronicles present it as a shining period in David’s life; during which some of the tribe of Benjamin (Saul’s brethren) came to join him; and many of those of mighty talents were drawn to the fugitive David. To him came the best of Saul’s men. ... By that, God intended to confirm to David that his enemies became his helpers (16). Those men were characterized by:

1-They experts in *“using bows, hurling stones, and shooting arrows with the bow”* (2)

2- Serious and strong-willed, *“trained for battle, who could handle shield and spear, whose faces were like the faces of lions”* (8)

3- Physically fit; *and were as swift as gazelles on the mountains”* (8)

4- Faithful to man and men (1 – 17)

Ziklag: a city in southern Judah, was first a portion of the tribe of Simon (Joshua 19: 5); then was taken over by the Philistines, and later on by Judah. In Ziklag, David stayed a year and four months, until Saul died.

What is amazing is that those mighty men of valor who came to join David in Ziklag, were Saul's brethren; They came, not aware that Saul was near death. They did not come after Saul's death to flatter David, perceiving that the throne was within David's reach, but were drawn to him, in his time of weakness, saying to him on the tongue of 'Amasai': *“For Your God helps you”* (18).

“Who could handle shield and spear; armed with bows, using both the right hand and the left, in hurling stones; and shooting arrows with the bow. They were of Benjamin, Saul's brethren” (2)

The sling, although humble in appearance, yet deadly in battle; as to the bow and arrows, they are used for thousands of years, and the heads of the arrows were made of stone, wood or bones

“The chief was Ahiezer, then Joash, the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite, Jaziel and Pelet the sons of Azmaveth, Berachah and Jehu the Anathothites” (3)

“Ishmaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the thirty, and over the thirty, Jeremiah, Jahaziel, Johanan, and Jozabad the Gederathite” (4)

“Eluzai, Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah, and Shephatiah the Haruphite” (5)

“Elkanah, Jisshiah, Azareel, Joezer, and Jashobeam, the Korahites” (6)

“and Joelah, and Zebadiah the sons of Jeroham of Gedor” (7)

2- GAD’S MIGHTY MEN OF VALOR JOIN DAVID:

“Some Gadites joined David at the stronghold in the wilderness, mighty men of valor, men trained for battle, who could handle shield and spear, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as gazelles on the mountains” (8)

By the stronghold, he probably means the cave of ‘Adullam’ (2 Samuel 23: 13). The Gadites had the favor of joining David while in affliction, and on account of their strength and courage in battle. While the Benjamites were experts in using the bows, arrows and the slings, the Gadites could handle shield and spear. And while the heads of the spears were made of bones or stones; those of the Philistines were made of bronze or iron; for they monopolized the manufacture of iron (1 Samuel 13: 19-20).

The book portrays for us how the Gadites were convinced of having David a king over Israel; they separated from their brethren on the eastern bank of the Jordan; an action worthy of commendation, for David was then a fugitive in the stronghold in the wilderness (8), probably in Ein Gedi

. In spite of the few number mentioned here (11 persons), yet they were an effective addition of power to David; on account of that they were mighty men of valor, *“whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as gazelles on the mountains” (8)*. They did not come out of affliction, nor sought protection against an enemy; but came convinced that David was the man of God appointed to be king over Israel.

Those mighty men present a living example of the good and faithful soldiers of Christ:

a- As they were leaders of armies; it is befitting of the believer to bear the spirit of strength, perceiving that he possesses mighty possibilities to oppose sin, evil, corruption, and the devil himself, with all his tricks and

deception. The believer is a leader of all his energies and possibilities in the Lord.

b- Those men had faces like the faces of lions, not to bear the spirit of violence, but to work with the spirit of strength to the account of the kingdom of God without fear; would not be disturbed because of affliction; nor fear

illness, difficulties, or oppression; and would say, together with the psalmist: *“For by You I can run against a troop”* (Psalm 18: 29); and, *“Though war should rise against me, in this I will*

be confident” (Psalm 27: 3). On the mountains they are as swift as gazelles, not to escape before the enemies, but to hasten to conquest over the devil, their enemy.

“Ezer the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third” (9)

“Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth” (10)

“Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh” (11)

“Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth” (12)

“Jeremiah the tenth, and Machbanai the eleventh” (13)

“These were from the sons of Gad, captains of the army; the least was over a hundred, and the greatest was over a thousand” (14)

The Holy Book intends to confirm that man is created as a leader, who, by the Holy Spirit of God; leads all his senses, emotions, and talents, are without humiliation nor disturbance. The heart of a believer is preoccupied, not with the

extent of his possibilities, to become a leader over a hundred or a thousand, but to be faithful in what is within his hands.

“These are the ones who crossed the Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all its banks; and they put to flight all those in the valleys, to the east and to the west” (15)

In the first month, namely in the month of Nissan, when the Jordan overflows all its banks (Joshua 3: 15).

Concerning the mighty men of Benjamin, Saul’s brethren, they were not hindered by Saul’s animosity against David, to support and recognize David as a king. As to the Gadites, their only hindrance was their location east of the Jordan, which stood against their encounter with David. Yet despite the river overflowed its banks, they crossed it swimming, on account of that their great love had drawn them to David; and were about to have their enthusiasm damped, when David came to encounter them; Not knowing whether they were coming as friends or enemies, he said to them “If you came to harm me, I shall destroy you”; to which they answered him, saying, “Far from us to harm you, David, we came to be on your side”.

Many of us intend to be in the service of the Lord; assuming that it is just a way of spend the time. The main thing is, do we intend to live for Christ as those men intended to live for David? We can contemplate more in this issue. Christ, having made us cross over the River Jordan when we died and were risen together with Him in the holy baptism; and blessed us with every spiritual blessing; we should serve him, not by the lips, nor to spend time, but by the complete submission to His will. We crossed the Jordan, not to serve David, but to serve the One greater than David.

By saying: “*And they put to flight all those in the valleys, to the east and to the west*”, he reveals the following:

They set forth from east of the Jordan, crossed over the river powerfully and quickly, then headed west to encounter David. Their journey represents the journey of every believer who comes to settle down in the bosom of the Lord of David.

It is befitting of the believer to live as though on the high mountains; not to seek the lowly and earthly things, but the heavenlies; and not to have his heart abide in the valleys, namely in the lowly mortal things. He fights on the east and on the west; namely against the carnal pleasures and the afflictions; his heart would not be preoccupied with pleasures, nor destroyed by the troubles and afflictions. He walks his way crossing over the gladness and the troubles, setting forth to the high things; about which the psalmist says: “*The high hills are for the wild goats; the cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers (a kind of rabbits)*” (Psalm 104: 18)

- + We have truly found out that the badgers refer to the saints who came to this world to destroy the venom of the serpent. Now, let us see what are those high hills kept only for the badgers; which no one can climb but the badgers. I believe that they refer to the knowledge of the Holy Trinity; known as the high mountains; a knowledge only perceived by badgers.

- + Jesus Himself, when He transfigured, it did not happen in the valley, but He ascended a mountain. You may understand from this that He always head to the hills and mountains, to teach us not to search for Him anywhere but on the mountains of the law and the prophets.

(The scholar Origen)

3- THE CHILDREN OF BENJAMIN AND JUDAH IN THE STRONGHOLD WITH DAVID:

“Then some of the children of Benjamin and Judah came to David at the stronghold” (16)

For the second time, some of the Benjamites appear, but not alone as in the first time, but accompanied with some of the children of Judah, to go to David in the stronghold, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

“And David went out to meet them, ‘If you have come peaceably to me to help me, my heart will be united with you; but if to betray me to my enemies, since there is no wrong in my hands, may the God of our fathers look and bring judgment” (17)

David had many reasons to doubt their intention, lest they pretend friendship to get his trust, then they would deliver him to Saul; but Amasai confirmed to him their faithful intention. By saying: *“If you had come peaceably to help me”* reveals his doubt that some might come to him with an ulterior intention, to know his plan and tell it Saul. For many who came to him were afflicted, debtors, or with a bitter soul (1 Samuel 22: 2). David’s doubt was because he was actually betrayed by some (1 Samuel 21-22). The psalmist often suffered from the false intention of men, to say: *“I said in y haste, ‘all men are liars”* (Psalm 116: 11).

According to St. Jerome, every man is a liar; namely, if he acts as a man he lies; but if he is sanctified, and on him the saying applies: *“I said, ‘you are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High”* (Psalm 82: 6), he would be no more a liar, for being a god, and not a man, he would utter no lies.

“Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the captains, and he said: ‘We are yours, O David; We are on your side, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, and peace to your helpers! For your God helps you. So David received them, and made them captains of the troop’” (18)

What Amasai uttered by the inspiration of the Spirit: *“Peace, peace be to you, and peace to your helpers”*, is considered the greatest gift presented to David; for the word ‘Shalom’ in Hebrew, surpassing the English word ‘peace’, does not only mean no war, but means the perfection of happiness, and the abundance of goods. David would enjoy on account of that God is on his side.

Amasai: he was probably ‘Amasa’ the son of Abigail sister of David (2: 7); his eloquent words bore a prophecy. The secret of strength is the dwelling of the Spirit of the Lord upon those who work to the account of the kingdom of God. By the work of the Holy Spirit that dwelt upon Amasai, chief of threes, they declared their love, admiration, and faithful to David, who received them and made them captains of the troop. The Spirit sometimes grants a physical strength, as it happened with ‘Jephthah’ (Judges 11: 29, and ‘Samson’(Judges 14: 19); wisdom as with ‘Bezaleel’ (*Exodus 31: 3*); eloquence as with ‘Amasai’; spiritual talents, and knowledge of divine things as it is with the prophets. To some, like Bezaleel, the Spirit of God granted special craftsmanship (*Exodus 31: 1 – 5*); to Jephthah a military abilities (*udges 11: 29*); to David, the ability to rule (*1 Samuel 16: 13*); and to Zechariah the son of Jehoiada a prophetic word (*2 Chronicles 24: 20*)

+ We read about the children of Israel, that they went to war with a heart full of peace, even in the midst of swords, shed blood, and corpses; for they were thinking only of the conquest of peace, not of their own conquest.

(St. Augustine)

4- THE CHILDREN OF MANASSEH SUPPORT DAVID:

“And some of Manasseh defected to David when he was going with the philistines to battle against Saul; but they did not help them, for the lords of the philistines sent them away by counsel, saying, ‘he may defect to his master Saul and endanger our heads’” (19)

What came here in verses 19-22, we find in (1 Samuel 29-30). God kept David from fighting against the children of Israel, when he was with the Philistines. Although the men of Manasseh did not have the faith of the Benjamites, the strength of the Gadites, nor the power of the spirit of the children of Judah and Benjamin; yet they declared their recognition of David, when he was rejected by the Philistines. When the world reject our Christ to reign on their hearts; we declare our recognition of Him to reign in us.

“When he went to Ziklag, those of Manasseh who defected to him were Adnah, Josabad, Jediael, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai, captains of the thousands who were from Manasseh” (20)

“And they helped David against the bands of raiders, for they all were mighty men of valor, and they were captains in the army” (21)

The raiders were Amalekites, against whom David and his men defended Israel; and for to whom Saul did not care much, out of weakness or slothfulness.

“For at that time they came to David day by day to help him, until it was a great army, like the army of god” (22)

What a magnificent portrait of David who gathered all Israel together in one heart and mind.

5- SOME SOUGHT TO TURN THE KINGDOM TO DAVID:

“Now these were the numbers of the divisions that were equipped for the war, and came to David at Hebron to turn over the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the Lord” (23)

All the tribes came to David, to take their position to support David, particularly in the army. This is a symbolic portrait of the believers working in the church of Christ, His one body. But not all the members have the same of function, but each of them has his own talent, that he uses according to the diverse grace of God, *“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another” (Romans 12: 4-5)*

A magnificent example of this is the Benjamites, who despised the honorary appearances, as guards on the house of Saul. Counted them as of no benefit, they dedicated their energies to service and edification with David; by which they became a living example to the rest of the tribes; as according to the apostle, *“Join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern” (Philippians 3: 17); and, “Remember those who rule over you, who has spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct” (Hebrew 13: 7).*

The total number of those who came to Hebron was 339, 000, other than Issachar, and those who came together with Zadok; In those who joined David, we notice the following:

- 1- The great number of those who came from east of the Jordan: 120,000; namely more than one third of the total number.
- 2- Many came from the north (Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali).
- 3- Few came from Benjamin, for they were of Saul's household.
- 4- Few came from Judah and Simeon; for many of them were with David from the beginning; they probably were the brethren who prepared the food for those who came (39)

Probably one of the factors that motivated the tribes to join David, was knowing that when Saul fell in David's hand, and he refused to stretch his hand to the Lord's anointed, in spite of Saul's many attempts to kill him.

The tribe of Judah enthroned David in Hebron where he reigned seven years and six months; during which there was a continuous war between the house of Saul and the house of David (2 Samuel 2-4); although no mention of it came in the book of the chronicle

"Of the children of Judah bearing shield and spear, six thousand eight hundred armed for war" (24)

Some may probably wonder why the tribes closer to him, presented relatively fewer number of warriors (Judah presented 6800, and Simeon 7100); while Zebulun presented 50,000, and the tribes east of the Jordan presented 120,000. That does not mean that the tribes geographically closer to David were less zealous or faithful than those far from him but, most probably, because they felt that they were at David's disposal, he could ask for whatever he needs, to find them hasten to support hi,. On another aspect, being committed to receive those coming from far locations, they did not want to be a burden on David.

6- SIMEON'S MIGHTY MEN OF VALOR JOIN DAVID:

“Of the children of Simeon, mighty men of valor fit for war, seven thousand one hundred” (25)

7- LEVITES AND PRIESTS JOIN DAVID:

“Of the children of Levi four thousand six hundred” (26)

Although the Levites were exempted from military service (Numbers 1: 47-50); yet we find them here, beside raising prayers, volunteer in those critical circumstances to support David with their whole hearts, and to fight on his side, to make him king.

“Jehoiada, the leader of the Aaronites, and with him three thousand seven hundred” (27)

The priests were called Aaronites because they were descendants of Aaron the high priest.

“Zadok, a young man, a valiant warrior, and from his father’s house twenty-two captains” (28)

Zadok was a faithful servant of David all his life; and the high priest at the beginning of Solomon’s reign.

8- SOME GUARDS OF SAUL’S HOUSE JOIN DAVID:

“Of the children of Benjamin, kinsmen of Saul, three thousand (until then the greatest part of them had remained loyal to the house of Saul)” (29)

The number was fewer than the rest of the tribes, probably on account of that some of them feared lest David might avenge himself against them, because of Saul's continuous oppression and his attempts to kill him (by the help of his guards).

9- SOME OF EPHRAIM'S MIGHTY MEN OF VALOR JOIN DAVID:

"Of the children of Ephraim twenty thousand eight hundred, mighty men of valor, famous men throughout their father's house" (30)

Beside being mighty men of valor like those of the other tribes, these Ephramites, being already men of high positions in their fathers' house, they did not join David, seeking high position in the new nation.

10- SOME OF THE HALF-TRIBE OF MANASSEH JOIN DAVID:

"Of the half-tribe of Manasseh eighteen thousand who were designated by name to come and make David king" (31)

How amazing was what the tribe of Manasseh did; Without any controversy or competition within the tribe, for who are to go to enthrone David, , they "were designated by name", namely, their talents, works, and zeal, revealed their worthiness to do this mission.

11-THE CHILDREN OF ISSACHAR JOIN DAVID:

"Of the children of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, their chiefs were two thousand, and all their brethren were at their command" (32)

Despite presenting the least number of men (200 leaders), yet those leaders were known for their experience in taking wise decisions, convenient for the nation at that time *“had understanding of the times”*, (for what suit a certain time may not suit another). They knew how to choose the right time to unite together, to do a mutual work, concerning the enthronement of David. They probably were the thinking mind for how to deal with Saul and his children; and for choosing the right time to consummate the true purposes of God concerning uniting together around David.

With the same spirit the apostle Paul says: *“Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand”* (Romans 13: 11, 12)

By reason and wise discernment they knew that the other tribes were submitted to the, and *“all their brethren were at their command”*. ... How amazing portrait! ... We are committed to submit, with the spirit of love and humility, to whom granted such a talent

The work of God is clearly apparent, that consummating that role did not create any jealousy against them among the other tribes; but it is said that men of Zebulun and men of Asher went to war, bearing the same spirit..

12-THE CHILDREN OF ZEBULUN JOIN DAVID:

“Of Zebulun there were fifty thousand who went out to battle, experts in war with all weapons of war stouthearted men who could keep ranks” (33)

The tribe of Zebulun were featured by their readiness to go to battle, supporting one another with no controversy, and *“could keep ranks”*, a Hebrew military expression, referring to the orderly military attitude, walking like one man, with one heart.

13-THE CHILDREN OF NAPHTALI JOIN DAVID:

“Of Naphtali one thousand captains, and with them thirty-seven thousand with shield and spear” (34)

Naphtali were like Judah, men who could handle shields and spears; like those who built the wall of Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah.

14-THE CHILDREN OF DAN JOIN DAVID:

“Of the Danites who could keep battle formation, twenty-eight thousand six hundred” (35)

Both Dan and Zebulun were featured by being always ready to go to war. Men of Dan were standing by as though anticipation the signal (ss 2 Timothy 1: 7).

15-THE CHILDREN OF ASHER JOIN DAVID:

“Of Asher, those who could go out to war, able to keep battle formation, forty thousand” (36)

16- MEN OF THE EASTERN BANK OF THE JORDAN JOIN DAVID:

“Of the Reubenites and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, from the other side of the Jordan, one hundred and twenty thousand armed for battle with every kind of weapon of war” (37)

The tribes from the eastern side of the Jordan came in great numbers; although coming from afar, they crossed the river carrying the weapons of war; came with one heart; the same spirit of brotherly love that prevailed upon all the other tribes.

17-UNITY AND JOY IN ISRAEL:

“All these men of war who could keep ranks, came to Hebron with a loyal heart, to make David king over all Israel; and the rest of Israel were of one mind to make David king” (38)

The total of those who came to Join David and to set him a king, were more than 300,000 men. Having an upright heart, David was granted by God, leaders of diverse talents and experience from all tribes, who worked with one spirit, one goal, and one mind.

The tribe	The number of those who joined David, and their talents
Judah	6800 men who could handle shields and spears
Simeon	7100 mighty men of war
Levi	4600 Levites
Benjamin	3000 men of the house of Saul
Ephraim	20,800 mighty men of valor
Half-tribe of Manasseh	18000 men who came to set David a king
Issachar	200 chiefs of experience and wisdom in running the affairs of the nation
Zebulun	50,000 of faithful warrior with all kinds of weapons
Nephtali	1000 leaders and 37,000 of warriors with shields and spears
Dan	28,600 of warriors in battles

Asher	40,000 of warriors in battles
Reuben, Gad, and half-tribe of Manasseh	120,000 warriors who could handle all kinds of weapons (from east of the Jordan)

Commenting on the warriors of a peaceful heart, St. Jerome quotes Psalm 120, saying: *“Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue”* (Psalm 12: 2).

- + Deliver my sou;, O Lord, from a deceitful tongue. The tongue od someone else would not harm me, but it is my own tongue who is my enemy. Deliver me from my own tongue, not of someone else, but of my own tongue, which is like a sword that kills me. I assume that I harm my enemy, not perceiving that I kill myself. My opponents may oppose me when I speak to them; but I shall talk peace. They spirit may come against me, but let my spirit a peace-maker. For it is written in the first book of the Chronicles (Paralipomenon): *“All these men of war came to Hebron with a loyal heart”* (full of peace to make war) (1 Chronicles 12; 38).

(St. Jerome)

This celebration was unique, *“for there was joy in Israel”*; the secret of their joy was that he represents the Messiah Savior of the world; In him they saw the shadow of salvation; they enjoys the spirit of praise; and perceived that the Word of God and the divine promises were the source of their exalted joy.

“And they were there with David three days, eating and drinking, for their brethren had prepared for them” (39)

“eating and drinking”, meaning that men of all tribes, even in eating and drinking, were like one family

“Moreover those who were near to them, from as far away as Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, were bringing food on donkeys and camels, on mules and oxen – provisions of flour and cakes, of figs and cakes of raisins, wine and oil and oxen and sheep abundantly, for there was joy in Israel” (40)

If all the tribes provided leaders in war, politics, and running the affairs of the nation; the families of the tribes close to them presented an abundance of provisions, with the spirit of joy that prevailed over Israel, because of their leader, David, the man of God, the prophet, the king, the judge, and the sweet psalmist of Israel.

The secret of their joy was, not the political possibilities, the experience, and the material possibilities, but the feeling of the presence of the divine presence, the Grantor of joy.

“There was joy in Israel” (11: 40). According to some, this expression is not a regular kind of joy, because of the enthronement of a king; but it is the same joy they enjoy when they celebrate the new Jewish year, when the Orthodox Jews, up till now, dance exultant in the Torah.

The secret of their joy is gathering together by a spirit of intimacy and unity, without controversy or competition; That is beside their perception that David is anointed by the Lord Himself, to be a king over all Israel.

The tribes, on account of that they suffered sadness for a long time, because the rebellion of Saul against the Lord, and his oppression against David; they were defeated before the Philistines, and Saul and his sons died in battle.

David rejoiced to see all the tribes united together, instead of dissensions and the civil wars.

Many tribes cared to bring provisions on donkeys, camels, and mules; food and wine, that referred to an atmosphere of joy. Together with the spirit of serious strife, they bore that of satiety, joy, brotherly love, and unity; *“for there was joy in Israel”* (18).

The secret of strength in those tribes was:

- 1- The gathering together of such a great number to the account of the glory of God.
- 2- Despite their great number and diversity, they had one goal.
- 3- They presented provisions with abundance.
- 4- Now, as all Israel united together around the king, appointed by the Lord Himself, they came to be in great joy; for they gathered together around the good shepherd.

+ *“Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, for praise from the upright is beautiful”* (Psalm 33: 1).

We often hear about the cry-outs and shouts in the Holy Book, that express the condition of a very happy soul, full of joy; not because everything is running smoothly; nor for the sake of physical wellbeing; nor because the fields were filled with every kind of fruit; but because you have possessed the Lord, the beautiful, the good, and the wise. Is this joy He has given you, is not enough for you?

This text exhorts the righteous to perceive the extent of their honor to be worthy to be members of the herd of this Shepherd, and to feel pride to serve Him. They are filled with an unutterable joy, while standing with their hearts jumping out with the zeal of the beloved toward the loving God.

If you feel in your heart such light that brings in it a complete knowledge toward God; I God enlighten your heart to love Him; your care for the world and its material things would decrease. By such vague and short feeling, you can perceive the fullness of the righteous, who continuously and unceasingly draw their happiness from God. You would rarely feel such feeling that is granted to you by God; by which you go back to remember what you miss. Whereas the righteous feel it continuously, for the Spirit of God dwells in him, and the foremost fruit of the Spirit are *“love, joy, and peace”* (Galatians 5: 22).

“Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous” (Psalm 33: 1). God of the righteous dwells in the souls that are large enough to accommodate Him; and he in whom He dwells will be characterized by courage, will exult, and the righteous will be a dwelling place for the Lord, once he receive Him in his heart. He who sins, on the other hand, would give place to the devil; and close his ears to the words saying: *“Do not give place to the devil”*; (Ephesians 4: 27). nor the words, saying: *“If the spirit of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your post”* (Ecclesiastes 10: 4). I wish we store the joy in our hearts while meditating in these words: *“Praise from the upright is beautiful”* (Psalm 33: 1).

(St. Basil the Great)

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 12

LET THE WEAK SAY: I AM A HERO

- + Because of Saul, David found no place among his people;
He fled to the Philistines, and one of their kings gave him a city;
He hid in Ziklag, yet his movements were not completely secret;
In the midst of that affliction,
The fragrance of godliness came out of him, and reached all the tribes;
And many of his oppressors wished to get attached to him,
Many of Saul's brethren and his guards, came to him;
Many chiefs of the armies of amazing capabilities surrounded him.

- + As to our Christ, the Son of David, He came down by His free will and that of His Father;
He came down to us, not to seek a city of refuge;
But to seek our hearts as His throne;
Men, women, youth, and children surrounded Him;
Whom He set kings and mighty men of valor;
Who perpetually sing the spiritual military anthem:
"Let the weak say: 'I am strong'" (Joel 3: 10).

- + The battle field is our hearts; and its way is our Christ;
Our weapon is the cross of our Savior; and the secret of our conquest is the flow of His grace;
Our eyes look up toward heaven;
But our enemy the devil is underneath the feet, with no authority over us;
Our wounds in the battle radiate splendor and glory;
Our stronghold is the Physician of the souls and the bodies, Leader of the battle;

We shall not fear death, for. By His death, He destroyed the bulwarks of the pit;

And we do not fear the grave, for in it we encounter the Grantor of the resurrection, eternity, and non-corruption.

+ The salvation army includes the believers of the old and the new covenants;

It embraces warriors from all peoples, nations, and tongues;

Its banner is the divine love, and the brotherly love;

Its conquest is a cross over to heaven.

+ Our weapon is repentance with the spirit of hope;

And humility with the spirit of surety in God;

And the enjoyment of the grace of God, without slothfulness and laziness.

+ In the midst of the battle, our souls are filled with joy and exultation;

We are joined by those coming from disbelief to faith;

And those who take off the garment of corruption, and put on the righteousness of Christ.

+ Our battle knows no softness nor slothfulness;

In the midst of seriousness, our Leader pours His sweetness in our hearts;

Opens our insight up to enjoy the deposit of heaven;

Our battle against the devil will not stop as long as we are in the body;

Our battle against him is also between him and every believer;

But we truly are not part of it;

For it is a battle of our Christ against the devil.

+ Our Christ – the amazing Leader – turned the battle of the cross into a wedding;

He presented His shed blood as a dowry to His church;

He stretched His hands to embrace His bride;
In the midst of our battle, our divine Leader transfigures;
We see Him as the Groom of heaven, the Grantor of joy to the hearts;
The Grantor of eternity, who will eternally shine His splendor on us.

+ Some of the Gadites set forth to David;
They crossed over valleys east and west. And encountered him in the
stronghold on the mountain;
Grant me to cross over all the pleasures and afflictions of the world;
And to set forth to You, O Son of David, to encounter You up on the
mountain
On Mount Tabor, You open my eyes up, to enjoy the secrets of Your glory;
I shall not be drawn by the covetousness of the world, nor be disturbed by
its afflictions.
You reflect Your splendor on my depths;
You set Your kingdom in me;
To perceive the secrets of Your Godhead, and to experience the deposit
of Your heavens;
Let me encounter You on the mountain, while You talk to the multitudes;
Let me hear Your sweet voice, and experience the power of Your word;
Let me holdfast to Your commandment, to be rescued of all the tricks of
the enemy;
Let me encounter You on Mount Calvary, the mountain of the wedding;
Let me cry out together with the robber Dimas;
Remember me, O my soul's Groom, when You come to Your kingdom.

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CHAPTER 13

A FAILED COLLECTIVE ATTEMPT

TO BRING THE ARK OF THE LORD BACK TO JERUSALEM

DAVID AND THE ARK OF THE LORD (Chapters 13 – 16);

In (2 Samuel 5: 11-25), we see David build his palace, enter into a battle against the Philistines, and enjoy conquest, before making Jerusalem the religious center of the kingdom. Here, the author cares to show David's flaring zeal to bring the ark of the Lord back to Jerusalem, representing the divine throne. He intends to show that bringing that ark which was disregarded by Saul back to Jerusalem was considered as the first and main task for David.

David cared for gathering all the tribes together, and for the unity and the presence of the people (2, 5, 6).

Chapters 13-16 tell us about that holy zeal. The reader may remember that during the period of the judges, the Philistines took the ark of the Lord; but having brought limitless troubles on them, they put it on a new cart, and returned it to Israel (1 Samuel 6). Since then, the ark of the Lord remained in the house of Abinadab in Kirjath Jearim, until David decided to attempt bringing it back to Jerusalem, to make the capital of his kingdom, the royal city, as well as the holy city.

The first attempt to bring the Ark back:

David did not ever seek his personal honor, nor hastened to sit on the throne, despite having a divine promise for that since his youth; he was only preoccupied

with gathering the people and the leaders together around the ark of the Lord, being a representative of the throne of God, where the 'Seat of Mercy' was.

David gathered together all Israel to make a collective and sound decision concerning that task, by the leaders of the army, the chiefs of the tribes, the priests, and the Levites; But because they did not seek the counsel of the Lord; that supposedly joyful task turned into bitterness, when Uzza who touched the ark to keep it from falling from the cart, aroused the wrath of God. David feared to make another attempt to bring the ark back to Jerusalem.

1- David seeks the counsel of the leaders and all Israel

1 - 4

2- All moved to bring the ark back to Jerusalem

5 - 6

3- A great celebration for bringing the ark of the Lord back to Jerusalem

7 - 8

4- The death of Uzzah

9 - 11

5- David feared to make any further attempt to bring the ark back to Jerusalem 12 - 13

6- God blesses the house of Obed-Edom

14

1- DAVID SEEKS THE COUNSEL OF THE LEADERS AND ALL THE CONGREGATION OF ISRAEL:

Why did the talk here concerning the achievements of David begin with moving the ark of the Lord from 'Jearim' to 'Jerusalem', although, as it came in (2 Samuel 5-6) that he did many achievements before moving the ark? By this the author tends to confirm that all the works and achievements of David had one goal, namely, the enjoyment of the divine presence. The ark of the Lord had

preoccupied David's heart even before he becomes a king. And moving it to Jerusalem was not something new in his mind. ... The author was also preoccupied, not by the historical parade of events, as much as proclaiming what was in David's mind, heart, and behavior.

"Then David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader" (1)

Once David settled down on the throne, he thought about moving the ark of God; with two goals:

- 1- To give honor to God, being the true Leader, and to show honor toward His ark, that represents His presence.

I wish the first and greater care of those who enjoy authority, honor, and riches, is to give honor to God, His ministry, and ministering to His kingdom among men.

- 2- To get the true comfort, happiness, and benefit, of the presence of the ark in the capital..... It was wise of the rulers of the world to take the ark of God in their depths, to enjoy His wisdom, counsel, and laws; for those who start by the fear of God will enjoy His grace.

David was used to consult the Lord in everything, to seek His blessing and intervention; but counting that moving the ark does not need consultation, being a blessed act that would undoubtedly bring pleasure to the heart of God; he failed, because he depended upon the collective decision, and upon his own understanding, disregarding to resort to God. David forgot that the ark of God, representing the throne of God, does not depend upon human arms or zeal. David learned that, but unfortunately, not before the actual work, but after the funeral of Uzzah and his burial in the grave.

We notice that in the book of Samuel, he mentioned how David, beside seeking the counsel of the leaders, he wisely sought the counsel of thousands, hundreds, and every chief among the people, so that all would feel that this work concern both the leaders and the people, and not just the king. Yet he erred that he did not seek the counsel of the Lord, probably because he felt that the work does not need God's counsel, for it implies the love for God. And on another aspect, he did not seek the counsel of the priests and the Levites, concerning how to move the ark of God according to the law.

It was good to seek the counsel of the people; for, although David was the king, and it was in his authority to command, yet he chose to seek counsel, and to let the others partake of leadership; that made all trust in his wise decisions, and feel comfortable with his behavior with such spirit of humility.

No wise leader can take his decisions without seeking counsel. Although David was very shrewd, yet he sought the counsel of his leaders; "*For in the multitude of counselors there is safety*" (Proverbs 24: 6). But, if David sought the counsel of the Lord, or asked any Levite about the lawful way of moving the ark of God, the task of moving it would have been done with peace and joy.

"And David said to all the congregation of Israel: 'If it seems good to you, and if it is of the Lord our God, let us send out to our brethren everywhere who are left in the land of Israel,

and with them to the priests and the Levites who are in their cities and their common-lands, that they may gather together to us'" (2)

He called the whole people to attend that occasion, to honor the ark, and to please and enlighten them. He called the common people "*our brethren*", a sign of humility, and of the extent of love he had for them; the same way the Lord Jesus called us His brothers (Hebrew 2: 11), for the sake of His amazing love for us.

David made one condition that the task had to be according to the will of God; as though he says that, even if it seems good in your sight and mine, yet, if it is not according to the will of the Lord, we should not do it.

I wish, we, as well, in all what we do, should ask ourselves: [Is this work from God? Is it according to his will? Can we give a good report about it to God? Do we expect that it brings pleasure to God? Have we sought the counsel of God before starting doing it?

“And let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we have not inquired at it since the days of Saul” (3)

He calls *“the ark of the covenant”* *“the Ark of our Lord”*, or *“the ark of our God”*; He intended to bring it back to the capital, to make out of it a center of worship for the whole people. He intended to confirm that God is the center of life of all believers.

In the days of Saul, who disregarded the ark of the covenant, the Philistines took it over for a duration of seven months; then brought it forth to Kerjat Jearim, to be kept in the house of Abinadab the Levite (1 Samuel 4-7), where it remained several years; a sign of the lack of care for the divine presence, the attachment to God, or the acceptance of God as the center of life. The desire to move the ark of the covenant back to the capital, however, bears a desire that God would be the first in the life of the congregation, and at the foremost position.

So it is befitting of us to have the Holy Book, being the Word of God, in the foremost position in our lives.

David’s heart was preoccupied with gathering Israel together with all its tribes, leaders, priests, and Levites, to bring the ark of the covenant back from Kerjat Jearim; and with gathering together all the worshippers of the Lord for that

purpose; saying with bitterness: “for we have not inquired at it since the days of Saul” (3). David perceived that the secret of Israel’s failure in the days of Saul, was that the ark of God was altogether forgotten. Since the Philistines brought it back to Israel, no one cared for it (1 Samuel 14: 18-19)... We should notice that David did not say anything bad about Saul; he did not say that Saul never cared for the ark of the covenant, at least during the end of his reign; but with humility, he said: “for we have not inquired at it since the days of Saul”; counting himself together with others, guilty of that slothfulness. ... It is better for us to condemn ourselves, before condemning anyone else; for the humble and the good, count their portion in the general guilt, and refer the reproach to themselves (Daniel 9: 5, etc.)

“Then all the congregation said that they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people” (4)

3- ALL MOVED TO BRING THE ARK TO JERUSALEM:

“So David gathered all Israel together from Shihor in Egypt to as far as the entrance of Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kerjath Jearim” (5)

Shihor in Egypt: meaning (black or turbid), refers to the River Nile, which divides at the end into a delta of two branches, the eastern one is the boundary between Egypt and Israel, referred to here.

The entrance of Hamath: The land around ‘Homs’, an open plain to the north of Hamath, to east toward the wilderness of Syria; to the south toward Rablah and Bakaa; and to the west toward the sea. It is an entrance to all these locations. Shihor was toward the extreme south, and Hamath toward the extreme north.

“And David and all Israel went up to Baalah, to kerjath Jearim, which belonged to Judah to bring up from there the ark of the Lord God who dwells between the cherubim, where His name is proclaimed” (6)

The ark was in the house of Abinadab in Kerjath Jearim, after the Philistines brought it back to Israel (1 Samuel 4: 3). The tabernacle of meeting was in Shiloh in the days of Eli the priest (1 Samuel 1: 3); In ‘Nob’ in the days of Saul (1 Samuel 21: 1-9); In Gibeon in the days of David, when Zadok was the high priest; And finally in Jerusalem in the days of Solomon, before the temple was built.

4- A GREAT CELEBRATION FOR BRINGING THE ARK BACK TO JERUSALEM:

“So they carried the ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab; and Uzzah and Ahio drove the cart” (7)

A cart drawn by oxen was a convenient way for the Philistines to move the ark (1 Samuel 6: 7); But the people of God, given definite commands in this concern (See Numbers 4: 11, 15), in spite of their great celebration of bringing back the ark, yet they disobeyed God’s commands, hence failed to recognize the presence of the Holy God among them.

Who could imagine that David, with his great understanding of the law, would commit such a mistake, to use a cart to move the ark?! Because the Philistines moved it that way, and God allowed it to be, David assumed that he could do the same. But we should abide to the divine command, and not follow the lead of others when they disobey it; even though the divine will might allow it in specific circumstances .

That is why, when Uzzah touched the ark, God stroke him and he died. Uzzah's sin warns us against prior assumptions, haste, and the lack of awe in dealing with the sanctities; We should not assume that good intention is an excuse for a faulty act.

When we approach to have communion of the Holy sacraments, we should examine our hearts, lest the long intimacy would lead to lack of honor. I wish we would not take approaching God, easy ; but to approach with daring to the throne of grace through Christ; for we are now under the ordinance of freedom and grace, and not under bondage and servitude. ... I wish the depression that altered the joy of Israel to grief, because of the punishment that came upon Uzzah, would perpetually remind us to worship the Lord with fear and trembling, while serving Him with joy and gladness. I wish David's anger on that occasion would warn us, to watch ourselves when we come under the divine chastisement; lest we get into controversy with Him instead of submitting to His will.

"Then David and all Israel played music before the Lord with all their might, with singing, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals, and with trumpets" (8)"

Beside making all his decisions in everything, even in the religious issues, with seriousness, balance, and reverence, David put in his heart to let the spirit of joy prevail on all the people.

According to the scholar Origen, the use of music is an expression of joy, with the spirit of unity and harmony in the Lord. With the tunes of music, those wishing for unity could be in harmony with the others; whereas those rejecting unity, would never enjoy the music. That was what strongly appeared in the parable by the Lord Christ of the prodigal son who returned to his father; When the son, encountered his father, who ran and fell on his neck and kissed him (Luke 15:

20); music was played in the house (the church); and there was dancing (a symbol of the amazing unity between the father, full of compassion, and the son who returned with his whole heart); but unfortunately, the older brother was offended by all that (Luke 15: 25-28).

- + The word 'symphony' precisely refers to the harmonized sounds of music; an expression well known in the Holy Book. As it was befitting with the harmony that happened between the father and his son who was lost and is found by repentance, to hear a symphony in such a joyful occasion... That likens what came in the second book of Samuel, when the sons of Abinadab preceded the ark of the covenant, and David and all the children of Israel played before the face of the Lord a superb music and songs (see 2 Samuel 6: 4-5 LXX).

(The scholar Origen)

5- THE DEATH OF UZZAH:

"And when they came to Shidon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled" (9)

"Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark, and he died there before the Lord" (10)

The Lord had already given specific instructions concerning the way the ark should be carried and moved (Numbers 4: 5-15). It was the duty of the priests to carry the ark without touching it, lest they die. They should carry it by two poles of shittim-wood overlaid with gold, inserted through four rings of gold two on each side -- – which are not to be removed). The law forbids even the priests to touch the holy thing (Number 4: 15).

Uzzah died because he touched the ark of the covenant; whereas the house of Obed the Edomite where the ark was kept, was blessed.

The apostle says: "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*" (Hebrew 10: 21). We look at God, being the merciful Father; Yet we are committed to revere Him, being the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. Uzzah died because he took by force the rights of priest, which he should not do.

According to Josephus, If Uzzah died on account of what he did, out of ignorance; Those who take communion of the body and blood of the Lord, while unworthy, will be condemned, even if they do not perceive the seriousness of their act.

God allowed for the death of Uzzah, because he touched the ark, that he should not do; to tell us not to take any divine commandment slothfully. Together with God's exalted love of man; it is befitting of man to be committed by obedience to the divine commandment, even the simple ones.

+ Whoever perverts, even a little bit, from the pure faith, is counted as though had committed a major sin, and would be counted as utterly corrupt.

The lack of zeal in the little things is the cause of all our tribulations; Because of the little sins, the big ones crawl into man. The same way the slothfulness in treating the wounds of the body would cause infection, fever, and probably death.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- + Seeing how ignorance may be punished by the wrath of God, David, the godly man, the prophet, the anointed king, whom God chose according to His heart to consummate His will in everything; was grieved; and feared lest he would fall under a similar judgment

(St. Jerome)

“And David became angry because of the Lord’s outbreak against Uzzah; therefore that place was called ‘Perez Uzzah’ to this day” (11)

David became so angry and fearful; that he feared to make another attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem; on account of that his great celebration of moving the ark utterly failed, and ended in the death of someone, he thought

as innocent. ... God did not forsake him in his anger and grief, but opened his eyes up to see the blessings of the ark of the covenant that dwelt on the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite; that he desired to attach himself to the ark of the covenant, and to move it anew to the capital, but yet with the spirit of obedience to the divine commandment.

6- DAVID FEARED TO DO ANY OTHER ATTEMPT TO BRING THE ARK OF THE COVENANT TO JERUSALEM:

“David was afraid of God that day, saying, “How can I bring the ark of God to me?” (12)

“And David would not move the ark with him into the city of David, but took it aside into the house of Obed-Odom the Gittite” (13)

The ark remained for three months in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite, and the house was filled with blessing.

It is amazing that the book of the Chronicles that covered up serious and horrible sins of David, cared here to record his fault in not following the statute of moving the ark of the covenant. ... Why?

- 1- It is well and good for David and those with him, to rejoice and praise God, while moving the ark of the covenant into the capital; Yet, together with the praise, they were committed to obey the statute of God; For the non-commitment to let the priests carry the ark, assuming that it is enough to carry it on a new cart, even if it seems to be a little thing, but the obedience to God is everything.
 - 2- The comfort of the ark of the covenant is not in moving it into the capital, but in the obedience by man of the divine commandment; by which we would enjoy the presence of God.
 - 3- Although the Philistines, when they returned the ark of the covenant to Israel, carried it on a new cart; and yet no one died; It was because they know nothing about that statute. What they did was according to their conscience and their perception by the natural law, because they did not have the Mosaic law.
 - 4- David failed in moving the ark; and his confidence, together with the joy and praise turned into fear, anger, and bitterness; and even to accusation against God; Yet, the movement of the ark was realized when David came to learn how to obey the divine commandment.
 - 5- God presented to us a practical lesson, not to seek to please Him according to our human mind, but by obedience to His divine Word and commandment, He granted to us.
- + It is befitting of us to believe that the delay in fulfilling the commandment, is counted as time of disobedience to it.... We should remember the saying: *“Do not delay to turn back to the Lord, and do not postpone it from day to day”* (Sirach 5: 7); and the saying: *“Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go and come back, and tomorrow I will give it’, when you have it with you”* (Proverb 3: 28).

(The scholar Origen)

- + The proof of love is to proclaim it through work. That is why John says in his epistle: *“He who says ‘I know him’, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him”* (1 John 2: 4). Our true love is in keeping our will in harmony with God’s commandments. He who goes to and fro through his evil covetousness, does not truly love God; because he acts against the will of God.

(Pope Gregory the Great)

- + Every word of Christ reveals the mercies, righteousness and wisdom of God; and this word could have its strength in the soul through the ear, if it readily listens. That is why a man with a cruel and an evil heart, who does not readily listen to it, will not only fails to perceive the divine wisdom, but will crucify Jesus who taught it, again.

That is why we ought to make sure if we readily listen to His Word; For he says: *“If you love Me, keep My commandments ... He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him”* (John 14: 16, 21).

Do you see how He made keeping His commandments a condition to manifest Himself? The greatest commandment is to love God, and to love the neighbor, that come after we reject all the temporal things, and have our mind well-established.

- + The spiritual training is not separate from the commandment, but it is rather the commandment itself.

Show me work that is not a commandment. If you talk about prayer, it is a commandment.

If you talk about rejecting the evil thoughts, it is a commandment.

If you talk about fasting and watching, ... they are commandments.

And if you talk about bringing the self to death, it is a commandment as well.

(St. Mark the hermit)

6- GOD BLESSES THE HOUSE OF OBED-EDOM:

“The ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that he had” (14)

If death came upon Uzzah because he touched the ark of the covenant, regardless of the divine commandment; God, however blessed the house of Obed-Edom where the ark remained for three months; which confirms that God is the Source of uncountable blessings to him who holds fast to Him and who seeks Him. But he who does not care for His commandment, will hear the evangelic saying: *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”* (Hebrew 10: 31)

Let the blessing which dwelt upon the house of Obed-Edom because of the ark of the covenant, encourage us to welcome the rites of the church in our houses.... If the word of the gospel for some is “the aroma of death to death”; as the ark was for Uzzah; ... But if we receive it with joy and love, it will be for us “the aroma of life for life: (2 Corinthians 2: 16).

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 13

PROCLAIM, O LORD, YOUR DIVINE PRESENCE IN MY HEART

- + By Your Holy Spirit, set in my depths a temple for Yourself;
Transfigure, O Lord, in my depths;
To see You deep in me, deeper than my depths;
And High, O Holy One, higher than my heights.

- + Grant me by Your divine presence, to be preoccupied only by You;
Nail Your fear in my heart; and proclaim Your love in my depths;
Together with the cherubim and the seraphim, I stand in awe before You;
And by the cross, my heart flows with love and longing for You

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“Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, with masons and carpenters, to build him a house” (1)

This shows how David's kingdom was established in Jerusalem; when a foreign king of the Gentiles, sends him a multitude of gifts. God manifested His grace to David, and granted him favor in the eyes of Hiram king of Tyre, who sent him messengers to seek his friendship, beside sending him masons, and carpenters to build him a house. That was the beginning of a strong friendship that lasted for a long time between David and Hiram king of Tyre, until the days of Solomon.

David's kingdom was great and stretching wide, while Hiram's kingdom was tiny, compared to that of David. But God, who supported David in all his works, intended to lead him to love with humility. With all the possibilities of David, he could not build a palace for himself without the support of Hiram king of Tyre. That teaches us not to despise those inferior to us in possibilities and authority. For man, however successful he is, and whatever possibilities he may have, needs his neighbor, seeks his support, and gives him thanks for his favors and help, even if they are for a price. No one can live isolated from his neighbor; but whenever he has a chance, he would reveal to his neighbor that he is in need of his support and cooperation; to keep him from having feelings of inferiority.

“And David perceived that the Lord had established him as king over Israel. For his kingdom was highly exalted because of his people Israel” (2)

Leading his people, caring for them, satisfying their needs, and protecting them, David did not feel that the favor is his; for that is what expected of him, as a good shepherd, who loves the people of God.

The first factor was that David's eyes were concentrated upon God. He counted every success, prosperity, and honor, that dwelt upon him, as divine gifts; not on

account of that he was more clever, able, or wise, than anyone else; but rather because God was with him.

The second factor was that all what he got of success, glory, and greatness, were granted to him, not to enjoy as a person, but to serve the people of God..... That is how it is befitting of the believer not to be centered around his ego, but to count himself as being called by God for the sake of the happiness, comfort, glory of others, and their eternal salvation. ... He who lives for his own sake, disregarding his neighbor, is not worthy of being born.

The secret of the greatness and the establishment of the kingdom of David, is not because of his personal charisma, that made all the tribes gather together around him, nor of the others' love, faithfulness, and zeal for the edification and the growth of the people; but is due to two main factors, which are:

- 1- What David enjoyed of spiritual growth, exaltation, glory, and joy, are but a gift from God
- 2- With God's exalted love for His servant David, He granted him unique privileges, and even promised that his descendants will reign forever. David perceived that all these privileges are for the sake of God's people, Israel.

3- DAVID AND POLYGAMY:

"Then David took more wives in Jerusalem, and David begot more sons and daughters" (3)

One of David's weaknesses was adopting polygamy and having concubines, the customs common among the royal families in the Middle East at that time, and his non- commitment to the divine statute of one wife (Genesis 2: 24).. Some kings used this custom to enter into relationship with the surrounding kings, to have some kind of political peace.

This custom, as expected, had often brought forth envy and jealousy in the royal household between the wives and between the children; because of which David entered into a multitude of familial problems, and controversies between his children; He did not have time enough to raise his children in the fear of God; as it happened between Absalom and Amnon; on account of that the later raped the sister of the former, who was also his own sister from his father, and not from his mother.

David got bound to wives and concubines, among whom were:

- 1- **Michal daughter of king Saul**; She begot no children, probably because she despised David when she saw him dancing before the ark of the covenant (2 Samuel 6: 14). It so seem that she adopted five of her sister's children, whom David delivered to the Gibeonites to kill for the sake of Saul's sins.
- 2- Ahinoam of Jezreel: She begot Amnon, the firstborn. He raped his half-sister Tamar, whose brother killed him for revenge.
- 3- Maacha, daughter of king Talmi of Gishur; She begot Absalom, David's third son, who killed his half-brother Amnon; then lived in a tent on the roof because his father David refused to meet him. He slept with the women of his father, rebelled against him, and was killed in battle against his father's army.
- 4- Haggith: She begot Adonijah, David's fourth son, who declared himself king before his father's death; but his plot failed. David let him live, but Solomon killed him after being enthroned.
- 5- Bathsheba (or Bathshua); with whom David sinned, then plotted to have her husband Uriah the Hittite killed to conceal his crime. She begot a son whose name was not known, and died while still a child. Then she begot Solomon who reigned after his father. But unfortunately he married many heathen wives, who drew him to idol-worship.

“And these are the names of his children whom he had in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon” (4)

“Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet” (5)

“Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia” (6)

“Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet” (7)

The genealogies of the Lord Christ mentioned only two sons begotten by Bathsheba: The first was Nathan (Luke 3: 31), from whose descendants came St. Mary; and the second was Solomon (Matthew 1: 6), from whose descendants came St. Joseph her betrothed man.

4- THE PHILISTINES ATTACK DAVID:

God confirmed to David His support. After Hiram king of Tyre showed him his submission, and appreciation, God granted him conquests over the Philistines, and awe among all nations.

“Now when the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David; And David heard of it and went out against them” (8)

“Then the Philistines went and made a raid on the valley of Rephaim” (9)

While in Hebron, the Philistines did not feel that David represented danger against them; But while in Jerusalem they did, and intended to destroy him. Yet David sought God’s counsel before entering in any battle.

“And David inquired of God, saying, ‘Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand? And the Lord said to him, ‘Go up, for I will deliver them into your hand’” (10)

The author intended in an indirect way to present to us a comparison between the behavior of Saul and that of David. The former, before his battle against the Philistines in Mount Gilboa, sought the counsel of the medium (10: 3), and not of the Lord (10: 14) Whereas David sought God's counsel in his battle against them in Baal Perazim.

David, before going to war sought the company of God and His counsel. About which the historian Josephus says: [David did not allow himself to do anything without seeking a prophecy and a command from God, and without leaning upon Him. We often resort to God, once afflictions and troubles dwell upon us; but David, on the other hand, used to seek God's counsel before moving. ... I wish, seeking God's counsel, do not come late but early, to avoid a multitude of serious troubles].

- + Since he killed Goliath, David never entered into war without seeking God's counsel; by which he conquered in all his battles, even at the end of his life when he fought against the violent hosts of the philistines.

We count the abidance of believers as glorious, by whose great faith "they stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword; and out of weakness were made strong" (Hebrew 11: 33-34). Although they were not supported by a multitude of warriors; yet they acquired their conquests on their own against their deceptive enemies, by the courage of their souls.

(St. Ambrose)

“So they went up to Baal Perazim, and David defeated them there. Then David said, ‘God has broken through my enemies by my hand like a breakthrough of water’. Therefore they

called the name of the place Baal Perazim” (11)

“And when they left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burned by fire” (12)

Resorting to the living God, David got a great conquest on the pagans, and firmly burned their gods by fire, so as not to leave any trace of evil in his life, in that of his brethren, and in the society in which he lived. ... It is befitting of us not to leave anything to take the place of God in our hearts or minds. For fear that some of his men might probably admire the little idols made of gold or silver; he therefore, did not give them the chance to keep any of them.

He consummated the divine commandment with his whole strength

(Deuteronomy 7: 5); contrary to many of the kings of his descendants who followed him and were slothful in destroying the idols.

“Then the Philistines once again made a raid on the valley” (13)

Therefore David inquired again from God, and God said to him, ‘You shall not go up after them, circle around them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees” (14)

The secret of David’s success and greatness, was that in every new situation, he did not trust in his past experience or his possibilities, but he sought the counsel of God, to spare himself any unforeseen dangers that could probably dwell upon him.

It is befitting of us, likewise, with every situation, to consider it a new chance to seek God’s counsel; for He wants us to have a perpetual encounter with Him..

Let the new raid done by the Philistine against David, who sought again the counsel of God, be a lesson to us, to recognize God, to flee to Him in time of tribulations, to resort to Him when we are oppressed, and when we do not know what we should do; to seek His counsel, to put our will under His, and to seek his help fervently to show us the way.

“And it shall be, when you hear a sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall go out to battle, for God has gone out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines” (15)

Let hearing a sound in the tops of the mulberry trees, guides us to hear God’s marching in His divine inspiration, and the impact of His Holy Spirit.

“So David did as God commanded him, and they drove back the army of the philistines from Gibeon as far as Gezer” (16)

When the Philistines made a new raid, David again got conquest in another form from God.

“Then the fame of David went out into all lands, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations” (17)

David’s fear came upon all nations, and his fame went out into all lands (16-17). By that, the divine promise was realized, saying: *“Therefore the Lord God of Israel says, ‘Far be it from Me, for those who honor Me, I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed”* (1 Samuel 2: 30).

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 14

LET YOUR KINGDOM BE ESTABLISHED IN MY DEPTHS, O SON OF DAVID

- + You set David from shepherding the sheep;
To shepherd You people, whom You have chosen for Yourself;
You gave him favor in the sight of all the tribes;
You granted him success and conquest in every task to which his hand stretched;

- + You, O Son of David came to our world;
To set Your kingdom in the depths of our hearts;
To make our hearts, Jerusalem, glittering by Your splendor;
And to turn our dust to what is almost like a new heaven;

- + You gave David favor in the eyes of Hiram king of Tyre;
Who sent messengers to him seeking his friendship;
And sent to him masons and carpenters to build a house for him;
You came down Yourself to me, O King of kings;
And sent to me Your Mighty Holy Spirit;
Not to build a palace for me, but to set me a temple for You;
Come, O the only begotten Son, together with Your Father, and Your Holy Spirit;
Come and dwell in me, and proclaim Your kingdom in me.

- + You granted David children in Hebron, as well as in Jerusalem;
And behold, You grant us the spirit of sonhood to the Holy Father;
You no longer call us servants, but beloved children;
We, who are not worthy to be counted as Your servants;
Out of us, Your love set God's heirs, and heirs together with You;
What is our inheritance but Your love and compassion?!

- + Let the enemy stir up against us, for we would hide in You;
You are our refuge, and the stronghold of our life;
You are the Leader of our procession, and the Grantor of our conquest;
You destroy the devil, and cast him under foot

- + With every morning, Your image glitters in our life;
To restore to us our spiritual beauty, and to take away our corruption;
To give us the spirit of strength and authority;
To let us be filled with the reflection of Your splendor;
And to make our souls exult by Your amazing conquest.



CHAPTER 15

BRINGING THE ARK OF THE COVENANT TO JERUSALEM

After the death and the burial of Uzzah, the prophet David learned the lesson, did nothing further without seeking the counsel of God, studied the law, and was committed to the divine commandment. The greatness of David was not because he committed no mistakes, but because he benefited from every mistake he did. He did not do according the proverb saying: "If you want to make no mistake, do not do any work". ... He works and makes mistakes, but he learns from his mistakes, grew in purity through the grace of God, working in the repentant.

This time, the prophet David was keen on carrying out the procedure of moving the ark of the covenant according to the statute of God:

- a- The procedure was done in a more accurate way.
- b- David prepared a special place for the ark in the city (1-2). He pitched a special tent for the ark in Jerusalem, other than the tabernacle of meeting and its furniture that remained in Gibeon (16-39) up till the days of Solomon. He prepared a tent for the ark (and not a house); which so seemed to follow the same pattern of the one set by the prophet Moses in the wilderness (Exodus 26; Numbers 1: 50).
- c- He gave the command that the priests should carry the ark on their shoulders, and not on a cart like the last time.
- d- He assigned a special role to each of their categories.
- e- The Levites and the others practiced their duties without any mistake (26)

f- The atmosphere was full of joy for all who partook of that task.

g- Nobody was preoccupied with Michal's attitude toward the dancing by David before the ark of the covenant.

1- David learns from his mistake	1 - 3
2- David assembles the sons of Aaron and the Levites	4 - 15
3- David chooses the musicians	16 - 19
4- David offers sacrifices to the Lord	26
5- David dances before the ark	27 – 29

1- DAVID LEARNS FROM HIS MISTAKE:

“David built houses for himself in the city of David, and he prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched a tent for it” (1)

When David built houses for himself, for his household, and for those working with him in the royal palace, he cared for preparing a place for the ark of the covenant in the city of David..... In every work we do, it is befitting of us to care for preparing a place for the ark of the covenant, which represents the presence of God, the essence of our life, the cause of our growth, and the secret of our perpetual edification.

“Then David said, ‘No one may carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the Lord has chosen them to carry the ark of God and to minister for him forever” (2)

David learned from his past mistake when he attempted to move the ark of the covenant from Kerjat Jearim (1 Chronicles 13). He moved the ark to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite, after the death of Uzzah, where it remained for three months, until he prepared to move and receive it in Jerusalem. But this time he

elaborately studied the law, to know the perfect procedure of its moving, and he discovered that the reason of God's wrath, when his attempt to move the ark turned into a tragedy, was because it was not assigned to the Levites. And he perceived that that the blessing that dwelt upon the house of Obed-Edom was because of the presence of the ark of the covenant in his house.

This time, David commanded that the ark is to be carried by the Levites, and not on a cart, whatever its price or beauty are; for God is pleased to see His believers carry Him in their hearts, and reign Him on their inner emotions and feelings. God is not preoccupied with the buildings, however magnificent they are, but finds His pleasure in the sanctification of man.

“And David gathered all Israel together at Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the Lord to its place, which He had prepared for it” (3)

It was not allowed for anyone except the Levites to touch the ark. For it represents the divine presence, not only among the priests and the Levites, but among all His people; Hence David gathered all Israel together, for all to enjoy the encounter with God, the Lover of mankind.

2- DAVID ASSEMBLES THE CHILDREN OF AARON AND THE LEVITES:

The great number of the Levites gathered together by David to bring the ark to Jerusalem, did not create any problem, for they all were preoccupied with doing that assignment with joy from their whole hearts, with ministering to God with gladness, and with worshipping the Lord with flaring zeal, like what David did when he danced before the ark.

“Then David assembled the children of Aaron and the Levites” (4)

“And the sons of Kohath, Urie the chief, and one hundred and twenty of his brethren” (5)

“Of the sons of Merari, Asaiah the chief, and two hundred and twenty of his brethren” (6)

“Of the sons of Gershom, Joel the chief, and one hundred and thirty of his brethren” (7)

“Of the sons of Elizaphan, Shemaiah the chief, and two hundred of his brethren” (8)

“Of the sons of Hebron, Eliel the chief, and eighty of his brethren” (9)

“Of the sons of Uzziel, Amminadab the chief, and one hundred and twelve of his brethren” (10)

“And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites; for Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Ammindab” (11)

For that occasion (11), David called for the two high priests: Zadok and Abiathar (1 Kings 4: 4). Zadok was ministering in the tabernacle in Gibeon; and Abiathar was ministering in Jerusalem in the tent newly prepared there for the ark of the covenant.

David spoke to the Levites, and commanded them to carry the ark of the covenant; and whoever was a father, a leader, or a chief, to go ahead before the others. not to give orders, nor to organize; as much as to partake of the work, and to be a role model for his children and subordinates.

“Then he said to them, ‘You are the heads of the fathers’ houses of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel

to the place I have prepared for it” (12)

What does he mean by the words “*Sanctify yourselves, (or purify yourselves) that you may bring the ark ...*”?

If the term ‘sanctifying’ sometimes means (separation, or seclusion), and the term ‘purification’ means (washing); man would be sanctified or purified by washing his body and clothes with specific rites (Numbers 8: 5-8); and by separating his heart, mind, and depths, from anything not befitting of God. He is committed to wash his inner man from anything foreign from God, and to obedience of the divine commandment.

The Holy God is pleased to work with those He sanctifies; He even transfigures in their hearts, and proclaims Himself and His secrets to them. He grants His Holy Spirit to His holy church, to sanctify His believers. The apostle Paul says: “*For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness*” (1 Thessalonians 4: 7); and he also says, “*Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord*” (Hebrew 12: 14)

- + The Holy Spirit, proceeding from God (the Father) is the source of holiness; of the life-giving strength, and of the perfection-giving grace. Through Him man enjoys adoption, and the corrupt becomes non-corrupt. He is One with the Father and the Son in everything; in glory, eternity, power, kingdom, and Divinity; all of which are experienced through the tradition of the baptism of salvation.

- + The diversity of the sacraments is purposely done according to the ordinance of the new creation; For the baptism renews our origin; the holy Meron gives us holiness and spiritual talents; and the communion in the Eucharist provides us with the divine nourishment.

(St. Basil the Great)

- + By the divine incarnation we became like Him concerning the body; became branches in the vine; united to Him, enjoying its fullness (John 1: 16). By it, our body, which was before dead and corrupt; came to be sanctified, and to have the right of the resurrection and salvation through our brotherhood with the Lord Christ, who bears our body.

(St. Athanasius the apostolic)

- + The Father sanctifies according to the words of the apostle, saying: “*May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thessalonians 5: 23); The Father sanctifies, according to the supplication of the Lord Jesus, saying: “*O Father, sanctify them by Your truth*” (John 17: 17). And about the Son, the apostle says: “*You are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption*” (1 Corinthians 1: 30). And the apostle teaches us, as well, that, “*We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation, through sanctification by the Spirit in the truth*” (2 Thessalonians 2: 13). But the sanctification is one, for the baptism is one, and the grace of the sacrament is one.

(St. Ambrose)

“For because you did not do it the first time, the Lord our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order”

(13)

Despite David's flaring zeal, his love for the ark, appreciating and honoring it, yet intending to move it, without letting the priests carry it according to the statute, he failed in his attempt. Now we see him confess his mistake, with the perception that God who seeks the purity of heart and the zeal of the soul, is also God of order and peace, and not an author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14: 33). That incident also came in (1 Chronicles 13: 8 – 11; 2 Samuel 6: 1 -11).

This time, bringing the ark forth to Jerusalem, the priests carried it on their shoulders, as sought by Moses (Numbers 4: 2, 14; Deuteronomy 10: 8; 31: 25; 1 Samuel 6: 15). David learned from his mistake that the ark of the covenant should be carried according to the statute (13). Last time, Uzzah died because he touched the ark, although with the good intention of keeping it from falling; yet contrary to the statute. David learned that the worship of God has its rites to which he is committed; yet by the Spirit.

It is befitting of us to perceive that even heaven itself has its rites as well, by which the heavenly hosts are committed. The rite in worship is not mere orders, but touches our understanding of the holiness of God, and the edification and salvation of our souls; for the glory of God. It is befitting of our worship to respond to the proclamation of God Himself, and not merely to our human mind.

Having discovered the secret of God's wrath, and the mistake done, David attempted to correct it this time, by:

- 1- In the first time he did not seek the counsel of God; Now he seeks His counsel concerning the right way to move the ark of the covenant.
- 2- The priests and the Levites purified and sanctified themselves, in preparation to carry the ark, according to the statutes of the law..
- 3- They carried it by poles on their shoulders; lest someone might unintentionally touch it like what Uzzah did.

David's care to correct his previous mistake, confirmed to the people that God Himself is the true Leader of the kingdom, Who controls its affairs. Like a little child who does not often perceive what is behind his father's instructions; It was befitting of the leaders and the people, being God's children who should listen to the counsel of their Father, who knows things they cannot perceive at the time, to commit themselves to God's commands and instructions;

“So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel” (14)

Here again he confirms that the right persons proceed to carry the ark, in the befitting way, according to the word of God to Moses.

“And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the Lord” (15)

Many who are slothful in doing their duty, if warned, they would correct, and do their duty in a better way. The punishment that dwelt upon Uzzah made the priests care more to sanctify themselves by God; namely, to purify themselves from the routine dross, and be prepared to minister to God with seriousness, so that their awe would flow over the people, and to become good role models for others.

Although the ark was not too heavy to carry, yet God helped the Levites to carry it in the following way:

- 1- Remembering the punishment that dwelt on Uzzah, those who proceeded to carry the ark, probably were trembling; but God encouraged them, took away their fear, and strengthened their faith.

- 2- It is better for us to seek the divine help, even for the regular situations within our natural ability; as without the help of God, we shall not be able to step a single step.
- 3- We should seek a special help to perform our religious services (see Acts 26: 22); for our whole abilities to do them come from God
- 4- God helped them to perform their task in order without any mistake. ... In case we proceed to perform any religious rite, it is befitting of us to refer the favor to the help of God; for, Otherwise we would fall into serious mistakes. The ministers of God who bear the vessels of the Lord, need a special help, so as God would be glorified in them, and His church would be edified by them; Having helped the Levites, the people in turn got the benefit.

4- DAVID CHOOSES THE MUSICIANS:

*“Then David spoke to the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brethren to the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals,
by raising the voice with resounding joy” (16)*

David appointed supervisors for the preparations to receive the ark with all the expressions of joy.. The ark was brought forth in a joyful procession, for the presence of God among His people stirs up joy in the hearts of all. David cared for mixing the order or the rite with the spirit of joy, not with the hard letter; as it is befitting of the believer in executing the rite, to bear the experience of the exultant heaven.

The book of the chronicles often refers to the role of the singers accompanied with the instruments of praise; for the worship of God is joyful and exultant. God’s pleasure is to let His people practice their worship and their life with the spirit of joy and exultation; whether on the individuals or the collective level.

The musical instruments mentioned here were used in the temple after captivity; and are still used in the Jewish worship, specially during the celebration of the new Jewish year.

“So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his brethren, Asaph the son of Berechiah; and of their brethren, the sons of Merari, Ethan, the son of Kushaiah” (17)

David spoke to the leaders of the Levites to appoint those who are known to be industrial in service; the foremost of whom were the singers of psalms: Heman (psalm 88); Asaph (Psalm 73-83), and Ethan (Psalm 89)

“And with them their brethren of the second rank: Zechariah, Ben, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Elipheleh, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom, and Jeiel, the gatekeepers” (18)

In that assembly, or spiritual procession, as for every task, there were spiritual touches of order; a special group was appointed to carry the ark of the covenant, or as doorkeepers (18), to guard the gates (23, 24), among whom was Obed-Edom, who considered it a great honor and a reward for his care for the ark of the covenant in his own house. According to some fathers, the presence of the ark in his house for a period of three months, was a symbol and a reference to the stay of the mental ark (the virgin Mary the mother of God) in the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth, for a period of three months. (Luke 1: 56)

“The singers Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were to sound the cymbals of bronze” (19)

“Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Uni, Eliab, Maaseiah, and Benaiah, with strings according to Alamo” (20)

“Mattithiah, Eliphaleh, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom, Jeiel, and Azariah, to direct with harp on the Sheminith” (21)

Some sounded the cymbals; others played the harp on the Sheminith (1); namely on a louder or a lower tune according to the notes of the concert. Some priests blew the trumpets, as they used to do when moving the ark (Numbers 10: 8), and in the holy feasts (psalm 81). On such occasions they probably used the fourteen psalms of ascent (Psalm 120-134) in their first form, before some alterations were done on them. Such a way of praise or thanksgiving was not used at the time, but David, being a prophet, set them by a divine ordinance, and according to Paul the apostle, he added to them other physical statutes (Hebrews 9: 10). David's heart was only preoccupied with using every occasion to praise the Lord.

“Chenaniah leader of the Levites, was instructor in charge of the music, because he was skillful” (22)

Berechiah and Elkanah were doorkeepers for the ark” (23)

Two doorkeepers were assigned to guard the ark of the covenant, lest anyone would dare to uncover the ark, as it happened in Beth Shemesh, for which thousands were struck and killed (1 Samuel 6: 19)

“Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethaneel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, were to blow the trumpets before the ark of God, and Obed-Edom and Jehiah, doorkeepers for the ark“ (24)

Blowing the trumpets by the priests when moving the ark reminded those present of what took place when they used to carry the ark to move during their journey across the wilderness, that was a symbol of our journey in this world, not toward the promised land, but toward the heavenly Canaan. It also created an atmosphere of celebration of an awesome holy feast (Psalm 81: 3).

“So David, the elders of Israel, the captains over thousands went to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord from the house of Obed-Edom with joy” (25)

Here we find a portrait of the awe of that occasion, which was like a joyful procession of a great victory, to bring the ark from the house of Obed-Edom to the city of David.

Carrying the ark did not need all that number of men, for it was not that heavy; but through the previous experience, all perceived that moving the ark does not depend on its weight, nor on the number of those taking part in the procession, as much as on the intervention of God Himself, His pleasure in His people, His ministers, and all the leaders. All perceived that there will be no success of that task without the intervention of God.

5- DAVID OFFERS SACRIFICES TO THE LORD:

“And so it was, when God helped the Levites who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bulls and seven rams” (26)

Once they felt the presence of the Lord among them (in the presence of the ark), they offered Him sacrifices of praise of bulls and rams, probably as an atonement for the previous mistake; and to confess the help they have got from God this time. They intended to pay God's love, back with love; Yet, our love for the Lord could never be compared to His love for us.

6- DAVID DANCES BEFORE THE ARK:

“David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites, who bore the ark, the singers, and Chenaniah the music master with the singers. David also wore a linen ephod” (27)

Here, we find great expressions of joy; from playing the holy music, singing praise, the people shouting (27-28), to David dancing before the ark, also mentioned in (2 Samuel 6: 14-15); From which we may learn:

- 1- We serve a good Master, who is pleased to see His ministers sing during work.
- 2- Popular revivals should be occasions for joy by the people. For those who do not rejoice in the ark, are not worthy of it.
- 3- It would not lessen the honor of men to show off their zeal for the works of worship. Michal, the daughter of Saul, who became the first wife of David, when she watched him demonstrate such an enthusiasm and joy in ministering to the Lord, she felt in her heart that he is a religious bigot. We are actually in need of people like David in our days, not a need for bigotry, but for joy coming from the depths of the heart and life of the people of God.

According to father Maximus, bishop of Turin, moving the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem refers to the encounter of the heavenly Groom with His bride. It is befitting of us to rejoice together with David, who danced before the ark (2 Samuel 6: 14). It is befitting of us to rejoice and exult for Christ incarnated in the womb of St. Mary; as in the ark of the covenant.

+ What could be said of the ark, if not referring to St. Mary?

The ark carried inside it the two tablets of the law; whereas St. Mary bore the Lord of that covenant.

The ark carried the law; And Mary carried the gospel.

The ark glittered inside and outside with the shining of gold; whereas St. Mary shined inside and outside with the splendor of virginity.

The ark was adorned with earthly gold; whereas St. Mary was adorned with heavenly gold.

(Father Maximus, bishop of Turin)

The church believes in the unique sanctity of Mary that surpasses the heavenly creation, even that of the cherubim and the seraphim. She spent her whole life in holiness, like the ark of the covenant, made of pest-resistant wood, coated inside and outside with gold.

+ The golden two cherubs shadowing the cover of the ark by their wings; are shadowing the Most Holy Place in the second dome.

As for you, Mary, thousands and thousands, and tens of thousands are shadowing you.

Praising their Creator while in your womb;
He who took over our likeness.

(The Sunday Theotokos)

+ I implore you man, to accept his conception, and to dance before Him, if not in the womb like St. John the Baptist, let it be once the ark is established, the way David did.

(St. Gregory the Nezianzen)

+ Zechariah, in his amazement, sings, praises; and so does Elizabeth on the good news;

While the Virgin keeps silent like a ship laden with secrets; and the household of the priest rejoices and honors her.

They looked at her like the ship of God, or counted her like an ark of the covenant, filled with fire.

+ The Israelites danced for joy before God (the ark of the covenant), when it was carried to other places

David danced before the ark of the covenant (2 Samuel 6: 14-16), regardless of the royal prestige, because of the great joy in his heart.

And while still a fetus in his mother's womb, St. John the Baptist danced for joy better than David.

The blessed virgin mother was more splendid than the ark of the covenant, full of the secrets of the house of God.

While David danced before the ark of the covenant, John the Baptist danced before Mary.

Nobody heard of a king dancing except for David; nor of a fetus dancing, except for John the Baptist; One of whom told about the other.

The prophets and kings prepared the way for the Son of God; who, once He came, He consummated the secrets they searched for.

While the ark was carried, David joyfully danced, testifying for his King and Lord.

It was the true portrait of the Virgin who was, as well, an ark for the Godhead.

The Lord of the secrets dwelt in her; hence the fetus joyfully danced before her, like a victorious king.

Mary was like an ark filled with holy writings; in whom all the vague prophecies were interpreted.

As she was greatly adorned in a way that surpassed that of the ark of the covenant; the fetus rejoiced;

The stir-up of the silent fetus was without limits, bringing joy to the womb that was depressed for such a long time.

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

“Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the horn, with trumpets and with cymbals, making music with stringed instruments and harps” (28)

That collective worship was partaken by the priests, the Levites, all the people, and the king himself who was dancing and whirling before the ark..

“And it happened as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul, looking through a window saw king David whirling and playing music; and she despised him in her heart” (29)

Michal, David's wife, the daughter of Saul was not impressed by David dancing before the ark of the covenant, But David would rather appear like an imbecile in the sight of some, even that of his wife, to express his joy and thanks to God with every strength and faithfulness.

Michal ridiculed her husband David, when she saw him dancing before the ark of the covenant, with which her father Saul was never preoccupied.

According to some, Michal's attitude toward David, even if it apparently seemed to be ridiculing him as a king dancing in the presence of his people, yet, it actually reflected her inner attitude of disregard and lack of respect toward the ark of the covenant itself, which she took after her father Saul.

In the next chapter we shall see David praying twice to God, most probably before the ark of the covenant (14: 10; 14). The book of the chronicles cared for David's care for God's proclamations of His divine will.

According to St. Ambrose, Michal was punished for her attitude by barrenness (2 Samuel 6: 23), saying: [It is a clear lesson to see the king playing on a drum, and dancing before the ark of the Lord, justified; while the one who rebuked him was punished with barrenness.].

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 15

TEACH ME, O LORD, HOW TO EXULT IN YOUR SPLENDID PROCESSION

- + David desired to set a tabernacle for Your ark of covenant in his city.
He called the priests, the Levites, the leaders, and all the people;
For all to partake of Your splendid procession;
Grant me to present my heart as Your dwelling place;
Where You put Your head and find comfort;
To perpetually proclaim Your divine presence;
To sanctify and exult all my depths.

- + Let Your Holy Spirit play a symphony of love on my harp;
Let Him play on the strings of my senses, emotions, heart, and mind;
Let all the members of my body shout for You;
Grant me, not to blow silver trumpets to proclaim Your presence;
But to blow with all the breaths of my life, by the obedience of Your commandments.

+ Tell me what I should wear in that exalted procession;
Grant me to put on the garment of Your righteousness, instead of my sins;
Grant me to submit to Your commandments, to bear a heavenly
adornment.

+ What sacrifice shall I offer You in this procession?
Grant me to offer a sacrifice of love for You and for all mankind;
Grant me to offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving;
For You are more content with such sacrifices.

+ Turn my life into an unceasing procession;
To find rest in me, like in a holy tent;
Let me find comfort in You, as You are my pleasure;

+ Come, O Lord Christ, together with Your Father, and Your Holy Spirit;
To make me move toward You, and settle down in Your bosoms;
When shall I see You on the clouds, and set forth with You to Your secret
place?

When shall I see the heavenly creatures exultant in the day of the eternal
wedding?!

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CHAPTER 16

THE RITE OF SETTING THE ARK, AND OF THE PERPETUAL WORSHIP

On the occasion of bringing the ark of God into the city of David, and setting it in the middle of the tabernacle set by king David, in a holy awesome procession; a great feast of celebration was held; which according to some was like the enthronement of a king; and the psalms of praise sung were like the enthronement speech. It was truly a happy occasion for the king, the leaders, the priests, and the people

Having put in his heart to minister to God, David found friends to support him, like Hiram king of Tyre; as though God Himself was leading and guiding him; Yet, he found enemies to oppose him, as well. With every success in the spiritual life, the devil stirs up a holy battle. When Joshua the son of Nun conquered in the battle of Jericho (Joshua 3: 16), the enemy fought him in the battle of Ai through the sinful behavior of Achan the son of Carmi, in which Joshua was defeated (Joshua 7: 5). And when Nehemiah was building the walls of Jerusalem, he demanded from his coworkers to work with one hand, and to hold the weapon with the other (the Word of God and the prayer) (Nehemiah 4: 17).

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1- THE RITE OF SETTING THE ARK OF THE COVENANT:

This book presents to us the rite of bringing the ark of God into Jerusalem, and of establishing it in its midst, bearing the following magnificent evangelic concepts:

- a- ***“Setting the ark in the midst of the tabernacle”*** (1): If the tabernacle refers to the church of Christ and the people of God; the entrance of the ark of God refers to the descent of the Word, incarnated, to dwell among His people.
- b- **Offering burnt offerings and peace offerings** before God: Our Christ came as a sacrifice and a ransom for the sake of humanity, to reconcile the world to God the Father.
- c- **Blessing the people in the name of the Lord**: Although David was not a priest, but, being a symbol of the Son of David, the High Priest according to the rank of Melchizedek, he blessed the people. The same happened in the dedication of the temple, when king Solomon, being a symbol of the Lord Christ, the King of peace, blessed the people,
- d- **Offering a loaf of bread, a piece of meat, and a cake of raisins** (3) refers to the Lord Christ who satisfies the hunger of the multitudes, and grants them the spiritual joy (Psalm 132: 15-17)
- e- **The Levites carry out the ministry of praise and thanksgiving**: The book of the chronicles cared for showing the role of the Levites in praising the Lord.
- f- **The two priests Benaiah and Jahaziel regularly blew the trumpets** before the ark of the covenant of God; a reference to the strong proclamation of the true teaching, and warning by the Word of God.

“So they brought the ark of God and set it in the midst of the tabernacle that David had erected for it. Then they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God” (1)

“Set it in the midst of the tabernacle”: It was a great and joyful occasion when the ark was set in the midst of the tabernacle that David had erected for it. That

good man had his heart set upon the ark, and couldn't go to sleep in peace, until he found a place for it (Psalm 132).

a- Now, the ark was in a better position than it was before, when it was in a little village in the midst of fields and forests. Now, being moved to a public location in the royal city, seen by everyone, it is served with reverence, and prayers to God are raised through it. After being in a little corner of a room in a private home, enjoyed by a limited number of people, mostly as a compliment, Now it has a dwelling place of its own.

It is befitting of us to notice that the Word of God and His sanctuaries, even though may be hidden for some time, yet they will eventually shine and scatter the darkness,

b- What took place by bringing the ark of God to the city of David, was much less than what eventually took place, when the temple was built. Although the tabernacle erected by David would not be compared to the temple built by Solomon. Yet, David was far better than his son Solomon who built the temple, then gave it his back in his last days.

Once the ark was set in the city of David, the king finally enjoyed peace of mind, which he expressed as follows:

- 1- David glorified God by offering sacrifices and burnt offerings (1), as a confession of the favor of God.
- 2- He glorified God by appointing Levites to sing His praise to Him for the benefit of others (4).

It is befitting of us to express all our joys by giving thanks to God, from whom we get all goodness.

“And when David finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord” (2)

Offering burnt offerings and peace offerings to the Lord (Leviticus 1, 3); occupy the foremost place in all the joyful feasts and occasions. It does not mean that David, himself, did the offerings and the sacrifices, but provided the animals to the priests to slay and offer to the Lord; the same way when it is said that he erected the tabernacle or built the temple; he provided the building materials to the builders and the carpenters to do the actual work.

To let the people enjoy the joy and sanctity of that day, David gave them a blessing in the name of the Lord, as a father with his children. He prayed for their sake, to the Lord, who, according to the ‘Tergom’, is the eternal Word, Jehovah; from whom all blessings come.

“Then he distributed to everyone of Israel, both man and woman, to everyone a loaf of bread, a piece of meat, and a cake of raisins” (3)

“And he appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, to commemorate, to thank, and to praise the Lord God of Israel” (4)

Praising God with joy did not end by bringing the ark of God into the tabernacle, but David appointed some of the Levites to praise and to give thanks to God, perpetually and without ceasing. Here we notice three kinds of prayers:

1- Commemoration: (Supplication or invocation); namely reminding the people, lest they would forget the great works of God for the sake of His people. Commemoration mixes with praise and thanksgiving to God.

2- Thanksgiving: It is befitting of us to thank God, whether our requests were realized or rejected.

- + To know that prayer is a talk with God, listen to the words of the prophet, saying: I wish my talk bring pleasure before the eyes of God. ... Will God not give us unless we ask Him? ... He waits until we give Him the chance, to make us worthy of His care. And whether we get what we asked for, or not, let us keep praying to Him, and give Him thanks, not only when He responds to our prayers but even when He does not. For if God chooses not to respond to our requests, He certainly knows what is good for us. We should, therefore give Him thanks as though we have got what we asked for; as we do not know what is good for us, as He does.

(St. John Chrysostom)

3- **Praise:** It is befitting of us to praise God perpetually, even while sleeping.

- + *"I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth"* (Psalm 34: 1). Here it seems that the prophet is giving a pledge he would not fulfill. How could praising God perpetually be in the mouth of man? How could it be while regularly taking, or while sleeping; while eating or drinking?

To answer this question we say that he refers to the inner spiritual mouth of man, that fed upon the Word of life, the bread coming down from heaven (John 6: 33). About this mouth, the prophet says: *"I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for Your commandments"* (Psalm 119: 131). The Lord says: *"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it"* (Psalm 81: 10).

Once the thought of God is planted deep in the depths of the soul, you can praise God who perpetually dwells in the soul. The righteous man does everything for the glory of God (1 Corinthians

10: 31); as according to the apostle, with every work, every word, and every activity, he takes power to glorify God. Man also praises God while eating, drinking, or sleeping, and says, together with the bride of the song: "*I sleep, but my heart is awake*" (Song 5: 2); For the dreams often reflect the thoughts of the day.

(St. Basil the Great)

"Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, then Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Matthithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, and Obed-Edom; Jeiel with stringed instrument and harps; but Asaph made music with cymbals" (5)

From captivity, 128 of the children of Asaph came back, all singers.

"Benaiah and Ahaziel the priests regularly blew the trumpets before the ark of the covenant of God" (6)

The silver trumpets in which the priests blew refer to the Word of God, according to the saying of the prophet: "*The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times*" (Psalm 12: 6)

4- THE PSALM OF THANKSGIVING:

The book of the chronicles, never ceasing to mention the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God, together with its care for the groups of the singers of praise in the temple, intends to confirm that the kingdom of God is truly an enjoyment of the exultant heavenly life.

We find here the psalm of thanksgiving written by David by the Spirit, then delivered to the chief singer to put it in tunes, and to sing it in the popular occasion of the entrance of the ark of the covenant to the place prepared for it. It is assumed that David wrote this psalm to be sung on a daily basis in the service of the temple; Namely, whatever other psalms they may sing, this psalm should not be exempted.

David wrote many psalms before this, some during the time of affliction, suffered on the hand of Saul; but this psalm he wrote and gave to Asaph to use in the temple. We find parts of it repeated in three other psalms (verses 34, 36 in psalm 105: 1, 15; verses 22-23 in psalm 96; 1, 3' verses 34, 36 in psalm 106: 1, 47-48), which talk about the amazing works of God for the salvation of His people in the past; with which we dealt in the interpretation of the psalms.

This praise came not only to concentrate on bringing forth the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, but to open up the door of hope before the people returning from captivity, few in number, lacking authority, and power before the world; But the presence of the Lord in their midst will satisfy their needs.

Some call this psalm “**the psalm of the beginning of the kingdom**”, in which David sees the kingdom of the Messiah, and tells us about it:

A- It is a call to testify among the Gentiles, to let them enjoy His kingdom. Its goal is to put the spirit of hope in the life of the people who returned from captivity; to confirm to them, and to those who felt that their nation had

become lost among the powers of the world; that God is with them, the same God who saved their fathers in the old; and set with them a covenant in the past; the Judge of the whole earth, who defends His chosen people.

This psalm embraces two parts:

- 1- **The first part addressed to Israel** (8 – 22). In it the psalmist calls on the Israelites to praise the Lord on His great works; and to seek His face. It is befitting of them to remember His covenant and promises to their fathers in the old
- 2- **The second part addressed to the Gentiles** (23 – 34). In it the psalmist calls upon the Gentiles to glorify the Lord; as is befitting for the God of all creation; and for the sake of His might and majesty.

- B- An eternal kingdom (15)
- C- The kingdom of every faithful believer (6)
- D- The kingdom of His people (17 – 22)
- E- A joyful kingdom (23 – 24)
- F- A kingdom for the glory of God (25 – 30)
- G- The earth harmonizes with heaven (31 – 33)
- H- God's goodness and salvation (34 – 36)

The psalm ends by the word “Amen”, sung by the people, as a sign of their acceptance of what this liturgical psalm uttered; sung in loud voice, together with the sound of cymbals and other musical instruments. This psalm reveals to us here the program of thanksgiving to the Lord:

- 1- We should remember what God had done in the past (12)
- 2- Telling the others (the peoples) about His works with us (8)
- 3- Boasting God, and His holy name (10)
- 4- The perpetual smile and joy for the Lord (10)
- 5- Remembering God's judgments and covenants along the generations (14 – 18)
- 6- Remembering His faithful promises, and His protection of us (21 – 22)
- 7- Calling all mankind to partake of praising the Lord (23 – 34)
- 8- To come to Him with offerings, as a sign of thanksgiving to Him (29)

- 9- To join the heavenly hosts in their praise of God, their joy in Him, and their perpetual thanksgiving to Him (31)
- 10- Joining the nature in praising God (32 – 33)
- 11- Praise and thanksgiving on the personal and collective levels, seeking the edification of His kingdom, and the growth of His church (36)

“And on that day David delivered this psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to thank the Lord” (7)

Praise did not depart from David's heart and tongue, even in the bitter times of affliction; Yet the entrance of the ark of the covenant of the Lord into Jerusalem, and setting it in the midst of the tabernacle, was considered as a new turning point for praise. For the collective praise before the ark of the covenant with order and according to a designated system, had its different taste.

“Oh, give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples” (8)

Let God be glorified in all our praises; let us glorify Him by thanksgiving (Give Him thanks), by our prayers (Call upon His name), and our songs (8), and our talk (Make known His deeds). Let us glorify Him as a great God, and greatly praised (25); as a God (higher above all gods); for all gods of the Gentiles are idols (26). Let us glorify Him, having more splendor and blessing (27); as a Creator (He made heaven); as a Judge of all creation (His judgment over all the earth) (14); And as though He is the Lord God to us alone.

*“Sing to Him; Sing psalms to Him; talk of all His wondrous works”
(9)*

As not everyone has the special talent to praise God with a tune, yet everyone is invited to *“talk of all His wondrous works”*.

“Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord” (10)

The believer boasts His God, the Holy One, the Grantor of holiness to those who believe in Him, and attach themselves to Him. The secret of the joy of those who seek Him, is that God intends to give salvation to all peoples, to embrace the whole world to His kingdom.. ..Let us then, be encouraged, let us conquer, let us boast our God and trust in Him; For those who glorify the name of God, are allowed to boast His name (10); to dare to seek His promises for themselves; to make glad their hearts. Seek His face, and His strength; namely, seek Him in the ark of His strength, in which He is manifested.

Commenting on this psalm of praise, Justin the martyr says: [The psalmist here, prophesies about what is going to happen after fifteen centuries, by the coming of the Lord Christ, as though he sees it already happened].

+ Now, when the spirit of prophecy talks about things to come, as though they have already happened; it causes some to find difficulty in understanding them. David uttered those words 1500 years before the incarnation and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. No one who were crucified before Him or after Him, have granted joy to the nations; No one but Jesus, the Wisdom of God, who was crucified, died, resurrected, and ascended to heaven, to reign. And through preaching Him by the apostles in all nations, there is joy for those who look forward to the non-corruption, which He promised.

(St. Justin the martyr)

“Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His face evermore” (11)

Remembering Saul who, instead of seeking the counsel of God, he sought it from the medium, David calls on us to “*seek the Lord and His strength*”.

“Remember His marvelous works which He has done; His wonders and judgments of His mouth” (12)

“O seed of Israel His servant, You children of Jacob, His chosen ones” (13)

Here, the psalmist calls the believers, “*chosen by the Lord*”; as, according to the Lord Christ: “*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you*” (John 15: 16)

“He is the Lord our God; His judgments are in all the earth” (14)

“Remember His covenant always; The word which He commanded for a thousand generations” (15)

If God made a covenant with Abraham, then with Isaac, and Jacob, He intends to make it, as well, with everyone who believes in Him; with the few who seek Him; He made His covenant to a thousand generations..... Let the eternal covenant, therefore, be the subject of our joy and praise. ... It is also written: “*He has remembered His covenant forever*” (Psalm 105: 8). If God will never forget His covenant, it is befitting of us, as well, not to forget it. God made His covenant; and exhorts us to obey His commandments; for He has the authority to give the promise, and has the ability to put it into effect..

“The covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac” (16)

Although that was an ancient covenant, yet it would never be forgotten; He made it with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who all died in the old (16, 18); Yet it is still new with their spiritual seed; and His promises endure forever.

“And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting covenant” (17)

Of the beautiful features of David’s life, was that he used to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord for His promises for the sake of his descendants. He used to pray, not just for himself, but for the sake of his descendants along the generations. His heart was kindled with love for his children and grandchildren. ... It is befitting even for a young man who has not yet reached the age of marriage, to pray with his whole heart for the sake of the generations to come.

“Saying, ‘To you I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance’” (18)

“When you were but few in number, indeed very few, and strangers in it” (19)

“You were but few in number”; God’s promises do not depend upon the number of believers, nor upon their possibilities and abilities; For Abraham got the promises, when it was only him and his household who believed in God. In every generation there are faithful few who enjoy the divine promises, and who accept to enter into a covenant with God.

Let us then remember with thanksgiving and praise, God’s mercies to our fathers and grandfathers; Let us remember how God kept the patriarchs, when they were few sojourners and strangers in Canaan; and could easily be swallowed by the enemies around them; ... when they were continually departing, subject to dangers; ... when many intended to harass and disturb them.... Yet God did not allow anyone to harm them; even the Canaanites and the Egyptians. The

Pharaoh and Abimalech, were both reprovved and stricken for their sakes; on account of that they were sanctified by His grace for the glory of His name; and received the anointment of the Holy Spirit. Being anointed prophets designated to teach the others (1 Kings 19: 16); anyone who happen to touch them was as though he touched the pupil of God's eye (Deuteronomy 32: 10; Zechariah 2: 8); And anyone who harm them would end up perishing (19, 22).

“When they went from one nation to another, and from one kingdom to another people” (20)

“He permitted no man to do them wrong; Yes, He reprovved kings for their sakes” (21)

God did not let anyone oppress them. Although they were few in number, and their enemies were a violent multitude, yet God granted them courage and strength, and kept them protected from danger; For their sake, He reprovved Pharaoh (Genesis 12: 17), and Abimalech (genesis 20: 3).

“Saying, ‘Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm’” (22)

The Lord counts those whom He calls to enjoy His promises, to walk in truth, and to testify for Him to the evil world, as *“His anointed”*. As He also calls the prophets, with whom He talked, to talk in turn about Him to others, and to testify for Him, and for the glory He prepares for His faithful.

The scholar Origen quotes this verse when he talked about those who preached the salvation in every place, and who teach the gospel of Jesus Christ in every land, by sound teaching and upright life, he calls them *“the anointed”*; saying:

+ As we hear that the antichrist will come; and as we know that there are already many antichrists in the world (1 John 2: 18); In the same way, we

know that Christ will come, and through Him we see many “anointed” in the world, who, like Him, love righteousness, and hate iniquity; The Father, therefore anoints them, as well, with the oil of gladness.

- + In case someone wishes to see many persons who are filled with the divine Spirit like the One Christ, who minister for the sake of the salvation of the people everywhere; let him notice those who teach the gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere, with sound teaching, and upright life; Those who, themselves, are called “anointed”, by the holy books, saying “*Do not touch My anointed*” (12; Psalm 105: 15 LXX).

(The scholar Origen)

. *“Sing to the Lord; all the earth, Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day”* (23)

Here, David, the prophet and the king, the sweet psalmist of Israel, calls on the whole world to praise God.

“Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day” (23). And the prophet Jeremiah sees the mercies of God, new every morning (Lamentations 3: 23). Opening his eyes in the morning, the believer anticipates joyful news; as *“the Lord adds to the church daily, those who are being saved”* (Acts 2: 47).

Let the great salvation of our Lord be the subject of our praise (23) *“Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day”*; namely, the promise of salvation proclaimed by Jesus Christ; in which we have the right to exult from day to day; for we quench our thirst daily from it; and it will never be exhausted.

“Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among the peoples” (24)

I wish all be enlightened and taught. *"Make known His deeds among the people"* (8); *"Declare His glory among the peoples"* (24); to make those sojourners from Him recognize Him, and offer Him loyalty and worship. Hence, we should work hard to make His kingdom spread among the peoples, to make the whole earth tremble before Him (30)

Here the psalmist talks about the nations as glorifying the Lord, when they still did not receive faith. He talks about the sure future as though it already happened.

- + The lord incarnated only among the Jews; He was not begotten by a virgin of any other peoples of the earth, nor lived among them ... Nevertheless, what was written about Him was realized, saying: *"A people I have not known shall serve Me"* (Psalm 18: 43). .. But how could they worship Him when they do not know Him? *"As soon as they hear of Me, they obey Me"* (Psalm 18: 44). ... The Jews knew Him, and crucified Him; Whereas the whole world heard of Him and believed in Him.

(St. Augustine)

"For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised; He is also to be feared above all gods" (25)

"For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens" (26)

"Honor and majesty are before Him; Strength and gladness are in His place" (27)

"Strength and gladness". While the strength (the reverence) of the greats of the world is bound to fear, and set upon mortal human authority; That of God is

bound to gladness and spiritual beauty; on account of that it is set upon His holiness, love, compassion, and mercy.

“Give to the Lord, O kindreds of the peoples; Give to your Lord glory and strength” (28)

“Give to the Lord the glory due His name; Bring an offering and come before Him. Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (29)

“In the beauty of holiness”. which is not set upon mortal outer appearances; but upon inner sanctity that glitters more in heaven.

Let us praise God by caring for His sanctuaries He designated. *“Bring an offering and come before Him”*; It was then offering out of the fruit of the earth; but now, it is the fruits of our hearts (Hebrew 3: 15). *“Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (29)*; The holiness is the splendor of the Lord, that of all the holy souls, and of the services of the sacraments.

“Tremble before Him, all the earth. The world also is firmly established, it shall not be moved” (30)

All the earth tremble because of wars, fall of governments and kingdoms. Wherever there are sin and oppression, there will be destruction, corruption, and lack of security; Whereas, where there is the righteousness of God and His holiness, *“The world will be firmly established”*.

“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; And let them say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns’” (31)

Let the kingdom of God a cause of awe and joy to the whole people. *“Tremble before Him all the earth”, and “let the heavens rejoice and be glad, for the Lord reigns,... for the world is firmly established, and shall not be moved”*.(30-31).

The voice of the apostles filled the whole earth; and reached its far ends..

+ The Lord Christ came to that far country of the earth (Luke 19: 12), to receive the kingdom of the Gentiles.

(St. Basil the Great)

“Let the sea roar, and all its fullness; Let the field rejoice, and all that is in it” (32)

The sea refers to disturbance and anxiety; whereas, according to St. John the Theologian: *“There is no more sea in the heaven”* (Revelation 21: 1). While here, the sea roars; there the sea praises God with the tongue of joy and peace.

“Then the trees of the wood shall rejoice before the Lord, for He is coming to judge the earth” (33)

Let the scenery of the judgment to come, stirs in us the spirit of tremendous joy; Let the earth, the sea, the fields, and the forests, rejoice for the coming of the great day of the Lord to judge the earth (32-33).

“Oh, Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever” (34)

“And say, ‘Save us, O God of our salvation; Gather us together, and deliver us from the Gentiles, to give thanks to Your name, to triumph in Your praise” (35)

The final prayer of the psalm (35-36), came conforming to (Psalm 106: 47-48). In the midst of our praise, I wish we would not forget to pray for the sake of the deliverance of the saints and the ministers of God who are in affliction (35).

“Save us, O God of our salvation; Gather us together, the scattered and persecuted, and deliver us from (the pagans)”; we,. . . . And when we are in joy, granted to us by the Lord, , we should remember our humiliated brethren, and pray for the sake of their salvation and safety, the same way we pray for ourselves; for we are all members of the same body. . Finally, God should be the Alpha and the Omega in our praises; like David who started by saying: *“Oh, give thanks to the Lord”* (8)

“Blessed be the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting”; And all the people said ‘Amen’, and praised the Lord” (36)

“All the people said ‘Amen’”; by which they proclaimed their trust in the Lord, their pledge to walk in faithfulness, and to keep the covenant with God.. He says: *“Blessed be the God of Israel”*, quoting from psalm 106: 48, which adds: *“Let all the people say: ‘Amen’; Praise the Lord”*; We find them here so did.... After the Levites ended this psalm and praise (and not before), the people proclaimed their consent, saying ‘Amen’, being impressed by this new way of worship that was only followed in the schools of the prophets (1 Samuel 10: 5); a way that *“pleases the Lord better than an ox or bull, which has horns and hooves. The humble shall see this and be glad”* (Psalm 69: 31-33);

“So he left Asaph and his brethren there before the ark of the covenant of the Lord to minister before the Ark regularly, as every day’s work required” (37)

After opening the door to organized worship, David left the Levites to practice praise without ceasing; and the priests to offer sacrifices and offerings to God.

He left every member of the church of Christ to do his assigned work: praising, guarding (caring), preaching (blowing the trumpets, and praying).

Not being the work of one day, but had to be of every day; David established the worship of God to be perpetually done by everyone, according to his own talent.

In the tabernacle made by Moses, the ark and the altar were together; but since the days of Eli the priest, they were separated; and so remained until the temple was built. It is not clear why David did not bring the ark to Gibeon, where the altar and the tabernacle were; or why he did not bring the tabernacle of meeting to Mount Zion, where he brought the ark. Some parts of the tabernacle of Moses probably deteriorated with time and with the impact of the weather; that it was not possible to move it; or it could not be usable to protect the ark. Yet, being temporarily satisfied with the ark, David did not attempt to renew it, on account of that the time to build the temple was almost at hand. Anyway, whatever the reason was, although the two were separated all the days of David, yet none of them was neglected; which is obvious in that, with bringing the ark to Jerusalem, Asaph and his brethren were assigned to minister before it, as every day's work required (37).... However, no sacrifices or incense were probably offered there, for there were no altars, but David's prayers were raised as incense; and his lifted up arms were like an evening sacrifice (Psalm 141: 2); The sacrifices were offered in Gibeon.

“And Obed-Edom with his sixty-eight brethren, including Obed-Edom the son of Jeduthun and Hosah, to be gate-keepers” (38)

12-THE MINISTRY OF PRIESTS:

“And Zadok the priest and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the Lord at the high place that was at Gibeon” (39)

The worship at Gibeon:

In (2 Samuel 6) we see no sign of the continuity of worship in the tabernacle of meeting in Gibeon. Whereas the first book of the Chronicles, confirms the presence of two main centers of worship in that stage of the history of Israel, until the temple was built in the days of king Solomon.

Setting the tabernacle in Jerusalem, and bringing the ark to it, did not annul the care for center of worship in the high place at Gibeon; but there were two centers of worship; both cared for by David; and there were two high priests; one in each center; even at the beginning of the reign of Solomon. Gibeon had its reverence, and worship was practiced there as well; for there, God spoke to Moses in the wilderness, face to face (Exodus 33: 11); and it represented the presence of God, to guide the people. And in (1 Kings 3: 4-5), it came that Solomon himself offered sacrifices there, *“For that was the great high place; and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. And at Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, ‘Ask! What shall I give you”*.

As the ark was established in Zion, the people returned to their houses; and David returned to praise God in his own house.

- + According to the law, no prayer, nor offering sacrifices were allowed outside Jerusalem (Deuteronomy !2: 1-32); Why then had Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on the altar in Gibeon? ... For the tabernacle of meeting was in Gibeon, as testified by the book of the Chronicles (1 Chronicles !6: 39; 21: 29); And to honor the old dwelling place, Solomon used to go there every year to offer sacrifices

(Ashudad, a Nestorian)

“to offer burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar of burnt offering regularly morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the law of the Lord which He commanded Israel” (40)

In Gibeon, there were the altars where the priest ministered, for their task was to offer the sacrifices and to raise the incense before God, which they were doing day and night according to the law of Moses (Numbers 39-40). On account of that it refers to the mediation of Christ; this task was a commitment to do, was given a great honor, and doing it had a great blessing. In Gibeon, Zadok supervised the ministry of the altar, whereas Abiathar was in Jerusalem to supervise the ministry of the ark of the covenant; having got the breastplate of judgment through which he had to ask before the ark. That is why we read that Zadok and Abiathar were both high priests in the days of David (2 Samuel 8: 17; 20: 25); the former ministered to the altar in Jerusalem, while the latter ministered to the ark in Gibeon.

Now, as everything was properly set, and the religious issues were made clear, we notice the following:

- a- Being satisfied, the people returned happily to their homes
- b- David, as well, returned to his home, to keep his familial worship hand in hand with the collective one; and not to annul it.

“And with them Heman and Jeduthun and the rest who were chosen, who were designated by name, to give thanks to the Lord, because His mercy endures forever” (41)

“And with them Heman and Jeduthun, to sound aloud with trumpets and cymbals and the musical instruments of God. Now, the sons of Jeduthun were gate-keepers” (42)

In Gibeon where the altars were, David appointed singers “*to give thanks to the Lord, because His mercy endures forever*” (41). They used holy music instruments, specific for this ministry, which differ from those used for fun and entertainment; For the distance and boundaries between the two kinds should be elaborately watched.

According to St. Basil the Great, David wrote the psalms, then gave them to Jeduthun to use; to glorify the Lord in the presence of the people, to mend their ways; and to appease his own sufferings.

13-THE END OF THE CELEBRATION:

“Then all the people departed, every man to his house; and David returned to bless his house” (43)

It is befitting of us to testify to the work of God even within our family life, to let the members of our families get in touch with our inner peace and joy.

Here, we notice that the book did not mention the shameful attitude of Michal, Saul’s daughter, who ridiculed her husband David on account of his dancing before the ark of the covenant.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 16

LET MY DEPTHS, O LORD, EXULT AS THOUGH IN A PERPETUAL FEAST

+ As David built houses for himself and those around him,
He set, as well, in Jerusalem, a tabernacle to bring to it the ark of Your covenant.

For he felt that he is indebted to you with his life, success, and all the blessings that dwelt upon him and his household;
Proclaim, O my God, Your presence in me;
Count my whole being, a tabernacle for Yourself; sanctify it, and prepare it to enjoy Your perpetual presence in it.

+ David offered You burnt and peace sacrifices;
Receive my praise, thanksgiving, and love, as well-received sacrifices;
Stretch Your hands and bless me; Consecrate all my thoughts and feelings for Your sake.

+ Let Your Holy Spirit kindle my whole life;
Proclaim Your kingdom in me; to fill my soul with perpetual spirit of joy;
Make me listen to Your sweet voice; and trust in Your faithful promises;
Let me give You thanks all the time; For You turn the fire of my affliction into dew.

+ Let me never stop praising You;
Testify, by heavenly joy, to Your wonders;
Boast in You; for You set an unceasing feast out of my life;
I shall perpetually seek You; for You are the secret of my comfort;
I shall always remember Your abiding faithful promises;
You promise that the earth will be for the Lord and His anointed;
When shall I see all humanity find refuge in Your bosoms?
When will the world enjoy the deposit of heaven?

+ You said: "*Do not touch My anointed; and do no harm to my prophets*";
I confess to You, that nothing harms me like my own sin;
Grant me the true repentance, and the contrition of heart;
Let me not throw the blame on the others; for my slothfulness is my real enemy;

Make the sin bitter in my mouth, to hate it;
Liberate my soul from the captivity of sin;
Grant me the authority not to fear the devil with all his tricks;

+ Glory be to You, Oh amazing in Your love;
How can I pay You back, for the sake of Your exalted love?
Let Your grace work in my soul, to adorn it;
I shall never cease to worship You with a holy adornment;
Which is nothing but the work of Your hands, and the flood of Your grace;
And the sanctity of Your exalted righteousness.



CHAPTER 17

DAVID'S INTENTION TO BUILD THE TEMPLE

“YOUR SON SHALL BUILD ME A HOUSE”

David's heart was preoccupied, not to dwell and settle down in the midst of the people of God; but to gather together with all the leaders and the people in the presence of God. He perceived that God is the secret of his life, his perpetual edification, joy, happiness, glory, and success in everything his hands stretch to do. He perceived that God is the source of all the blessings; He who makes him, as well, a blessing to everyone who encounter him.

In the previous chapter we saw how there was joy in all Israel; and how David desired that all the earth would praise the Lord, and proclaim the good news of His salvation (22). Now, as Hiram king of Tyre did his best to build a palace for David, the later could not endure to see himself dwelling in a great palace, while the ark of the covenant, that represents the presence of God, dwells in a tent. David desired to build for God a house, as a sign of His dwelling in the midst of His people; and an invitation for the whole world to encounter with God.

David and building the temple:

The author confirms that setting a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem, was initially the idea of David. In the first book of the kings, building the temple was referred to king Solomon, as a realization of the prophecy of David and the divine promise to him. But the first book of the Chronicles confirmed that Solomon' role was to execute his father David's plan.

The psalms of ascent came to confirm this view; In Psalm 132 (131 LXX), it came that David prayed, saying: *“Lord, remember David and all his afflictions; how he swore to the Lord, and vowed to the Mighty God of Jacob: ‘Surely I will not go into the chamber of my house, or go up to the comfort of my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty God of Jacob”* (Psalm 132: 1-5). The name of Solomon was not mentioned in any of the psalms of ascent, sung by those who used to come to celebrate the feast in the temple; but they seek from God to remember David and his house; as they themselves remember David.

No wonder that David desired to build a house for the Lord (1-3); and the Lord Himself intends to build a house for David (10), meaning a throne for David; for the Lord says: *“I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever”* (14).

In this, the Christian believer sees a living portrait of the incarnation of the Word of God, who is to come as the Son of David according to the flesh.. God was so pleased with David’s desire to build a house for Him, that the divine inspiration allowed for rewriting the chronicle of events as it came in (2 Samuel 7). The reader can refer to my book on the contemplations of the early fathers in the second book of Samuel. That chapter includes two main subjects:

- a- God’s compassion in receiving David’s desire to build a house for Him, and the promise He gave him as reaction to it (1-15).
- b- David, in complete consent and pleasure, receives God’s promise that it will be his son Solomon who will build His house, and David’s prayer as a reaction.

2- God accompanies His people wherever they go	
4 - 6	
3- God's pleasure to set leaders	7 - 8
4- God's pleasure in His peoples' comfort	9
5- God's pleasure to build houses for His beloved	10 -
12	
6- God's pleasure in His fatherhood of us, and in His mercy upon us	13
7- God's pleasure to set us kings	14 -
15	
8- David offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God	16 –
27	

David returned to his house, with the depths of his heart, so shaken by the joy of the whole people for the ark of the covenant, that he desired to build a house for God to put the ark of the covenant in it.

a- Bound in such a strong friendship with the prophet Nathan, David told Nathan about his desire to build a house for the Lord; and, because Nathan trusted in the purity of David's heart, he instantly said to him: "*Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you*" (2). He meant to encourage his friend to work.

b- The words "*David My servant*" was repeated 10 times. Although it is good for the servant to seek what is for his Master's (God) glory; but it is befitting of him to inquire from his Master about His pleasure.

c- God 's care for His servant in the past: "*I took you from the sheepfold*" (7); still holds in the present: "*I have been with you wherever you have gone*" (8); and will endure in the future: "*I will set up your seed after you, who will be of your sons, and I will establish his kingdom*" (11). Yet He promised him that it will be his son Solomon who will build the house of God.

d- *Then the king David went in and sat before the Lord*" (16). Like a little child, he sat to give his father thanks for his promises: "*Do as You have said*" (23). He tasted the sweetness of God's fatherhood toward him, which reflected on his own life, that he bore a kind of fatherhood toward his household, and toward the whole people.

e- Embracing his request from the Lord to realize his promises, he praised Him before and after his prayer.

1- A TALK TO THE PROPHET NATHAN:

The Lord intends to confirm that the kingdom of David and that of Solomon are just contributions to the kingdom of God Himself; saying: "*I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever*" (14). In (2 Chronicles 9: 8), we see that the true King of Israel is God Himself.

God told the prophet Nathan that David is not the one chosen for that specific task.

"Now it came to pass, when David was dwelling in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet: 'See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord is under tent curtains'" (1)

The book of Chronicles has often repeated Nathan's prophecy that came in (2 Samuel 7); which, according to the author is very important, for it expresses the covenant made between God and David; and the continuity of his royal seed, up till the time for the Son of David, the eternal King to come.

David's heart, being kindled with love for God, did not endure to reside in such a magnificent palace of cedar, while the ark of the covenant is put in a tent; hence he wished to build the temple of the Lord. Feeling settled down in the palace he built for himself, he intended to build a house where he could put the ark of the covenant. But with God, everything has its proper time.

Notice how David, when his wealth increased, and his greatness grew, did not think about what he should do for the sake of his children, nor how to fill up his treasury, and how to widen his authority, but he was preoccupied with how to serve and glorify God. ... That is how it is befitting of us to care for what we should do to minister to the kingdom and church of God in the world, .

"Then Nathan said to David: 'Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you'" (2)

Once Nathan has known David's desire, he said to him: "*Do all what is in your heart, for God is with you*"; For he had no doubt that God was with David. It is the duty of God's ministers to stir-up in their own souls, and in those of the others, the grace and the talents in them

"But it happened that night that the word of God came to Nathan, saying:..." (3)

According to some interpreters, like J. H. Blunt, Nathan's advise was altered, when the word of God came to him that night; ... That shows us that the prophets were not under the divine inspiration all the time; and might probably talk sometimes out of their own human mind.

a. GOD ACCOMPANIES HIS PEOPLE WHEREVER THEY GO:

'Go and tell My servant David: 'Thus says the Lord, You shall not build Me a house to live in" (4)

God's answer to David's demand was that he will not build the house of God, but will prepare for building it, the same way Moses brought forth the children of Israel to near the land of Canaan, then left it to Joshua to bring them into it. It is the right of the Lord Christ alone to be the Head of His work, and to consummate it.

God condescends to receive good ideas from His people, even though He may not allow them to consummate them. ... He sent the prophet Nathan to comfort David's heart, saying to him:

- 1- David!, ... Lifting you up to such a high position, was not wasted on you. ... I took you from the sheephold, from following the sheep, not to build the temple, but to be a ruler over My people Israel; which is honor enough for you. ... Leave the building of the temple for him who comes after you (7).... Why should someone think that he can do everything, can consummate everything good up till the end? ... Let him leave something for those who will follow him. ... God gave David conquests, and made him a name (8); and through him, He made a name for His people Israel, and strengthened them against their enemies. That is why he should be content for his mission as a man of war, and leave building the churches to him who is not assigned to be a man of war.

- 2- David!, Do not think that your good intent will be wasted, or that you will lose its reward.... Although I keep you from doing it, yet you will be rewarded as though you have done it; *"For the Lord will build you a house"* (10), and will embrace the crown of Israel to Himself. The good will not only be well received, but will be rewarded as well.

3- David!, Although I keep you from doing such a great endeavor, Do not think that your intent is wasted, for I shall set out of your seed him who will build a house for Me (11-12). The temple of God will be built in its designated time, even though we may not have the honor to contribute in building it, or to rejoice to see it built.

4- David!, Do not confine your thoughts in the temporal prosperity of your household, but look forward to the anticipated kingdom of the Messiah; He who will come of your groin, and whose throne will endure forever (14). Solomon, himself, was never established in the house of God, as he should have been; and his household never did in the kingdom; But *"I will set up your seed after you; and I will establish His kingdom"* (11). Namely, He will become a High Priest on the house of God; Will, alone, have the authority over the works of the kingdom of God among mankind; and all the power in heaven and on earth; in the house and in the kingdom; in the church and in the world. *"He will be a Priest on His throne; the counsel of peace shall be between them both; And He will build the temple of the Lord"* (Zechariah 6: 12-13)

God did not seek a house for the ark, but a tabernacle:

"For I have not dwelt in a house since the time I brought up Israel, even to this day, but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another" (5)

It was not yet the time to set the ark in the house of the Lord.

"Wherever I have moved about with all Israel, have I ever spoken a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'" (6)

God does not seek the outer appearance of luxury and magnificence in his ministry; The ark of His covenant was content with the tabernacle, and He did not seek building a house for it; even after the people were established in great cities they did not build (Deuteronomy 6: 10). He commanded the judges to care for His people; but He never asked them to build Him a house (6)... I wish we would sometimes be content with humble means of living; as it was the case with the ark of God.

3- GOD'S PLEASURE TO SET LEADERS:.

"Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David: 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'I took you from the sheep hold, from following the sheep, that you should be ruler over My people Israel'" (7)

"And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a name like the name of the great men who are on the earth" (8)

It is God's pleasure to set every man a leader over his own feelings, thoughts, words, and behavior; and to walk with the spirit of confidence and not of fear. According to St. Cyril, those who do not fear God, their names are not worthy of being mentioned by the psalmist with his lips. As to the poor in spirit, God mentions his name by His tongue (Luke 16: 19, 20); he is great in the sight of God, and will make him great before the heavenly and the earthly creatures.

4- GOD'S PLEASURE IN HIS PEOPLE'S COMFORT:

"Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more, nor shall the sons of wickedness

oppress them anymore as previously" (9)

5- GOD'S PLEASURE IN BUILDING HOUSES FOR HIS BELOVED:

"Since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel. Also I will subdue all your enemies. Furthermore I tell you that the Lord will build you a house" (10)

The Holy Book says about the two midwives who refused to kill the male babes of the children of Israel, according to the command of the Pharaoh of Egypt: *"Because the midwives feared God, He (made houses for them)"* (Exodus 1: 21). Does God make houses?... The two midwives refer to the Holy Book; which, if studied with the divine fear, and lived by the believers as they should, God will set for the Book a place everywhere; Namely, He will open up the range of ministry, and set houses for God. The world needs to see the word of God working in us with divine fear; for the gospel to find a lace in every heart... In the two midwives, the scholar Origen sees "the knowledge" which support the children of God in the birth of the males as well as well as in the females; Namely, to have the fruit of the divine mental meditation, and in the sanctification of the emotions. For the males refer to the mind; while the females refer to the emotion. ... The two midwives, also refer to the Holy Book with its Old and New Testaments, through which the children of God enjoy the increasing fruit, mentally and emotionally; namely, spiritually and physically.

"And it shall be when your days are fulfilled, when you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up your seed after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom" (11)

"He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever"
(12)

Because David had to go through many battles to establish the security of his people, God did not allow him to build the temple, on account that his hands have shed much blood.

Who is He, then, who builds a house for the Lord, and his throne will endure forever, but the Lord Christ, the Son of David; who built His church on the rocks. According to Josabius the Caesarian, verse 13, cannot apply to Solomon, but only to the Lord Christ, King of peace.

- + There is no doubt that Solomon was the son of David, and his successor on the throne. He indeed built the temple in Jerusalem; And the Jews may understand that he is the subject of the prophecy; Yet we have the right to ask them, if the divine inspiration could apply to Solomon, saying: *“And I will establish his throne forever”* (12); And, where God vowed that he is His Holy One; and that his throne will be like the sun and the days of heaven?

Solomon’s days were no more than 40 years; If we add to them all the years of the reign of his descendants, they will not be more than 500 years. if we assume that their line (in the kingdom) continued up to the Roman attack on the Jewish kingdom; How could the prophecy be fulfilled, saying: *His throne will be established forever, and comes to be like the sun, and the days of heaven?”*; and also the words, saying: *“I shall be his father, and he will be My son”* (13).

How could it apply to Solomon; whose history tells us much that are contrary to any possibility of being adopted by God, but a stranger from Him. Now listen to what is said against him: *“King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: Women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites; from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel: ‘You shall not*

intermarry with them, nor they with you. For surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods” (1 Kings 11: 1-2). If we add to this the words, saying: “Solomon’s heart was not loyal to the Lord his God as was the heart of his father David; For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not follow the Lord, as did his father David” (1 Kings 11: 4-6). Again it was said: “The Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite” (1 King 11: 14 LXX).

Who could dare to say that God was his father, he who has fallen under such serious accusations?... .. We, therefore, have to search for someone else, said to be a descendant of David.... There is no other than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who was called in the whole world: “the Son of David” according to His birth in the body; And whose kingdom is continuous and will endure forever. . Although it was attacked by a multitude, yet it will endure by the divine authority, exalted above the human authority; to confirm that it is inspired, and unconquerable, as told us by the prophecy.

(Josabius the Caesarian)

6- GOD’S PLEASURE IN HIS FATHERHOOD TO US AND HIS MERCY UPON US:

“I will be his father, and he shall be My son; And I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him who was before you” (13)

This expression was quoted by the apostle Paul; for he perceived that it was a divine promise, not just to Solomon, being a son of David, who will build the

temple, but a proclamation about the Messiah, the Son of David, in whom we enjoy adoption to the Father.

6- GOD'S PLEASURE IN SETTING US KINGS:

“And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever” (14)

“According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak to David” (15)

Through the prophet Nathan, God gave David two promises:

1- To make his descendants kings over Israel (9:10). Yet this promise, was on condition of their commitment to keep His commandments, and to obey Him.

2- An unconditioned promise; which was to set after him a son whose throne God will establish forever (12-14), This Son is our Lord Jesus Christ. The incarnate Son of God; the Son of David, whose kingdom is set in our

hearts. For the Messiah in the Old Testament is the eternal King, the righteous, and the anointed, to raise up the fallen tent of David; whose kingdom will extend to the end of the earth; and His law is truly the divine truth and justice.

Here we shall quote some prophecies about His amazing Person, as a heavenly King, and about His exalted kingdom:

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will raise to David a branch of righteousness. A king shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth” (Jeremiah 23: 5)

“Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession” (Psalm 2: 8)

“Your throne, O Lord, is forever and ever. A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore God, Your God has anointed You, with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.... At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir” (Psalm 45).

“Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness to the king’s Son. He will judge Your people with righteousness, and Your people with justice; ... He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the end of the earth” (Psalm 72).

“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2: 44).

“I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion , which shall not pass away” (Daniel 7: 13-14)

+ When the Lord sat on the mount with His disciples, and saw the multitudes coming to Him; He came down from the mount and satisfied them in the low places. How could He go back there again if He had not come down from the mount before?

This bears the meaning of coming down from up high to satisfy the multitudes, then to ascend again.

He came now, not to reign instantly, but to reign in the meaning for which sake we pray, saying: "*Thine kingdom comes*". ... He perpetually reigns with the Father, being the Son of God, the Word, by whom everything was done. But the prophets tell us about His kingdom where Christ who became Man, and made His believers Christians.

His kingdom extends, and is proclaimed when He proclaims the glory of His saints, after the judgment is done through Him; the judgment about which He previously said that it will be done by the Son of Man; about whom the apostle says: "*When He delivers the kingdom to God the Father*" (1 Corinthians 15: 24); and to which He Himself referred, saying: "*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matthew 25: 34)

But the disciples and the multitudes who believed in Him, assuming that He came to reign right away, "*intended to take Him by force to make Him king*" (John 6: 15). They intended to hasten the time which He Himself has hidden, to declare in the right time.

(St. Augustine)

7- DAVID OFFERS A SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING TO GOD:

"Then king David went in and sat before the Lord, and he said: 'Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me this far?'" (16)

I have already presented an interpretation of this prayer of David in (2 Samuel 7).

David received the response of God with humility (16-18), and with thanksgiving (19-20), confessing God's blessings (21-22); and welcoming God's judgments, promises, and commands (23-24). He was in great awe; no human language can express what went on inside him. Although God rejected his intention to build Him a house, David did not become sad, but exulted and gave thanks; for the whole talk referred to what is greater than building a house for the Lord; For the Lord of glory, the Son of David, will come to build a house by His blood shed on the cross.

David did not feel rejected by God, on account of that He did not allow him to build his house; but, on the contrary, he felt that he is in the divine bosoms; and that God the Father intends to send the Son of David to proclaim the practical divine love in an awesome way.

David's prayer reveals (16-27), that, although he is a man with faults, yet he trusts in God, and leans on Him. He concentrates on the fact that the king of Israel has to reign, not by his own authority, but by the power of God; on account of that he serves a people that entered into a covenant with God, and who had a long experience with Him.

David addressed God with awe and reverence, in response to the message of grace he received from Him. For by faith he got the promises, embraced them, and was satisfied with them; as the fathers Patriarch previously did (Hebrew 11: 13).

David sat before the Lord like a little child talking to his father, from whom he seeks with the spirit of sonhood. ... It brings pleasure to a father to listen to the demand of his child; he listens to him with greater care and pleasure than when he listens to philosophers. With such daring, the saint sought from God, as a child utters the language of love.

A child may utter few words, but, with his great love for his father, he talks with daring, for love makes it easier for him to express what is inside him.

+ A child talks to his father with love; and his father listens to him with love
Hearing his questions, he receives them as though he talks serious issues;

Even if he talks too much, and his talk do not make sense, he is pleased with what he says more than his pleasure with the talk of philosophers.

Such was how David talked to God; like a child talking to his father with great love.

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

“And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O God; And You have also spoken of Your servant’s house for a great while to come, and have regarded me according to a state of a man of high degree, O Lord God” (17)

What came in the second book of Samuel concerning the question: *“Is this the manner of Man, O Lord God?”* (2 Samuel 7: 19), came here in the sense of a confession: *“You have regarded me according to a state of a man of high degree, O Lord God”*. You made me a great man, and dealt me accordingly. Through the relationship of the covenant, by which God receives the believers, He gives them titles, grants them gifts, and prepares much for them, looking at them like at persons of high degrees, although they are no more than dust and ashes.

According to some interpreters, the words saying: *“You have regarded me according to a state of a man of high degree, O Lord God”*, refer to the Messiah; For David, like Abraham, *“has seen His day and rejoiced”*; He saw it by faith; he saw Him in the form of Man -- the incarnate Word; though he saw His glory as an

only begotten Son of the Father. That is what God talked about, concerning His house to a large extent. This vision in the sight of God is greater than anything. It is not strange that David talks about His Manhood and Godhead; calling Him “My God” by the Spirit (the Godhead); although he knew that He will be his Son (Psalm 110: 1); And saw Him less than the angels for a short period of time (the manhood); then saw Him after that crowned with glory and splendor (Hebrew 2: 6, 7)

Having heard about the two divine promises from the prophet Nathan, David did not seek specific details, nor to know the time of their fulfillment; but, with humility he stood before the Lord, giving Him thanks, and confessing His divine blessings.

*“What more can David say to You for the honor of Your servant?
For You know Your servant” (18)*

After saying: “*What more can David say to You*”, he added here: “*for the honor of Your servant*” (18). We notice the honor that God brings forth over His ministers, by entering with them into a covenant and fellowship; that they cannot, and do not wish to ask for more.

The prophet often repeats the word “Your servant”; meaning the Son of David who emptied Himself and took the form of a servant, becoming like men (Philippians 2: 7)

*“O Lord, for Your servant’s sake, and according to Your own heart,
You have done all this greatness, in making known all these great things”
(19)*

It is worthy of consideration that what came in the second book of Samuel as “*for the sake of Your Word*”; came here as “*For Your servant’s sake*” (19). For Jesus Christ is “The Word of God” (Revelation 19: 13); and He is “*The Servant of God*”

(Isaiah); for the sake of whom promises are given to all believers; for His sake every compassion was given; and for His sake it became known. We are indebted to Him for all this greatness; and from Him we anticipate all these things; the unutterable riches of Christ, that if we look at it with faith, and If we look at the hand of the Lord Christ, we cannot but glorify, not only the great things, but the only thing that is greater, namely the work and riches of Christ; and talk of it with honor.

“O Lord, there is none like You, nor is there any god besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears” (20)

“And who is like Your people Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people – to make for Himself a name by great and awesome deeds, by driving out nations before Your people whom You redeemed from Egypt” (21)

David considers the exodus that God realized on the hand of Moses, and what followed it of wonders and miracles, as a portrait of God’s perpetual work with His people along the generations. Ezra, while recording this prayer of David, probably binds, in the minds of his contemporaries, between the works of God in the exodus of their fathers from the land of Egypt, and His work with those who were returning from the Babylonian captivity.

“For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; And You, Lord, have become their God” (22)

How great is David’s piety, confessing his unworthiness; and how, in godliness and love he glorifies the name of God, and marvels at His grace.

“And now, O Lord, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, let it be established forever, and do as You have said” (23)

“So let it be established, that Your name may be magnified forever, saying, ‘The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, is Israel’s God; and let the house of Your servant David be established before You” (24)

In the second book of Samuel, God is mentioned as “Above Israel”; while here, he is described as “*God of Israel*” (24); and being God of Israel, this explains His response according to this title, confirming this relationship, and granting them all what they need, and what they expect of Him. There were what they called ‘Gods of the Gentiles’, like the gods of Assyria, Egypt, Hamah, and Arfad; but they were gods by name, for they never stood by their sides nor supported them. ... “*The God of Israel*”, on the other hand, was their God; as all His features and perfections flowed to their benefit. Triply blessed is the people whose God is Jehovah.

“For You, O my God, have told Your servant that You will build him a house. Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray before You” (25)

“And now, Lord, You are God, and have promised this goodness to Your servant” (26)

“Now You have been pleased to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue before You forever; for You have blessed it, O Lord, and it shall be blessed forever” (27)

The final words of the second book of Samuel (chapter 7) says: “*With Your blessing, let the house of Your servant be blessed forever*” (2 Samuel 7: 29), which is the language of ‘a holy wish’; Whereas here, the final words are the

language of 'holy faith': "*For You have blessed it, O Lord, and it shall be blessed forever*" (27). Here we notice:

- 1- David was encouraged to seek the divine blessings, for God confirmed to him that He has blessings stored for him and his seed..... "*For You have blessed me*", I shall come to get the blessing You promised to give me. The promises are given to us to guide us, and to stir-up in us the spirit of prayer. When God says: "I bless you", our hearts should respond, saying: "Yes, O Lord, bless me".

- 2- David was serious in seeking the blessing, for he believed that those whom God blesses, shall be truly blessed forever. "*You have blessed it, O Lord, and it shall be blessed forever*". Man hopes for the blessing; but it is God who gives it; What God ordains, He executes; and what He promises, He fulfills. For God, saying and doing are not separate things; Far from it! ... He blesses forever; His blessings are undisputable; and their benefits go beyond time.

David ends his prayer by the word "forever"; for the way God looks at eternity, so should be our wishes and hopes.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 17

BLESS, O LORD, MY GRANDCHILDREN AND GREAT GRANDCHILDREN

- + Experiencing Your amazing fatherhood for him,
David desired to build a house for You;

His heart did not have peace after establishing the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle;

How could he have peace, residing in a palace, while Your ark is in a tent?

By his pure heart, according to Yours;

He built for Your Spirit a holy house in his depths;

But he dreamt of building a house befitting of You;

Do You, O Creator of heavens and earth dwell in houses of stones and wood?!

+ For the sake of Your love for mankind, and Your amazing humility;

You responded to the request of David Your beloved;

You promised him that his son Solomon will build the house;

You counted the temple as an icon of heaven, and a sign of Your gathering together with Your people;

+ Come, O Lord Jesus, and dwell in my heart;

Your Holy Spirit will adorn it with the spirit of holiness;

Count my heart a throne for yourself, and an almost heavenly chariot;

What shall I offer You to set Your dwelling place in me?

I have nothing to offer You, but to bow before You;

Sanctify my will, to harmonize with Yours;

Guide my mind, emotions, and all my energies to the account of Your kingdom.

+ To You, I cry out, O Lover of all mankind;

I may have no children nor grandchildren;

But I count the generation to come as my children, and the following generations as my grandchildren;

I pray for the sake of the children and youth of the future;

I pray to You to proclaim Your love to them; to let them enter into a new covenant with You;

To let them taste Your peace, joy, and divine wisdom;
To let them perceive that You loved them even before they were born;
Proclaim Your divine presence to them;
To let them enjoy the fellowship with You.



DAVID'S BATTLES AND CONQUESTS

(Chapters 18 to 20)

David's battles and building the temple:

The book might have disregarded the inner controversies in the kingdom during David's days; the tragedies of his royal family; his fall into adultery (2 Samuel 11-12); his son Amnon's fall with his sister Tamar; the killing Amnon by his brother Absalom, Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 15-19); the opposition of some and the plots against him; etc. Yet the author confirmed that what is left in David's portrait and in his kingdom was everything glorious and splendid; for the sake of the purity of his heart, and his serious repentance after every weakness in which he happened to fall,

The three chapters (18 to 20) dealt with David's battles and conquests, which came in more details than in the second book of Samuel, about which we spoke in our commentary on the later book.

As to the wars into which David entered, the book mentioned them to confirm that, being a man of war, it is not befitting of him to build the temple (22: 8; 28: 3). Although those wars have provided Solomon with a well-established kingdom, plus the spoils got from those wars, which were used to the expense of building the temple.

The book intends to make it clear that David was a great victorious leader; who counted his continuous conquests, as not set upon his own exalted courage and cleverness, as much as they were gifts from the hand of God. That is why all the spoils that came from those wars, David dedicated to God, and not to his own account; were stored for the sake of the building of the temple.

The author was perpetually preoccupied with the issue of building the temple; even while narrating the events of the wars and the battles. The first book of the

Chronicles cared for the extension of David's kingdom, his conquests over his enemies, and his awe before the nations. It was preoccupied with David's achievements in the foreign policy, more than in the inner affairs; It did not mention his compassion toward Saul's household; even though that did not mean disregarding the inner achievements altogether.

Who Is the Leader of the battle: David or God?

The book mostly dealt with the period of peace in the reign of David, which he used in moving the ark and setting it in the tabernacle in Jerusalem; preparing for the building of the temple of the Lord on all aspects. But it was not possible to keep silent regarding the military side of David's work; As he was a symbol of the Lord Christ, who was fairer than the sons of men; but, at the same time *He girds His sword upon His thigh* to destroy the devil, and to take away the authority of death, and the sting of sin.

Why the wars?

Stirred-up by this question, the apostle James answered it in his epistle, saying: *"Where do war and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and cover and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask"* (James 4: 1, 2). In other words, the cause of wars is the sin lying deep in man's heart.

The way David stood up and fought against his enemies to defend his kingdom, the Christian, likewise, has bitter enemies; the spirits of evil in the high places, against whom he should fight; hence the apostle Paul exhorts us to *"Put on the whole armor of God"* (Ephesians 6: 11).

- + *“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil”* (Ephesians 6: 11). He did not say: against the wars, nor against the animosities, but *“against the wiles”*; for this enemy does not fight us openly, but through wiles, meaning, through (deception)... The devil does not present to us sins in their natural colors; but clothe them differently, using wiles.

By this way, the apostle stirs-up the (spiritual) warriors, educates them, and exhorts them to watch; making it clear to them that their spiritual strife is one of the mighty wars; for we fight an enemy, who is not neither simple nor direct, but a deceptive one.

At the beginning, the apostle stirred the disciples up, to take into consideration the craftiness of the devil; then talked to them about his nature and the size of his hosts. He did that, not to destroy the psyche of the spiritual warriors, but to exhort them to watch, to increase their enthusiasm, and to show them the tricky ways of their enemy; Because if he just says how huge is the number of his hosts, that would dampen their enthusiasm ... But before and after that, he confirmed the possibility of conquest on such an enemy; ... As much as he showed the power of the enemy, he ignited the zeal of the warriors (for the spiritual strife)

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6: 12).

Speaking about how ferocious the enemies are, he added that they rob us of great blessings! ... The wresting, being *“in the heavenly places”*; namely, It is not for the sake of riches nor of glory; but to enslave us; therefore, there is no place in it for reconciliation ... Wrestling becomes more vicious the more important its object is. For the expression *“in the*

heavenly places” means (for the sake of the heavenly places). The enemies gain nothing through their conquest upon us, but to rob us of our blessings ... The devil exerts all his effort to drive us out of heaven,

(St. John Chrysostom)

The blessings of the spiritual wars:

After the sweet fellowship which David enjoyed with God through the word, the prayer, and the praise; as is mentioned in the previous chapter, he resumed his work with love, and exalted enthusiasm, as a “conqueror and to conquer” . David’s wars presented a portrait of the spiritual blessings of the wars against the devil and sin; of which are the following:

- 1- Overcoming the traditional enemies, the pagan Philistines, who, for several generation, were the source of trouble for the Israelites; but David conquered them (1). ... Likewise, all principalities, authorities, and adversary powers, will submit to the Son of David; and fall down before Him (3).
- 2- It often happens that things of this world change, leading to loss of wealth and power, when men intend to establish them; as it did occur with Hadadezer , whom David struck, as he went to establish his power (3)
- 3- “*A horse is a vain hope for safety*” That is what David says in psalm 33: 17; That is why, as it came in (Psalm 20: 7), “*he hamstringed all the chariot horses*” (Psalm 18: 4), and did not use them, on account of that God commanded His people that their king should not increase neither his horses, nor his wives.

- 4- It often happen that the enemies of the church of God destroy themselves through joining forces against her (5); as it occurred with the people of Damascus who were defeated when they came to support Hadadezer. Joining forces against the church, "*God will gather them like sheaves to the threshing floor*" (Micah 4: 11, 12)
- 5- The sinner's wealth are sometimes meant for the righteous; The Aramites became David's servants, and brought tributes ((6); their shields of gold and bronze were brought to Jerusalem; and the tabernacle of meeting was built by the spoils of Egypt; and the temple was built by the spoils of wars against other nations. All that were signs of the entrance of the Gentiles into the gospel of the church.

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CHAPTER 18

EVEN DURING HIS WARS, DAVID WAS PREOCCUPIED WITH THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD

All the acts of David reveal how much he was preoccupied with building the temple of the Lord. In all his wars, he only cared for how much gold and silver he will get; beside the tributes and taxes paid by the defeated kings; to store completely to the account of building the temple. He was preoccupied with the divine presence in every possible way. His thought was: [If I cannot build the temple, I shall at least help my son to do].

With every battle, the deposit kept for building the temple, steadily increased. ... The same way, with every temptation we go through, by the grace of God, beside

the conquest upon the hosts of darkness, we enjoy a new deposit to the account of the kingdom of God in us.

Despite relieving the priests of military service, to concentrate on their religious ministry, we see 'Benaiah the son of Jehoiada (16) the priest (1 Chronicles 27: 5), join the army to become one of the mighty men of valor, a chief over 24000; and a personal guard of David; who killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day (2 Samuel 23: 20).

The events mentioned in chapters 18-20, historically came after David became a king (chapter 12), before bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (12-17).

1- The defeat of the Philistines	1
2- The defeat of the Moabites	2
3- The defeat of the Syrians (the Aramites)	3 - 10
4- The defeat of the Edomites, and dedicating the spoils for the Lord	11 - 12
5- Appointing governors in Edom	13
6- David's care to provide all his people with judgment and justice	14
7- Appointments in the army, and in the governmental administrations	15
8- Appointment for the ministry of the temple	16 – 17

1- THE DEFEAT OF THE PHILISTINES:

“After this it came to pass that David attacked the Philistines, subdued them, and took Gath and its towns from the hand of the Philistines” (1)

David enjoyed a continuous series of conquests, since his fight while a young man against 'Goliath' the mighty Philistine; because the lord helped him wherever he went.

According to many fathers, David's wars against the pagan nations, and his victory over them, refer to the work of the Lord Christ as a Leader of the spiritual battle against the devil and his angels, to liberate us from our bondage to him and to the sin.

+ Christ, the true David, came to lift up the human race from the valley of sins and tears. The Israelites confronted the Philistines (1 Samuel 17: 19-20) in a valley; for the burden of their sins brought them down. There, the Israelites, nevertheless did not dare to fight their enemy, because David, the symbol of Christ has not arrived yet.

That was true, beloved brethren, for who could fight against the devil, before our Lord Christ liberates the human race of his authority? ... Now, the word 'David' means (strong with his hand); Who is stronger than Him who conquered the whole world, armed with the cross, and not with a sword?

(Father Caesarius, bishop of Arle)

David's conquest over the Philistines (1); we already talked about in (14: 9-16)
His conquest over the Moabites (2); was portrayed in a lesser way than what came in (1 Samuel 22: 3)

He moved toward the north, defeated Zobah (3) and the Syrians (5)

All those nations submitted under David's authority, he reigned as far as the Euphrates,

2- THE DEFEAT OF THE MOABITES:

“He defeated Moab; And the Moabites became David’s servants, and brought tributes” (2)

The second book of Samuel (8: 1-2), tells us that David, whose grandmother was ‘Ruth’ the Moabite, killed two-third of the Moabites.

- + It is befitting of us to realize that those wars were symbols of the conquests of the Savior Lord, who conquered the idol-worship and the lack of faith of people all over the world. He wiped out all their old nonsense, to make them qualified for the change through the grace of the New Man.

(Father Casidorus)

- + In the second book of Samuel, the Holy Book, recording David’s victory on the Moabites, presents to us two separate lines: one of life and another of death (2 Samuel 8: 2 LXX); ... Leaving some of the Moabites to live, while letting some others die, was made clear in the episode of ‘Orpah’ and ‘Ruth’. The first, ‘Orpah’, who returned to idol-worship in her old town, was designated to death; Whereas the second ‘Ruth’ who followed her mother-in-law, ‘Naomi’, meaning (glad), said to her: *“Your people shall be my people, and your God my God”* (Ruth 1: 16)

(St. Jerome)

3- THE DEFEAT OF THE SYRIANS (THE ARAMITES):

“And David defeated Hadadezer king of Zobah as far as Hamath, as he went to establish his power by the River Euphrates” (3)

Hadadezer: a name derived from the name ‘Hadad’, of a Syrian god; that came to be the title of the rulers of that region, like ‘Pharaoh’ for the kings of Egypt.

Zobah: close to, and north-west of Damascus, which, according to some was called before ‘Hobah’ (Genesis 14: 15); the capital of the kingdom that ruled the region of Syria.

David intended to establish his kingdom by extending it toward the River Euphrates, according to the divine promise (Genesis 15: 18; Numbers 24: 17)

“David took from him one thousand chariots, seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. And David also hamstringed all the chariot horses, except that he spared enough of them for one hundred chariots” (3)

In the book of Deuteronomy 17: 16, it came that the king *“shall not multiply horses for himself”*; lest he may fall into pride, or enter into competition for greatness with the kings around him, It so seem that David kept the one hundred chariots as a sign of his conquest over Hadadezer, then was to destroy them as he did for the rest. While, according to others, David, the way he erred by multiplying wives (14: 13), he so did in multiplying horses.

“When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David killed twenty-two thousand of the Syrians” (5)

“Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus; and the Syrians became David’s servants, and brought tribute. Thus the Lord preserved David wherever he went” (6)

“And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem” (7)

David dedicated all the gold, silver, and bronze things to the Lord; which were used by his son Solomon later in building the temple.

“And from Tibhath and from Chun, cities of Hadadezer, David brought a large amount of bronze, with which Solomon made the bronze sea, the pillars, and the articles of bronze” (8)

Tabath and Chun: The locations of those two cities are unknown, nor the relationship between them. In the old Arabic text, their names came as ‘Ameasa’ (Nowadays Homs), and Baalbeck.

“When ‘Tou’ king of Hamath heard that David had defeated all the army of Hadadezer king of Zobah...” (9)

The kingdom of ‘Tou’ was on the border of that of Hadadezer (2 Samuel 8: 8-9)

“He sent Hadoram his son to king David, to greet him and bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him (for Hadadezer had been at war with Tou).

And Hadoram brought with him all kinds of gold, silver, and bronze” (10)

1- It is for our benefit to have friends who enjoy the divine presence; When the king of Hamath heard about the greatness of David’s achievements, he sent his son to congratulate him, and to bring to him a precious gift (9-10).

It is not wise to be an adversary to the Son of David; hence it is said: *“Kiss the son lest He be angry”* (Psalm 2: 12). Let the kings and judges of the earth, as the lowly ones, learn and seek the wisdom. Yet the gifts we

should bring to the Lord are not gold and silver, for those are befitting for him who has nothing; but we should present to Him our hearts and our pure love, as well as our souls, as living sacrifice.

2- We should honor God out of the blessings He grants us. The gifts of his friends, and the spoil of his enemies, David presented to the Lord (11); namely, he kept them for the building and the adornment of the temple. We,

likewise should dedicate to the Lord, and use for the glory of His name, everything true and precious we have: *“(Our) gain and (our) pay will be set apart for the Lord”*.(Isaiah 23: 18)

3- It is said *“God preserved David wherever he went”*. God’s eyes are always on those whose eyes are perpetually directed toward him.

4- God gives strength to men, not to boast their greatness, but to do good. When he reigned over all Israel, David administered judgment and justice to his people; That was how he responded to his exaltation. He did not

concentrate on his conquests abroad, to forget about doing justice inside; by which he served God, the divine King, who sits on His throne a just Judge; By that, David was a prominent symbol of the Messiah; *“whose scepter of righteousness is the scepter of His kingdom”* (Psalm 45: 6)

4- THE DEFEAT OF THE EDMITES, AND THE DEDICATION OF THE SPOIL TO THE LORD:

“King David also dedicated these to the Lord, along with the silver and gold that he had brought from all these nations – from Edom, from Moab, from the people of Ammon, from

the Philistines, and from Amalek” (11)

All the nations paid taxes to Israel, for the sake of its prevalence and the power of its authority. David dedicated the gifts he got from ‘Tou’ king of Hamath, as well as the spoils of gold and silver he got from the defeated nations, to the Lord, being the Source of everything; and everything should be dedicated to Him.

So it is befitting of the believer to dedicate his heart, talents, and all his resources to God and His glory.

“Moreover Abishai the son of Zeruiah killed eighteen thousand Edomites in the valley of salt” (12)

David turned toward the south where he defeated the Edomites, and occupied the Gulf of Aqaba, that opens on the Red Sea, and all what is beyond; which was used by king Solomon to have commercial enterprises.

5- SETTING GOVERNERS IN EDOM:

“He also put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became David’s servants. And the Lord preserved David wherever he went” (13)

“The Lord preserved David wherever he went”. Perceiving that God is the source of his conquests, David did not refer them to his cleverness, experience, nor possibilities.

5- DAVID’S CARE FOR JUDGMENT AND JUSTICE TO ALL HIS PEOPLE:

“So David reigned over all Israel, and administered judgment and justice to all his people” (14)

Realization of judgment and justice to all his people is the responsibility and mission of the king (1 Kings 3: 16-28; Isaiah 11: 4; Psalm 72).

While the enemies felt the wrath of David, his people enjoyed his righteousness, piety, and justice. David was not only a brave and good leader, but he, as well, was a wise organizer.

7- APPOINTMENTS IN THE ARMY AND THE GOVERNMENTAL ADMINISTRATION:

“Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army, Jehushaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder” (15)

The list of appointments mentioned here conforms to what came in (2 Samuel 8: 16-18)

The man directly next to David was Joab **the chief of the army**, who entered into battles for the sake of the kingdom. And beside his leadership of the army, he was **the chief of the personal guards of the king**. Guarding the king was of utmost importance as a price for the fame he got.

The recorder: He most probably took up this system from Egypt; Beside recording the events pertaining to the state, the recorder has been the official spokesman on behalf of the royal house.

9- APPOINTMENTS FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE TEMPLE:

“Zadok the son of Ahitub and Abimelech the son of Abiathar were the priests; Shavsha was the scribe” (16)

Shavsha was the royal secretary, a personal secretary of the king, and general secretary of the state; Beside being responsible for all the correspondences, he was responsible for the revenue of the temple; and had an important role in the public affairs of the state.

Mentioning the two high priests together with those men of high positions of the state, reveals the close connection between the state affairs and the religious life of the people.

“Benaiah the son of Jehojada was over the Cherithites and the Pelethites; and David’s sons were chief ministers at the king’s side” (17)

The **Cherithites** and the **Pelethites**, were most probably a group of foreign mercenaries who joined David when he was fleeing from the face of Saul; and remained loyal to him all along his reign (2 Samuel 15; 17-18); and became a part of his personal guards.

In this list of military, civil, and religious leaders, David’s first sons were mentioned. In (2 Samuel 8: 18) as priests; not to practice the priestly work, like offering the sacrifices, but to practice the administrative works of the temple; For the priests had to be from the Levites. Here, in the first book of the Chronicles, they are mentioned as chief ministers and leaders at the king’s side.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 18

FROM YOUR HAND, O LORD, ARE THE CONQUEST AND PROSPERITY

- + Beside what David got of courage since his early youth;
He perceived that the secret of his courage was being attached to God;

In all his battles, he never moved without You;
Hiding in You, he enjoyed conquest;
Grant me in my perpetual battle against the devil;
Not to depend upon previous conquests;
For You are the secret of holiness, purity, and conquest
Your grace is my support;
And Your presence in my depths is the secret of my perpetual edification.

+ Beside trusting in You, grant me to care for perpetually growing by You;
David was not so preoccupied with his conquests upon the surrounding
nations;

Not to care for administering judgment and justice to all his people;
Grant me not to be preoccupied with my conquest over certain sins,
To care to deliver my whole life to You;
To be covered by Your righteousness, and to hold fast to Your
commandments.

+ David's conquests did not preoccupy him from the good ordinances;
In his army, as well as in the governmental affairs.
Let me attach myself to you, and enjoy wisdom and good counsel;
To have everything in me under the ordinance befitting of Your children;
Glory be to You, O Grantor of conquest, wisdom, and counsel;
Glory be to You, O who cares for what is inside and outside me;
For You are the true Leader of my whole life.

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CHAPTER 19

THE EVIL THOUGHTS OF HANUN THE AMMONITE

If David's life was according to the heart of God, the most prominent feature in his life was his love even for his adversaries. This showed strongly in his behavior toward king Saul who was only preoccupied with killing him; yet David utterly refused to stretch his hand against Saul, being the Lord's anointed, when he was within his reach, and he could have got rid of him and his evil plots, once and for all.

Now, this book tells us how Hanun the son of Nahash king of the Ammonites did not learn a lesson of what David did with Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, who was lame in his feet, doing kindness to him for the sake of his friendship with his father Jonathan (2 Samuel 9). Hanun did not perceive how David's personality is featured by loyalty toward anyone who did him a favor.

David intended to send messengers to comfort Hanun concerning his father's death; for Nahash showed kindness to him. But the princes of Ammon said to Hanun that David's real intention by sending the messengers was not to comfort him, but to search, overthrow, and to spy out the land.. Foolishly, Hanun behaved in a way that aroused David's anger (1-5); And the result, was that Hanun lost the friendship of David and all the people of Israel; entered into battles that cost him and his allies much; and lost Aram as an ally.

Before David act, the Ammonites started to prepare for war. That was not the first time David was provoked because of the behavior of a foolish man. He was previously provoked by Nabal who despised his messengers; but Abigail, Nabal's wife, by her wisdom and humility, could appease David's anger (1 Samuel 25)

Having defeated Hanun the son of Nahash, it so happened that when David came to Mahanaim, that shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah, of the people of Ammon, and others, brought food to him and the people to eat (2 Samuel 17: 27-29); which reveals how David's fame of power has prevailed upon the whole region

Instead of misunderstanding, the apostle calls us to love "*that thinks no evil*" (1 Corinthians 13: 5). Being in such a condition, the psalmist says: "*In return of my love, they are my accusers, but I give myself to prayer. Thus they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love*" (Psalm 109: 4-5).

- 1- David comforts Hanun for the death of his father Nahash king of the Ammonites 1 - 2
- 2- The evil counsel of the princes of the Ammonites
3 - 5
- 3- Hanun hires an army from Aram (Syria)
6 - 9
- 4- The defeat of Hanun's Syrian allies
10 - 18
- 5- The leaders of Hadadezer submit to David
19

1- DAVID COMFORTS HANUN FOR THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER NAHASH KING OF THE AMMONITES:

"Now it happened after this that Nahash the king of the people of Ammon died; and his son reigned in his place" (1)

The people of Ammon reached the climax of their strength in the days of the judges; and David was the first military leader of Israel to defeat them; after

which they had no more strength to cause any trouble for Israel for many years to come.

Nahash, king of Ammon fought against Israel in the days of Saul (1 Samuel 11); And because he most probably presented to David services during the time he was chased by Saul (which were not recorded); David sent messengers to comfort his son Hanun for his father's death; but unfortunately Hanun treated them in an unbecoming way.

*“Then David said, ‘I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me’. So David sent messengers to comfort him concerning his father.
And the servants of David came to Hanun in the land of the people of Ammon to comfort him” (2)*

The Holy Book did not mention the nature of the kindness previously presented by Nahash to David, but the two of them entered into an intimate friendship during the time David was fleeing from Saul, against whom Nahash had animosity.

In the Assyrian inscriptions it came that a king of Palestine by the name Hanun paid tributes to the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser and that he entered into war against Sargon.

2- THE EVIL COUNSEL OF THE PRINCES OF THE AMMONITES:

And the princes of the people of Ammon said to Hanun: ‘Do you think that David really honors your father because he has sent comforters to you? Did his servants not come to you to search, to overthrow, and to spy out the land’ (3)

When David admonished Saul on account of that he listened to his wicked counselors who unjustly provoked him against David, he said to him: *“Wickedness proceeds from the wicked”* (1 Samuel 24: 13). That was what Hanun king of the Ammonites fell into; having set around himself wicked counselors who presented to him their wicked counsel. It is befitting of the king not to incline his ears to the wicked counsel; but, with wisdom, he should not hasten to misunderstand the others.

Therefore Hanun took David’s servants, shaved them, and cut off their garments in the middle at their buttocks, and sent them away”

(4)

Shaving the beard or a part of it, and cutting off the garment in the middle at the buttocks of someone against his will, was taken as a great insult, despise, and challenge for the Jews, and for the people of the East in general. This view is still present in the villages of Egypt, up to this day.

Then some went and told David about the men, and he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, ‘Wait at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return” (5)

David presents to us a magnificent example of the leader who cares for the feelings of those who work for them. He sent to meet them, to raise up their spirits and to support them; because the men were greatly ashamed.

If David so cared for those who worked for him, how much more would the Lord of David care for His ministers who suffer troubles. If they are ready to be crucified together with Him, He will grant them the power of resurrection, its exultation, and glory.

3- HANUN HIRES AN ARMY FROM SYRIA:

“When the people of Ammon saw that they had made themselves repulsive to David, Hanun and the people of Ammon sent a thousand talent of silver to hire for themselves

chariots and horsemen from Mesopotamia, from Syrian Maachah, and from Zobah” (6)

That episode mentioned in this chapter concerning the alliance between the Ammonites and the Syrians, and David’s conquest upon them, conform to what came in (2 Samuel 10).

Hanun’s misunderstanding of David’s intentions, brought upon him, his country, and the surrounding countries, a real catastrophe. Instead of regretting his haste and foolishness, Hanun dedicated a huge sum of silver to cover up his mistake, by entering into a failed battle. And instead of David having the intention to go to war, it was Hanun who did; and hired an army from Syria to help him against David. In this we see:

- 1- How the hearts of the wicked are hardened for their own perdition; how the people of Ammon, when they saw that they made themselves repulsive to David (1); instead of seeking peace, to correct what they did, and to submit themselves to compensate David for the harm they did against him, they provoked God to anger, God “the King of nations”, who defends the right of the oppressed. ... They instead, prepared for war, and brought upon themselves destruction on the hands of David, which he had no intention to do.
- 2- How the might of the brave men increases with affliction. Finding out that the front of the adversary army was before and behind him (10); Joab, instead of thinking of retreat, he persisted more; And being unable to

double to his army, he divided it; As a valiant leader, with great sense, he made an arrangement with his brother Abishai to help one another (12); And exhorted his men to be of good courage, not for the sake of their own honor and their personal benefit, but for the glory of God and the good of their country; then may the Lord do what is good in his sight (13).

- 3- How the greatest arts of war, directed against justice and truth, will benefit nothing. The Ammonites did their utmost best to strengthen their position; hired a mighty ally, and used them with craftiness; But not being on the right side, and defenders of vanity; they were shamefully defeated; For the truth perpetually prevails and conquers.

So they hired for themselves thirty-two thousand chariots, with the king of Maachah and his people who came and encamped before Medeba. Also the people of Ammon gathered together from their cities, and come to battle” (7)

“And when David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army of the mighty men” (8)

“Then the people of Ammon came out and put themselves in battle array before the gate of the city; and the kings who had come were by themselves in the field” (9)

The Ammonite army put themselves in battle array before the gate of the city, outside the walls before Medeba, on the border of the city of Arnon. Seeing the Ammonites in the front, followed by the Syrian mercenaries; Joab planned to charge against the mercenaries; and asked his brother Abishai to charge against the Ammonites. But seeing how the mercenaries were defeated and fleeing, the Ammonites lost courage, and had to flee as well.

4- THE DEFEAT OF THE SYRIAN ALLIES:

“When Joab saw that the battle line was set against him before and behind, he chose some of the choice men of Israel and put them in battle array against the Syrians” (10)

If in the days of Saul no one stood against the mighty Goliath except the young man David; Now in the days of David there are many mighty men of valor to confront the adversary nations.

“And the rest of the people he put under Abishai his brother; and they set themselves in battle array against the people of Ammon” (11)

“Then he said, ‘If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me. But if the people of Ammon are too strong for you, I will help you” (12)

“Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the Lord do what is good in His sight” (13).

The secret of the success of Joab and his brother Abishai, is that, beside studying their position with seriousness and prudence, they trusted in that God will do what is good in His sight (13). On another aspect, Joab supported his brother, and asked him to: *“Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people, and for the cities of our God” (13)*. It is amazing that, while cherishing the people, referring them to themselves, as: *“our people”*, at the same time they refer the cities to God, as *“the cities of God”*. On one aspect they intended to confirm their love for the people; and on another aspect they intended to confirm that God guards and cares for His people.

“So Joab and the people who were with him drew near for the battle against the Syrians, and they fled before him” (14)

As Joab's talk to his brother revealed their love for the people and their trust in God, the enemy collapsed before them; For nothing destroys the devil like the love for God and the neighbor. It is therefore, befitting of the believer, whether a priest or one of the congregation, to be adorned, or armed, with love, for then, all the hosts of darkness would never prevail upon him. By the true love, we would never fear the covetousness of the flesh, the love of the world, nor the devil and all his hosts. The love for God and the brethren are inseparable.

- + Whoever sets his mind upon the love of God, will despise all the seen things; he will even be a sojourner from his own body.
- + Whoever has a trace of hate in his heart toward anyone, through any fault whatever it is, makes himself a complete sojourner from the love of God; For the love of God would never coexist with the hate of man.
- + Blessed is he who learns how to love all men on an equal basis.
- + If you love some and hate some; or if you love some more than others; you should know that, by such attitude, you are too far from the perfect love, among which pillars are the equality of love.
- + Whoever loves God will certainly love his neighbor; Such a man would never holdfast to money, but, like God, he will rather give it away to the needy
- + Once the mind starts ahead to love God, the demon of blasphemy would start to fight him, by suggesting to him strange evil thoughts; on account of that he hates the new friend of God. Having such evil thoughts on his mind, the believer feels shame, and unworthiness to approach God in prayers. But, with the might of God, he will overcome this demon, defeat

his evil ways, become stronger and more faithful in his love for Christ; *“His sword shall enter his own heart, and his bow shall be broken”* (Psalm 37: 15)

(Father Maximus the Confessor)

- + How great is love! ... Stronger than fire itself; ... will ascend to heaven itself; and nothing will hinder it.
- + Paul, the citizen of heaven, a pillar of the church, an earthly angel; a heavenly being; is like iron red hot with fire; Paul was so kindled with love, to turn into love itself.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“When the people of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fleeing, they also fled before Abishai his brother and entered the city. So Joab went to Jerusalem” (15)

Once Joab prevailed, his brother Abishai was strengthened and prevailed as well. The same way our sins may become an offense to our brethren, and the cause of their fall, Our conquest by the Lord will support them to become stronger, more attached to God, and to conquer together with us.. With every conquest you enjoy, you support your brother to conquer as well by the Lord his God.

“Now when the Syrians saw that they had been defeated by Israel they sent messengers and brought the Syrians who were beyond the River, and Shophach the commander

of Hadadezer's army went before them" (16)

Planning to avenge themselves against Israel, the Syrians sent messengers to their kinsmen beyond the River to come to their help. Perceiving that new danger, David gathered his armies together, and set up a battle array against them; Then the haughtiness of the Syrians collapsed, and they became servants of David.

"When it was told David, he gathered all Israel, crossed over the Jordan and came upon them, and set up in battle array against them. So when David had set up in battle array against the Syrians, they fought with him" (17)

David may seem in this chapter as sharp-tempered, yet he tried his best to live in peace; Here we notice:

- 1- The godly men always try to live in peace with their neighbors; David intended to give kindness to Hanun, being a neighbor, for he remembered the kindness of his late father toward him. Those who get kindness have to pay it back according to their ability, whenever they get a chance; And those who get kindness from fathers, have to pay it back to their children after they depart.
- 2- As the proverb of the old says: *"Wickedness proceeds from the wicked"* (1 Samuel 24: 13); and *"For the foolish person will speak foolishness, and his heart will work iniquity; to practice ungodliness, to utter error against the Lord... Also the schemes of the schemer are evil; he devises wicked plans, to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaks justice"* (Isaiah 32: 6-7); Those lowly people invent evil on their own; tend toward jealousy and unwarranted misunderstanding of others. Hanun's servants consulted him that David's messengers came to spy the land; as

though a great man like David needed to do such a lowly act; For if he had any bad intention against the Moabites, he would have done it by force, and not through ulterior ways. Yet Hanun listened to his evil servants; and contrary to the international laws, he treated David's messengers in a shameful way.

Although the Ammonites were perpetual enemies of Israel, yet David did not intend to make war against them; for he was on the defense all his life; the way a man of God should always be. We should put on the perfect weapon of God; not to proceed to war, but to stand alert and ready all the time.

- 3- The rulers should protect their servants, should care for them in case they are harmed while on duty. David did so for his messengers; And so does the Lord Christ for His ministers.

“Then the Syrians fled before Israel, and David killed seven thousand charioteers and forty thousand foot soldiers of the Syrians, and killed Shophach the commander of the army” (18)

Those, who God is not on their side, would attempt to gather their forces together anew.. The Syrians did not care, as they were serving the Ammonites as mercenaries; They however, to save their own face and their lost honor, they sought the need from their kinsmen beyond the River Euphrates; but in vain, for they also fled before Israel (18); and lost 7000 charioteers (1 Samuel 10: 18)..

“And when the servants of Hadadezer saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with David and became his servants. So the Syrians were not willing to help the people of Ammon anymore” (19)

When the Syrians saw that they were defeated before Israel, they broke their alliance with the Ammonites, and were not willing to help them anymore (19). They made peace with David and became his servants. I wish those who stood in vain against God, reconsider their position, "*while they are on the way with him*" (Matthew 5: 25), to become His servants, instead of His enemies.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 19

GRANT ME, O LORD, TO FLEE FROM THE COUNSEL OF THE WICKED

- + "*Wickedness proceed from the wicked*"
Protect me from them and let me not incline my ears to them;
But to incline my ear to Your commandment, the life-giver.

- + Because of the counsel of the wicked, Hanun the son of Nahash lost the friendship of David;
Instead of making an alliance with David; and have the blessing of the Lord;
The wickedness of the wicked dwelt upon him, for a huge price;
He lost his wealth, chariots, and honor.

- + Hanun and his men defamed David's messengers, who hid in shame;
But David with his compassionate and humble heart cared for them;
By his love and care, he lifted up their spirit;
And did not allow anyone to see them in their disgrace;
Lest they might be ridiculed.

- + O Lord of David. with Your love and Your compassion;
Look down on Your servants and people;

If you allow the hand of the wicked to stretch against them;
Do not allow this hand to settle down on them;
Instead of the ridicule, pour Your splendor on them;
And instead of the reproach, proclaim Your glory in them.

+ Joab and his brother Abishai were strengthened to work to the Lord's account;

Trusting in God, their life was filled with strength, courage, and hope;
And victory became their portion.

+ Their amazing love for their people was mixed with the care of the loving God;

Cherishing their people, they called them "Our people";
They bore the people on their hands before God;
They perceived God's guarding His people and their cities.



CHAPTER 20

DAVID RESIDES IN JERUSALEM

In the previous chapter we saw how the Ammonites and their allies were defeated in war before David; Here we see how their capital city, Rabbah was devastated (1); how great affliction dwelt upon their people and cities (3); and how David placed the crown of their king over his head (2). We have those events in more detail in (2 Samuel 11-12)

David set forth to the battle field to consummate his final conquest:

- 1- While Saul, who trusted in his physical stature and his military might, found no one to rescue him from the mighty Goliath except the young man David; David, on the other hand, with the purity of his heart; and with his falls, presented tears of repentance; for which God granted him the grace of being surrounded by a multitude of mighty men of valor; and granted him continuous conquests
- 2- Putting the crown of the king of the Ammonites over his head, he found it heavy; and perceived that the enjoyment of conquest, the extension of the kingdom, and the increase of authority, are all a heavy burden to bear, unless he has the divine help and support.
- 3- Although David had no giants like the Philistines; yet the high spiritual stature of his men was far better than the size of the body stature. It is befitting of us, therefore to care for the growth of our spiritual stature and our eternal salvation, more than our care for those vain temporal things like body building.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| 1- David resides in Jerusalem | 1 |
| 2- David defeats the Ammonites | 2 - 3 |
| 3- David defeats the Philistines | 4 – 8 |

1- DAVID RESIDES IN JERUSALEM:

“And it happened in the spring of the year, at the time kings go out to battle, that Joab led out the armed forces and ravaged the country of the people of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem . And Joab defeated Rabbah and overthrew it” (1)

By saying: *“in the spring of the year”*, he means by the advent of the spring season, when the kings set forth to execute their plans for the future wars, when the weather is mild.

It may look here that Joab was the aggressive party, (which he might have been); But we should remember that David gave kindness to the young king of Ammon, who insulted his messengers, and instead of apologizing, he initiated a war against him. What happened here was a continuation of that war.

David sent Joab against ‘Rabbah’ (Amman nowadays); while he stayed in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 12: 1). The siege continued two years; during which the unfortunate episode of David falling into the sin of adultery, planning to have Uriah the Hittite killed, and marrying his wife Bathshebah (2 Samuel 11-12). That sin was not mentioned here; and we know why; For, having presented a true repentance with tears, God remembered it no more; although He allowed for chastising him, to let him and us feel the bitterness of the sin.

However much evil we may have reached, God anticipates our repentance and the confession of our sins, to forgive us for the sake of His Holy Name, and His exalted love; confirming to us: *“I, even I, am who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins. Put Me in remembrance; Let us contend together; State your case, that you may be acquitted”* (Isaiah 43: 24-25)

- + We should be aware and never cease to remember our sins; and to keep this as our way in life, to make the divine Just Judge forget our transgressions. Hence David says in his supplication: *“Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities”* (Psalm 51: 9); *“For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sins are ever before me”* (Psalm 51: 3). It is as though he says to God: [I pray, Do not look at my transgressions, for they are perpetually before my sight]. And that is why the Lord says on the tongue of the prophet: *“I, even I, am who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins”* (Isaiah 43: 25).

(Father Gregory the Great)

- + When you are preoccupied with a certain sin, Start by accusing yourself (See Proverb 18: 17), and do not wait until others accuse you; By that you will be like a righteous man who starts by accusing himself the first time he appears before the court; Or you will be like the righteous ‘Job’ who did not hesitate to proclaim his sin before a crowd in the city.

(St. Basil the Great)

- + It is well and good to ask God to *“Hide His face from your sins”*, if you, yourself, put them before you; but if you cast them behind your back, God

will set His sight on them. Put your sin before your face, if you wish God to turn His away from it; Then, you will safely seek, and He will listen.

- + If you defend yourself, you will lose your case... Your defense will not be for your own benefit, It would be more befitting of you to accuse yourself. Never say:[I did nothing wrong; or nothing serious; or everyone does it] ... For if you so say, you yourself will be nothing, and will have nothing from God. ... God is ever ready to give; So do not lock your door, but open it up by confession, Then you “will me hear joy and gladness” (Psalm 51: 8).
- + God revealed all those issues to His servant David; Once he said “*I have sinned against the Lord*”, he heard the prophet Nathan, namely, he heard the Spirit of God in the prophet, say: “*The Lord also has put away your sin*” (2 Samuel 12: 13).

(St. Augustine)

- + Whoever perpetually remembers his sin, would be ashamed; and by feeling shame, he would feel remorseful; and feeling remorseful he will be careful not to fall again; and by being careful he will be forgiven by God.

Whoever accuses himself, and acknowledges his transgression, his sin will be blotted away; For God says: “*I, even I, am who blot out your transgression for My own sake; and will not remember your sins; Put Me in remembrance; Let us contend together; State your case, that you may be acquitted*” (Isaiah 43; 25-26)

(Father Onesimus, bishop of Jerusalem)

It is to be noticed that the author of the book only hinted to that sad episode between the lines. By saying: "*David stayed in Jerusalem*", he most probably means: [I wish he was among his troops at war, for then he would be

away from temptation; but feeling comfortable in Jerusalem,, he fell into sin.

Mentioning the sin committed by David in the Holy Book, is an evidence of the faithfulness and impartiality of the authors of the books. And not mentioning its details here again, in the book of the Chronicles, is to teach us that, even though the chance is there to talk about the shortcomings and faults of others, we should not feel happy about repeating the talk about them, if there is nothing more good to say.

2- DAVID DEFEATS THE AMMONITES:

"Then David took their king's crown from his head, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and there were precious stones in it. And it was set on David's head. Also he brought out the spoil of the city in great abundance" (2)

After Joab managed to strike the Ammonites, David came to the battle field to realize the ultimate conquest. He took their king's crown from his head, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, namely, about 75 ½ pounds, which was very heavy to put on the head. Anyway all crowns are heavy, on account of that the responsibilities of the leader of any nation is not an easy task.

"And he brought out the people who were in it, and put them to work with sows, with iron picks, and with axes. So David did to all the cities of the people of Ammon. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem" (3)

2- DAVID DEFEATS THE PHILISTINES:

“Now it happened afterward that war broke out at Gezer with the Philistines, at which time Sibbechai the Hushathite killed Sippai who was one of the sons of the giant. And they were subdued” (4)

Three of David’s mighty men of valor were killed by the enemies.

Although the episode of Absalom’s rebellion against his father David came in (2 Samuel 13: 1-21: 7), occupying about one third of the second book of Samuel; yet it was not mentioned in the first book of the Chronicles; For the goal of the books of the Chronicles is not to parade the complete events of history, but to bind between history and worship.

The pagan Philistines were almost utterly destroyed with their cities (18: 1); But like what happened when Joshua destroyed the Canaanites. when the ‘Anakim’ were the last to be cut off (Joshua 11: 21); here as well, in the conquest over the Philistines, the giants of ‘Gath’ were the last to be subdued.... In the controversy between grace and corruption, there would be some sins deeply rooted like those giants, who could only be ultimately subdued after a long strife.

“Again there was war with the Philistines, and Elhanan the son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver’s beam” (5)

We never hear of any giants among the Israelites; like those of the Philistines in Gath. For the growth in the children of the living God is in the spiritual stature , and not in the physical one. Those who care to add some centimeters to their stature, do not perceive that it would be of no benefit whatsoever; for in the balance of holiness, David surpassed Goliath.

“Yet again there was war at Gath, where was a man of great stature, with twenty-four fingers and toes, six on each hand and six on each foot, and he also was born to the giant” (6)

Although David’s men were of regular stature; yet, by the help of God who supported them, they were stronger than the giants of Gath. God finds pleasure in bringing down the haughtiness of the giants of the earth; like he did in the old when He covered the haughty by the great flood. The children of the church should not be alarmed nor disturbed by the power and the haughtiness of the enemy; for if God is with us, who will be against us? What will the huge stature, an extra finger in the hand or an extra toe in the foot do, concerning the overall might?

“So when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, David’s brother killed him” (7)

Those giants who defied Israel (7); paid the price of their arrogance, and saw their destruction by their own eyes. God will never allow the enemy to claim: *“Our hand is high”*.

The conquests of the Son of David are gradual, the same like those of David himself. *“we do not yet see all things put under Him”* (Hebrew 2: 8); but we shall eventually do. Death itself, like the giants, will ultimately be overcome.

“These were born to the giant in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants” (8)

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 20

BY YOU, O LORD, I SHALL GO TO THE BATTLE FIELD

+ In the season of wars, David came out to realize the ultimate conquest by You;

He set forth to the battle, armed by You;
And not by His mighty men of valor, nor his military plans and possibilities;
If the enemy keeps on oppressing me;
You are my Weapon, Leader, and Grantor of conquest.
My sins corrupt my life;
But, confessing them to You, seeking healing;
You will forgive them by Your precious blood and Your love, and You will remember them no more.

+ With every conquest, I offer You a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise.
And seek an additional help;
For the enemy will never cease nor despair;
And with every conquest by me, he will kindle more violent wars;
Yet, what could that evil one do;
As long as I hide in You, and enjoy Your divine presence.

+ Many are the tricks and deceptions of the devil;
And many are his evil hosts who exult to see us fall;
He foolishly fight against the believers;
But he fights against You personally, to destroy himself;
Whenever he sets a net to catch me, he himself falls into it;
And whenever he assumes that he has wiped Your name from my heart and mind;
You transfigure more inside me;
And proclaim the splendor and greatness of Your kingdom;
Glory be to You, O amazing in Your guidance, care, and love.

CHAPTER 21

THE CENSUS OF ISRAEL AND THE THRESHING FLOOR OF ORNAN THE JEBUSITE

As the author cared to show what lie in David's heart of piety and attachment to the Lord; Here he speaks about his sin in making a census of the people of Israel. By that he meant, not to reveal some weakness in David's life, as much as to show how God turned David's sin into a way to reveal the location on which the temple would be built after his death. By his repentance, he got forgiveness; and his sin turned into a blessing.

It may seem to the reader of the second book of Samuel 24, that the episode of David's fall into demanding the census of the people, happened during a late stage of David's life; While here, in the first book of the Chronicles 21, it seems to happen during the early years of his reign. The reason behind this controversy is that the first book of the Chronicles did not mention many events that happened in David's life; on account of that they do not fit within the goal of the book, namely, binding the historical events with worship. And on another aspect, as the last nine chapters of the first book of the Chronicles (21-29) dealt with the preparations for building the temple, and setting the systems of its ministry, etc., what came in the present chapter (21), may seem as though happened in an early stage of David's life.

This chapter concentrated on talking about a sin, counted by some to be the most serious of what David had fallen into. Some may wonder why was the author committed to talk about that particular sin, when he disregarded David's sin concerning Bathsheba and her husband Uriah the Hittite, and the difficulties that dwelt upon David's household, including the rebellion of his son Absalom!

David's sin in making a census of the people of Israel was recorded in this chapter, on account of that the atonement on this particular sin, led to the reference to the location of the land purchased by David to set an altar for the Lord, that later on became the location on which the temple of the Lord will be built. It is as though David' sin turned into good, namely, to David's contribution to building the temple by purchasing the land.

According to some scholars, that piece of land was where Abraham intended to slay his son Isaac by the command of the Lord (Genesis 22). On Mount Moriah; a word meaning (the Lord sees) or (Jehovah sees) (Genesis 22: 14). In the second book of the Chronicles, it came: "*Now Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the jebusite*" (2 Chronicles 3: 1). David, in a unique way, fulfilled the divine promises presented to the fathers Patriarchs.

- 1- Although David was known, since his early days of youth, and until the day of his departure, for his humility; Yet, being human, he was tested by pride. and unfortunately fell into it, despite Joab's warning (1-7). Of the dangers of leadership is to fall into pride; hence the leaders are in need of more prayers for their sake.
- 2- Having recognized his fault, David instantly returned to God with repentance; Yet he still needed chastisement to taste the bitterness of the sin, so as not to do it again.
- 3- David purchased the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, on which he built an altar to offer a sacrifice to the Lord; a location on which the future temple of the Lord was to be built.

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|---|--------|
| 1- David commands Joab to number the people of Israel | 1 - 6 |
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We have already dealt with that painful episode in our book, entitled:
[Interpretation of the contemplations of the early fathers in the second book of Samuel (2 Samuel 24). Here we present more of those contemplations:

1- DAVID COMMANDS JOAB TO NUMBER THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL:

“Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel” (1)

Who was behind this sin? ... In (2 Samuel 24: 1), it came; *“Again the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them”*. And in the book of the Chronicles, it is written that it was Satan who was behind David’s erroneous behavior. Both are true: God allowed Satan to tempt David. God is not the source of evil, but He allows it to realize His goals. If Satan presents the seduction, yet he does not commit man to accept it.

Here he shows that Satan does not stand tight-handed before God’s plans and His continuous works to realize salvation. He seduced David’s heart to scatter God’s plans toward His people; as the serpent seduced Adam and Eve; and as he previously attempted to tempt ‘Job’ to destroy him (Job 1, 2); And the prophet Zechariah saw him in one of his visions (Zechariah 3: 1).

Numbering the people is not a sin in itself; as it is befitting of the shepherd to know all about his flock; but it is obvious that David aroused the wrath of God; on account of that he did it out of the pride of his heart, to boast his military power and possibilities, not trusting in God. The motive of his act was the sin of

arrogance; as the sin often lies, not in our manifest behavior, as much as in our hidden motives.

We are sure that God causes no sin; as "*He tempts no one*" (James 1: 13). Therefore when it is said that "*He moved David to do it*" (1); we should make it clear that, because of a holy and a wise goal, God allowed Satan to do. It is no wonder that the goal of Satan, the enemy of God, and every good thing, is to destroy David and the people.... Here we notice:

- 1- It is amazing how Satan could seduce David to do such a sin; about whom God testified: "*He is a man after My own heart*" (Acts 13: 22) who is supposed to be among those whom the evil one cannot touch. God so allowed to let us know that the holiest of the saints should never assume that they are out of reach of the devil's temptations. This reminds us of when Satan kept on saying to St. Maccari the Great: [You made it Maccara]; to which the saint continued to say; {No I have not}; up to the moment just before he delivered his spirit in the hand of his Creator; when he said: [Now I have done it]... Now, when Satan intended to do harm to Israel, how did he do it? "*He did not incite God against him to destroy them*" (Job 2: 3); but he moved David, their best friend, to number them, by which he could arouse the wrath of God, and incites Him against them.
- 2- By seducing us to sin against God, Satan causes us more harm than what he does through his perpetual complaint against us before God. He destroys men by their own hands
- 3- The greatest harm, Satan can do to the church of God is to seduce her leaders by pride; which should never be recognized, particularly in the elite of the church, according to the words of the Lord Himself, saying: "*But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let*

him be as the younger; and he who governs as he who serves” (Luke 22: 26).

+ David believed in you, and You took him from behind the sheep and made him king; You let him overcome Goliath, and all his persecutors.

The devil stirred all his hosts against him on all sides; But because You held his hand, he endured and got courage.

When the evil one put in David’s heart to number the people; God chastised him by His mercy, and received him by His love.

God made him king, and filled him with the spirit of prophecy; and from his mouth a wealth of words filled the whole universe.

He became a fountain, from which the words of the Holy Spirit flowed, for all peoples to drink, and still are thirsty to them..

(St (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

“So David said to Joab and to the leaders of the people, ‘Go number Israel from Beersheba to Dan; and bring the number of them to me that I may know it’” (2)

“And Joab answered, ‘May the Lord make His people a hundred times more than they are. But, my Lord the king, are they not all my lord’s servants? Why then does my lord require

this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt in Israel?’” (3)

This episode shows David fall into weakness that no one expected to see; which motivated Joab to rebuke him for it. David sinned on account of that he leaned upon the arm of his people, contrary to his principles, and sought his own glory.

The Lord Himself warned him on the tongue of the prophet Nathan, saying: *“I have been with you wherever you have gone; and have cut off all your enemies*

from before you; and have made you a name like the name of the great men who are on earth” (17: 8).

David did not seek the Lord’s counsel before numbering the people, nor listened to that of Joab, who was against the whole idea, and was not comfortable with David’s command.. Although Joab had a great reputation in public affairs; yet he had to follow the king’s order, which he did with much hesitation. He protested against that task before he started doing it; and although no one could compete with him in doing what is for the glory of the king and the good of the kingdom; yet he would rather be relieved of it, for two reasons:

- 1- He believed that it was nor warranted, nor needed. For God promised to increase His people; And Joab did not doubt the fulfillment of the divine promise; for the whole people were His loyal and loving servants.
- 2- Joab perceived that that thing was so serious, could be a cause of guilt in Israel; and could arouse the wrath of God upon them. But David did not perceive it that way. ... That is why it is befitting of even the kings to seek the counsel of his faithful men with the spirit of humility.

“Nevertheless the king’s word prevailed against Joab. Therefore Joab departed and went throughout Israel and came to Jerusalem” (4)

“Whatever the king did pleased all the people” (2 Samuel 3: 36); but now there was a public resentment of his orders, which showed in Joab’s reaction toward them; for “The king’s word was abominable to Joab”. (6).

“Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to David. All Israel had one million one hundred thousand men who drew the sword, and Judah had four hundred and seventy thousand men who drew the sword” (5)

The result of that census was less than perfect, because Joab's heart was not in it; he did not number two very important tribes: Levi and Benjamin (5-6), and he probably was not elaborate enough in numbering the other tribes as well; which explains the differences in the numbers from what came in (2 Samuel 24: 9); which could also be referred to the fact that the second book of Samuel did not count the number of the active army, the way it came here; for which David, as well, did not care to know, for he knew it in a general way; but his goal was to know to what extent the power of Israel could reach, to be able to put it in use at the proper situations

“But he did not count Levi and Benjamin among them, for the king's word was abominable to Joab” (6)

Joab did not number the tribe of Levi, because they are exempted from military service; and also because this tribe was scattered among the rest of the tribes, that makes it very difficult to estimate their actual number. And he did not number tribe Benjamin, on account of that the census got disrupted before it reached Benjamin (1 Chronicles 27: 24), because of the plague.

There is a great difference between this episode compared to what happened when David, the young shepherd came to the battle field, and saw the mighty Goliath haughtily wandering around, and defying Israel. The young man did not care, then, to know the number of the army, for he believed that *“It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man; It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes”* (Psalm 118: 8, 9); but he said: [Let me confront him]. Why did he have the courage to do that? For he trusted in the Lord; contrary to what he did in the episode of the census.

+ Great is the power of hope in the Lord; It is an unconquerable stronghold; a protective mighty wall; an undefeatable military force; and a safe harbor;

by which the unarmed become armed; women could become stronger than men; and children mightier than the men of war. No wonder that they can overcome, not just their enemy, but the whole world ... Hope in the Lord can alter everything.

- + He did not say: [I shall not suffer], but said [I shall not fear what man can do to me]. Meaning that, [even though I may suffer, yet I shall not fear]; As also said by the apostle Paul: "*If God is with us, who can be against us?*" (Romans 8: 36). Many things were against him, yet he was more exalted over all fears.

Oh, beloved brethren, Because God loves you, He draws you away from every thing; ... and draws you to Him.

(S. John Chrysostom)

- + To those who say: [Why the divine care does not support us when we are persecuted? ... I may say: [What harm could come on us, if we look at death as a departure to the Lord; If we see it as a mere change, by which we go from one kind of life to another kind.

Everyone of us may say in complete trust: "*The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do to me*" (Psalm 118: 6); As "*The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God; and no torment will ever touch them*" (Wisdom 3: 1); ... They persecute us, not because we are evildoers; but because they assume that we, Christians, sin against life, and against ourselves.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

- + Before going to war, look for an ally;
Before falling into illness, be sure to have your physician;
Before sorrowful things dwell upon you, Pray; for at the time of sorrow,
you will find Him more attentive to you.

(Mar Isaac the Syrian)

We should ask ourselves this important question: Do we perpetually believe and trust in the Lord?... *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him”* (Hebrew 11: 6). The Lord Jesus, glory be to Him, said: *“When He (the Holy Spirit) has come, He will convict the world of sin”*What sin? *“Because they do not believe in Me”* (John 16: 8); And the apostle Paul says: *“Whatever is not from faith is sin”* (Romans 14: 23).

That was therefore, David’s sin in that episode, which he soon perceived and confessed, seeking forgiveness.

2- DAVID SHOWS REMORSE FOR WHAT HE DID:

. *“And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He struck Israel”*
(7)

In the census done by David, no ransom was collected, according to what came in Exodus 30: 12; And David’s pride and lack of trust in God came with serious results.

- + The behavior of rulers are often bound to the features of their subjects;
Even the truly good shepherds may err as a fruit of the evil of their flock.
David who was commended by God Himself, to become worthy to know heavenly secrets, was puffed up by a sudden pride, and fell into the sin of numbering the people. And although he was the one who sinned, the

people fell under punishment. Why? On account of the fact that the rulers' hearts are influenced by their peoples' worthiness. The judge (David) was rebuked for his sin by putting punishment on those because of whom he sinned.

Falling into pride by his own free will, David, himself, fell under punishment; for the great wrath that struck the people in their flesh, has actually struck David in the depth of his heart. Surely, the worthiness of both the rulers and the people are mutual and bound together; For the behavior of the people would mostly become evil because of that of their rulers; and the behavior of the rulers will be influenced by the worthiness of their people.

(St. Gregory the Great)

“So David said to God, ‘I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing; but now I pray, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly’” (8)

Once David perceived the seriousness of his sin, he hastened to bear its responsibility, to show contrition, and to confess his sin before the Lord, seeking his forgiveness. He presented a true confession of his sin, and prayed for the sake of its forgiveness (8). He confessed that he had sinned greatly, had done foolishly; and prayed to God to take away his iniquity.

+ Struck greatly in his heart, David said to God: *“I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing; But now I pray, take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done foolishly” (8)*. God sent ‘Gad’, David’s seer, to him to choose one of three punishments for himself... Describing the three of them as calamities on him, David said that he would rather fall

into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are very great, rather than to fall into the hand of man.

David sinned by seeking knowledge of the number of people; a kind of knowledge that are within the right of God alone. It was written that when the plague started to dwell upon the people, in the evening of the first day, when David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord striking the people, he said: *“Was it not I who commanded the people to be numbered, I am the one who sinned and done evil indeed; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, O Lord, my God, be on me and my father’s house”*. Then, God relented and commanded His angel to restrain his hand, and told David through the prophet Gad to offer a sacrifice. As sacrifices at that time were usually offered on sin; yet here, they are offered on remorse. By his humility, David became more received by God. It is not strange for men to sin, but they would be more worthy of rebuke, if they are not aware that they have sinned, and show humility before God

(St. Ambrose)

3- DAVID CHOOSES THE KIND OF CHASTISEMENT TO DWELL UPON HIM:

“And the Lord spoke to gad, David’s seer, saying, ‘Go and tell David, saying, (9)

“Thus says the Lord: I offer you three things; choose one of them for yourself, that I may do it to you” (10)

“So Gad came to David and said to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: Choose for yourself” (11)

“Either three years of famine, or three months to be defeated by your foes with the sword of your enemies overtaking you, or else for three days the sword of the Lord – the plague in the land with the angel of the Lord destroying throughout the territory of Israel. Now consider what answer I should take back to Him who sent me” (12)

David fell under the rod of chastisement which drives foolishness away from the heart; the foolishness of pride and of trusting in the numbers rather than in God.... Let us contemplate in the following:

1-. David perceived that what he did was abominable in the sight of God (9-11), which is not a little thing for such a good man like David. For nothing is worse in God's sight than the pride of heart and not trusting in Him; and

there is nothing more sorrowful and painful for such a sensitive soul as David's, like being the cause of abomination to God.

It is befitting of us to know how God concentrates on specific things in David's life. Many here look at certain situation as a sin, and at others not to be as such, or are less so; but when we are in the presence of God, we shall realize that our look was erroneous, and know that sin is not only in action, namely in things we may do or not do, but it is as well in the thoughts and intentions. By studying the word of God we shall come to know how he looks at sin.

2- David was given to choose one of three things: war, famine, or plague; by which God intended to humiliate him for the sake of his repentance and his salvation. David found himself in great distress before three horrible choices.

“And David said to Gad, ‘I am in great distress. Please let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are very great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man” (13)

4- THE PLAGUE, AND HOW JERUSALEM WAS SPARED:

“So the Lord sent a plague upon Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell” (14)

If we think about how sin has a series of consequences, it will be so bitter in our mouth, that we come to reject it.

Within few hours, David heard the horrible news that 70,000 of his flock have died of the plague. He was proud of the multitude of his people; but the divine chastisement took its course to make them less numerous. With worthiness, what we are proud of may be taken away from us, to make us feel weak, and taste the bitterness of evil. David arrogantly insisted on numbering his people, saying, *“Go and number Israel; and bring me their number to know them” (2)*; But now God numbers them in a different way: *“(He numbers them) for the sword” (Isaiah 65: 12)*. They brought to David the number for his confusion and not for his pleasure, the number of those who died by the sword of the angel of the Lord; 70,000 died before the black plague comes to an end.

It often happens that the whole congregation suffer because of the faulty action of their leader; but on the great day of the Lord every man will be condemned on his own sin. ...

Some may wonder why did God allow for 70,000 to die for the sin of one man – David? ... Why did He allow for the perdition of many because of the sin of Achan the son of Carmi (?) And why was the Lord Christ late to come for the salvation of the world?, etc. ... According to St. Jerome, we may attempt to

defend God and justify His deeds. Yet who is man, to perceive the wisdom and planning of God? He says: [Let God's authority be over yours; He is definitely not in need of your defense nor of your justification of His deeds].

- + The church of God is like an eye; if a speck of dirt, however small comes into it may affect the sight; So it is if a member or a few of the body of the church commit an unclean act, they will hinder the splendor of the growth of the church.

(Salvian, priest of Marseille)

“And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he was destroying, the Lord looked and relented of the disaster, and said to the angel who was destroying. ‘It is enough, now restrain your hand’. And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing floor of Ornon the Jebusite” (15)

Here we see an end to that sorrowful situation. Once David repented, he resumed his peace with God. *“O Lord, I praise You; though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me”* (Isaiah 12: 1). Ounce David repented, God relented of the disaster, and commanded the angel of destruction to restrain his hand (15). ... Here, the sword of judgment returned to its sheath (27); but at the Golgotha, the sword pierced the side of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Then David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven, having in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. So David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces” (16)

Seeing the angel of destruction with his drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem (16), David was greatly terrified, for the sake of his beloved city. ... If seeing an angel coming on a peaceful mission has caused terror in the heart of the bravest of men, how could it be with seeing an angel with his drawn sword stretched, like the cherubim with his flaming and turning sword to guard the way to the tree of life? When we come to be under the wrath of God, the pure angels who tend to rejoice for the repentance of one sinner, will turn against us; although we do not see them as David did.

“And David said to God, ‘Was it not I who commanded the people to be numbered? I am the one who has sinned and done evil indeed; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, O Lord my God, be against me and my father’s house, but not against Your people that they should be plagued”
(17)

By saying that to God, David presents a practical example of humility. In a talk by St. Ambrose concerning the liberation from death, he presented to us David’s request from God; as a practical example of accepting death as a chastisement for the sake of liberating the soul from sin.

+ The apostle, teaching us that he who departs from his body, will be with Christ, if he is so worthy; Let us contemplate in the nature of life and death. From the Holy Book we know that death is nothing but a separation or a liberation of the bond between the soul and the body.

David was ready to die to atone for his disobedience of the Lord; he was ready to endure the vengeance of God for the sake of his beloved people. He knew how to become more glorious if he died for the sake of Christ, rather than to reign in this world as a king. What could be greater for man, than to become an offering for the sake of Christ?

(St. Ambrose)

In his letter to Emperor Theodosius to encourage him to repent on his massacre in Thessalonica in about the year 390 AD, St. Ambrose asked him to follow the lead of David who sinned, but presented a repentance on what he did.

David accepted the punishment on his iniquity, saying to God: "*Let Your hand be on me, and on my father's house*" (17); for it is I who sinned; I am the guilty head that should be cut off by the sword. He threw himself under the mercy of God. Despite his knowledge that God was angry on him; no evil thought came to his mind against God; but only said: "*Let me fall into the hand of God, because His mercies are great*" (13). A good man thinks good concerning God, even when the world looks grim before his eyes. David said that even if God leads him to the slaughter, he will still trust in Him.. He showed care for his people; and was struck in his heart to see them suffer for his own disobedience, "*But these sheep; what have they done?*" (17). It was too much for him to see the angel of the Lord with his sword drawn against his beloved people, and against Jerusalem which had a special place in his heart. ... His position was:

- 1- He confessed his sin, and asked God with his whole heart to forgive him (8); He confessed that he had done evil indeed and disgraced himself.
- 2- With utter submission he accepted to be chastised by the hand of God on his sin (17).
- 3- He cast himself on God's mercy, despite knowing that God is angry with him (13).
- 4- He showed compassion on his people, and was utterly grieved to perceive what dwelt upon them because of his own sin.

We should not wonder if we see that God allows for the chastisement of many because of a sin done by a few, and probably by one single person. For God, intending for His church to be holy without blemish, may allow for a temporary collective chastisement; as a practical lesson to all; on account of that on the great day of the Lord, he will let everyone present an account of his own work.

According to Pope Gregory the Great: [The personality of the leaders binds to those submitted to them. They may be good people, yet, they would unfortunately change because of the authority given to them, And as the prophet Samuel said to king Saul: "*So says the Lord, 'When you were little in your own eyes, have you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel?'*" (1 Samuel 15: 17)

Having been a shepherd of his father's flock of sheep, David was taken by God to shepherd His people. "*He shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands*" (Psalm 78: 72). Yet, when David numbered his flock, God's wrath dwelt upon them, and they started to perish; That was when David delivered himself to the account of his flock; saying to God: "*I am the one who sinned, and done evil indeed; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand be on me and on my father's house*" (2 Samuel 24: 17). That is how all the good shepherds used to deliver themselves to the account of their flock.

(St. Aphrahat)

- + Humility is good; it saves those in danger, and raises the fallen up. "*I am the one who sinned, and done evil indeed; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand be on me*" (See 2 Samuel 24: 17; Job 21: 17). That was said by David, who made his kingdom submit to God, presented

remorse, confessed his sin, and sought forgiveness; he got salvation by humility.

Christ Himself showed humility; and those who follow Christ's lead, will get comfort in Christ.

- + By his humility, David became more acceptable by God. It is not strange for the people to sin; but they will be worthy of rebuke if, not perceiving that sinned, they do not show humility before God.

(St. Ambrose)

- + What can we say about David to whom God testified, saying: *"I have found (a man after my own heart), My servant David; With My holy oil I have anointed him; With whom My hand shall be established"* (Psalm 89: 20, 21).

And he, himself says: *"Have mercy on me, O my God, according to Your loving kindness. According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.*

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me of my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against You, You only, I have sinned; and done this evil in Your sight -- that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which you have broken may rejoice.

Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your generous Spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.

Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God; The God of my salvation; And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it. You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart – These, O God, You will not despise.

Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem.

Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering. Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar”

(Psalm 51: 1- 19)

(St. Clement the Roman)

5- DAVID BUILDS AN ALTAR ON THE THRESHING FLOOR OF ORNAN THE JEBUSITE:

“Then the angel of the Lord commanded Gad to say to David that David should go and erect an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite” (18)

The divine command to David to build an altar to the Lord in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (18), was carried by the angel of the Lord to Gad the seer to convey to David. The same angel who executed the war in the name of God, here he brings forth the step leading to peace; For the angels do not want us to grieve. The angel could have brought those instructions to David directly; but he brought them forth through the seer, to show the honor of the prophets. ... The same way, according to the book of the revelation, the proclamation of Jesus Christ was given to John the apostle by an angel, and through him to the churches.

The instructions to build an altar for the Lord was a symbol of reconciliation; For if God would be pleased in David's death, he would not accept a sacrifice from his hand. On Mount Moriah, grace and righteousness have met together.

+ Notice, O brethren, that, while no place within the territory of the Jews was worthy to have the temple of God built on it ; but in the land of a Gentile there was a chosen place. This shows how the hearts of the Jews were not worthy to offer sacrifices in them, but those of the Gentiles, namely the conscience of the Christians were chosen as a place for the temple of the Lord. To this fact the apostle Paul obviously referred when he rebuked the Jews, saying: *“It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles”* (Acts 13: 46). ... That is why the angel of the Lord stood on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, the Gentile king; For the true Angel, Christ, visited the Gentiles.

(Father Caecarius, bishop of Arle)

- + Here, as well, the angel held his sword; and while destroying the wicked, he referred to the temple of the Lord on the threshing floor of Ornan, king of the Jebusites. By that he made it clear that the church of Christ will grow, not in Israel, but among the Gentiles.

(St. Jerome)

“So David went up at the word of Gad, which he had spoken in the name of the Lord” (19)

“Now Ornan turned and saw the angel; and his four sons who were with him hid themselves; but Ornan continued threshing wheat” (20)

David hastened to make a deal with Ornan for the sake of the threshing floor; for he would never minister God at the expense of others; even though Ornan presented it for free, not only as a complement to king David, but because he saw the angel (20), and was terrified of his drawn sword, and he and his four sons hid themselves because they could not endure the splendor of his glory ; Being a man of true sense of the fear of God, his fear of a probable danger, made him ready to do anything to appease the anger of God.

“Then David came to Ornan, and Ornan looked and saw David. And he went out from the threshing floor, and bowed down to David with his face to the ground” (21)

“Then David said to Ornan, ‘Grant me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar on it to the Lord. You shall grant it to me at the full price, that the plague may be

withdrawn from the people” (22)

“And Ornan said to David, ‘Take it to yourself, and let my lord the king do what is good in his eyes. Look, I also give you, the oxen for burnt offerings, the threshing implements for

wood, and the wheat for grain offering; I give it all” (23)

“Then king David said to Ornan, ‘No, but I will surely buy it for the full price; for I will not take what is yours for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings with that which costs me nothing” (24)

The burnt offering here means offering the whole heart to God, the time, money, and what we possess. David, therefore intends to offer everything out of his own wealth, and not of that of others.

- + Even though Ornan offered to give the blessed David the threshing floor, and the bulls as a burnt offering; yet king David rejected the offer unless he pays the full price in advance... That is what will be realized on the coming of our Lord and Savior; who refused to take the hearts of the Gentiles for Himself, unless He pays His precious blood as a price.

“So David gave Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the place” (25)

The second book of Samuel said that the price of the threshing floor and the bulls were just fifty shekels of silver; while according to the first book of the Chronicles, here, it is obvious that David purchased the whole place (Hebrew hammaqom), which includes the whole region of Mount Moriah; hence he paid 600 shekels of Gold. Purchasing the whole region might had come in a later stage; namely after the purchase of the threshing floor and the bulls, used by David in the first

sacrifice. The difference between the price of the first purchase and the second, could be interpreted that it is difficult to see how Ornan could be in a position to give the whole region of Mount Moriah,

“And David built there an altar to the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called on the Lord; and He answered him from heaven by fire on the altar of burnt offering”
(26)

David refused to take the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite to build an altar for the Lord for free; For the Lord would not be offered at the expense of others. .. God showed His acceptance of the offerings of David on that altar, by sending fire from heaven (26). The proof that God’s anger was appeased is that instead of the fire coming justly upon the sinner, it came upon the sacrifice on the altar and consumed it; followed by the return of the sword of the angel of destruction to its sheath. ... The same way, Christ was made a sin and reproach for our sake; for the Lord was pleased to crush Him, for God to be, for us through Him, not a consuming fire, but a reconciling Father.

“Then the Lord commanded the angel, and he returned his sword in its sheath” (27)

“At that time when David saw that the Lord had answered him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there” (28)

David continued to offer his sacrifices on this specific altar; on account of that the bronze altar erected by Moses was still on the high place of Gibeon (29); where the sacrifices of Israel were offered. But after seeing the angel of the Lord with his drawn sword, David feared to go to Gibeon to offer his sacrifices, and to inquire from God (30); for the situation here with the start of the plague, was not less urgent than the one that committed Aaron in the old to hasten to make an atonement (Numbers 16: 46-47). Time did not allow David to go to Gibeon, for

fear that the knockout would come before he returns; Hence God, out of compassion on him, and because of the present situation, commanded him to erect an altar on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, and granted him an exemption from His statute concerning the one altar; and allowed for offering sacrifices on this altar, that was not against the one in Gibeon, but goes hand in hand with it. And even after the present tribulation passed, it is obvious that God allowed David to continue offering sacrifices here, in addition to the continuity of offering them in Gibeon (28).

“For the tabernacle of the Lord and the altar of burnt offering, which Moses had made in the wilderness were at that time at the high place in Gibeon” (29)

God chose the location of the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite on Mount Moriah, the same location where He commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac a sacrifice; looking ahead to the sacrifices in the future temple; and ultimately to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God who will forgive the sins of the world sacrifices will be offered on its altar; the location where God will encounter with His people; which became now the place of the sacrifice.

David built the altar, and on it he offered a burnt offering, that referred to the Person of Christ; then he offered a peace offering, that referred as well to Christ, our peace. For Christ made peace by shedding His own blood on the cross; He is our peace. He is the One whose blood was sprinkled on the seat of mercy for our sake; He is our Greater High Priest, who ascended up to heaven, and sat on the right hand of the Father. For there is no access to the Father except through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Intermediary of the covenant. Perceiving all that by the spirit of prophecy, David offered the burnt offering and the peace offering to God.

“But David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the Lord” (30)

These two verses (29-30) interpret the reason behind moving the worship to Jerusalem from Gibeon, the place they used to go to inquire from the Lord (16: 39-40; Exodus 29: 42).

What preoccupies the mind of the author is that the episode mentioned here is bound to the choice of the location of the future temple to be built by Solomon the son of David (1 Chronicles 21: 18; 2 Chronicles 1; Genesis 22: 2).

AN INSPRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 21

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

- + My God, my soul trembled for fear of falling into weakness;
David who was according to Your own heart,
Was deceived by Satan, and for sometime he disregarded Your care;
He commanded the chief of his army to number of men who drew the sword;
I wonder, did David forget the day when he confronted the mighty Goliath?
When he was just a boy who carried only a sling?
Keep me safe from the deceptive thoughts of the devil;
Carry me by Your grace, so as not to divert to the right or to the left;

- + David did not endure to see his people perish because of his own sin;
And from the depths of his heart, he sought to have the chastisement fall upon him and his father's house;
You listened to the cries of his heart, and looked at his tears;
You looked at his loving heart for his people;
More than his love for himself and his father's house;

Give me David's heart, and a double portion of his spirit;
I do not seek this, out of selfishness, for my sake and that of my father's
house;

But I seek it for the sake of all the people, even for all mankind;

Let my heart rejoice for the salvation of all;

When shall I accompany You in loving all humanity?

When shall I perpetually look up at Your cross?

When shall I have hope,

That the earth and its fullness be Yours, O Savior of the World?

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PREPARATIONS FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE

(1 CHRONICLES chapters 22 to 29)

These chapters are considered as a consummation of the second book of Samuel; to fill the gap between its end and the start of the first book of the kings. From these final chapters of the first book of the chronicles we see David's great zeal to make preparations for building the temple; We see his care to gather together the building materials, and to establish all the necessary preparations for its running, despite the fact that God did not allow him to build it himself. That zeal of David exhorts us to enjoy the spirituals and the true relationship with God. For God, what David did was more important than anything he has already done in his life.

"Out of the eater came something to eat" (Judges 14: 14). After the horrible verdict that dwelt upon Israel because of David's sin, God gave His command to build a new altar, and chose its location; And David set forth with great

enthusiasm to prepare for that great achievement, even though he had planned for it since long time.

Chapter 22: Preparations of the building materials, the laborers, and the motivation for work

Chapter 23: The Levites partake of the building of the temple

Chapter 24: The groups of priests and the Levites

Chapter 25: The musicians

Chapter 26: The doorkeepers, the treasurers, and the judges

Chapter 27: Appointing the political and the military leaderships

Chapter 28: David addresses the leaders

Chapter 29: David's offerings to the temple; and thanksgiving to God

CHAPTER 22

PREPARATIONS OF THE BUILDING MATERIALS, THE LABORERS, AND THE MOTIVATION TO WORK

If we compare between what came here and what came in (1 Kings 2: 1-9). It was not befitting of David to build the temple on account of that he has shed much blood, even though it was for a just cause; While his son Solomon, because he was a man peace, he was assigned to do it.

Between Solomon and Joshua the son of Nun:

Seen by God as unbecoming to build the temple, David left the task to his son Solomon. Yet he made all preparations for building it, starting from purchasing the land, to gathering together the building materials, to exhorting the leaders and the people to give, to establishing the system of worship in the temple after it is built, etc. In a similar way, Moses, seen by God as unbecoming to bring the children of Israel forth into the promised land, and to distribute it among the tribes, he left the task to his disciple Joshua, after preparing everything to help him do it.

- a- The same way the elder Moses delivered the task to his young disciple Joshua to lead the people into the promised land; the elder David delivered the task of building the house of the Lord to his young son Solomon (Deuteronomy 31: 23; I Chronicles 22: 6). The two elders: Moses and David, delivered the tasks to the young men in the presence of the people.
- b- The two elders Moses and David encouraged the two young men Joshua and Solomon, to take up the tasks, and confirmed to them that God will be with them.

- c- Both young men were granted by God the spirit of wisdom and understanding to do the work, together with the confirmation that God will be with them.
- d- In both cases, the leadership work was integral in unity between the elder and the young man.

- 1- The location chosen For the temple 1
- 2- Preparation of the laborers and the building materials 2 - 5
- 3- The enjoyment of the divine promise 6 - 10
- 4- David's advises to Solomon and to the leaders of the people 11 – 19

1- THE LOCATION CHOSEN FOR THE TEMPLE:

“Then David said, ‘This is house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel’ (1)

By an inspiration from God, David said: *“This is the house of the Lord God”*. It is befitting to let the Lord Himself choose the location of His house, for the whole earth and its fullness are the Lord's. He chose a land possessed by a Jebusite; which was a happy prophecy of the entrance of the temple of the gospel among the Gentiles (See Acts 15: 16-17)

Although a temple of Lord was not built so far, yet the presence of the sacrifice (the altar), and the throne (the ark of the covenant), confirm the true divine presence among the people.

David sinned, yet his repentance resulted in purchasing the land of Ornan the Jebusite, on which the temple would be later built. God turned the evil deed into good. ... Remembering the sin of David, the priests, the Levites, and the people, along the generations, on their way up to the temple for worship, in every visit to the temple, will always put their trust in the Lord, who, alone is without sin, ... it is

befitting of the believer, whether a priest, or one of the congregation, to perceive that no man is without sin; for behold, David the pious man sinned, and was in need of a sacrifice to atone for his sin.

Perceiving that the threshing floor (21: 28) will be the location of the future temple, and of the altar of the burnt offering, David started right away to prepare for its building, despite his knowledge of that it is his son Solomon who will have that privilege. The location of the future temple was a threshing floor; as the church of the living God is His land and His threshing floor (Isaiah 21: 10). Christ has his sickle in His hand to purify His threshing floor. That was the house, for it is the altar. The temple was built for the sake of the altar; and the altars were there before the temples.

When the Lord responded by a fire from heaven on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, David perceived that that place was the location chosen by God to have His house built on it.

2- PREPARING THE LABORERS AND THE BUILDING MATERIALS:

Before his death, David prepared much (5) not for the day of his death, but for the building of the house of the Lord. He dedicated his life to a series of battles, not to extend his kingdom, as much as to gather together building materials for the house of the Lord. Apparently, he was one of the greatest war heroes; but, on the inside, he was actually preoccupied with the building of the temple.

“So David commanded to gather the aliens who were in the land of Israel; and he appointed masons to cut hewn stones to build the house of God”
(2)

The author here intends to confirm that the Israelites were not forced to work, even to bring forth the stones for building the house of God

The aliens are the Canaanites who remained in the land, and were dwelling among the Israelites (1 Kings 9: 20-21); Not able to annihilate them, David and Solomon forced them to do specific tasks (2 Chronicles 8: 7-9). The people of Tyre and Sidon, having been experts in cutting wood, and works of iron, bronze and stones, etc. David and Solomon numbered them and gathered hundred fifty-three thousand and six hundred of them (2 Chronicles 2: 17)

Prophecy here about the temple of the new covenant, the house of prayer for all nations (Mark 11: 17), we see David here give his command to gather together the aliens in his land to partake of the building it (2; actually to partake of building the second temple (Isaiah 60: 10). Here we find the secret spoken of later by the apostle Paul, namely grafting the nations in the root of the tree of Israel (Romans 11: 17)

“And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails of the doors of the gates and for the joints, and bronze in abundance beyond measure” (3)

Because Solomon built the temple, it was called Solomon’s temple; but it was David’s temple as well, on account of that a great part of the work was done by him.

Iron and bronze: were rare and accordingly high-priced in the old compared to our days. David has taken much bronze from those he conquered in his wars (18: 7-8).

“And cedar tree in abundance, for the Sidonians and those from Tyre brought much cedar wood to David” (4)

The nations around Israel were invited to partake of that great work, which they did with great joy, flaring zeal, and good will, That was a reference to that the church of the new covenant will embrace the nations and peoples of the Gentiles.

It is to be noticed concerning the building material:

- a- Gold, silver, and bronze, came from the spoil of the wars in which David conquered; but kept nothing for himself.
- b- Much of the building materials, presented by the surrounding nations as gifts and donations, David did not bring forth into the storehouses of his palace, but were all counted to the account of the temple.
- c- The building materials included iron nails for gates; which may seem to us now as of lowly value, were indispensable for completing the building.

The Sidonians and those from Tyre: were world famous for their expertise in many works.

“Now David said: ‘Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all countries. I will now make preparation for it’. So David made abundant preparations before his death” (5)

Preparing the leader of such a great project was very important for its success, as an exceedingly famous and glorious achievement throughout all countries; For it was a symbol of the church of Christ, that proclaims the presence of God Himself among His people, bearers of the icon of their Creator.

We are not sure of Solomon’s age at that time; having reined for forty years, and was an old man when he died, we may deduce that he was twenty years plus when he sat on the throne (It was said about Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 13: 7) that

he was young and inexperienced when he was 41 years old); even though, according to Josephus, Solomon was fourteen, and according to Rashi, he was twelve years old.

Like Moses who delivered to his disciple Joshua the task of overcoming the surrounding nations, and distributing the promised land among the tribes of Israel; So David did when he delivered to his son Solomon the task of building the house of the Lord; And with the same spirit, the apostle Paul delivered to his disciple Timothy the preaching task in his farewell epistle (2 Timothy).

To make those preparations, David took into consideration the following issues:

a- As Solomon was young and inexperienced, David feared that he might not work with the enthusiasm he wished him to; but finding the building materials ready, which is an important part of the work, this might be a motivation and an encouragement for him.

It is befitting of the elders and those of more experience not to despise the young or the weak; but to provide them, as much as possible, with all the necessary possibilities to help them do God's work..

b- It is befitting of the house of the Lord to be exceedingly great, huge and magnificent; and everything in it should be the best of their kind in the world; on account of that it is meant for the great honor of being the house of God, the Creator of the whole world; as a reference to the Lord Christ, in whom is all fullness, and all treasures. The people at that time had to be taught through sensed ways, like the greatness of the building, to let the worshippers feel the holy awe and submission to God; and to call the strangers to see it as a wonder of the world; and through it they may recognize the true God. Concerning such a good impression, David wrote in his psalm, saying:

“Because of Your temple at Jerusalem, kings will bring presents to You”
(Psalm 68: 29).

c- Saying *“So David made abundant preparations before his death”*, referred to that he was getting old and near the day of his death; which made him more zealous to do more for the building before his departure. ... We

should, likewise work for the sake of the Lord, for our own sake, and for that of our generation, with our whole strength before our departure; on account of that after death there will be no way nor chance to work; *“For in*

death there is no remembrance of You. In the grave who will give You thanks?” (Psalm 6: 5).

3- ENJOYING THE DIVINE PROMISE:

“Then he called for his son Solomon and charged him to build a house for the Lord God of Israel” (6)

In (2 Samuel 24), after talking about the plague, it was said that David grew old and died; but here in the book of Chronicles, it so seems that David’s bond with the temple to be built in the reign of his son, was so intense to preoccupy the rest of the book.

Despite the fact that Solomon was young and inexperienced, yet he was able to perceive the instructions of his father concerning the task he assigned him to do. When David was enthroned, he had before him many tasks to do; but Solomon had only one task, namely, to build a house for the Lord God of Israel. (6).

“And David said to Solomon:’ My son, as for me it was in my mind to build a house to the name of the Lord my God” (7)

With gladness, David received the word “NO” from God; And when He told him that his son will be the one to build the house, he readily did his best to provide him with all possibilities to help him fulfill his assignment.

“But the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ‘You have shed much blood, and made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, for you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight’” (8)

Although David shed that blood since his young days with justice and honor in the service of the God of Israel, yet that made him unfitting for that specific task; or rather less so than his son who was not called for a bloody task. Despite the fact that David has gone through those wars against his will, and was not their initiator; God considered him a man of blood. For God is against wars, and pro peace; His Son Jesus Christ is the King of peace, who brings peace to the earth. Giving David the reason for not assigning him for the task of building a house in His name, God shows how precious the life of men is to Him; and that he intends of him who will build the temple of the gospel to have one goal, namely the salvation of men, The task assigned to David was to make the necessary wars to establish the kingdom; whereas the task assigned to Solomon was to build the house of the Lord God of Israel.

War, even though it may sometimes have its reasons, and importance; yet it is not befitting for the holy worship of God. The apostle Paul desired that “*men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath*” (1 Timothy 2: 8). Although blood in the Holy Book is a holy thing; shedding it with wrath, as in war, is counted as unethical, and unbecoming for the pure worship of God;

+ David was not allowed to build the temple, because he was a man of blood. Yet the reference here was not – as some may assume – to his

wars, but to the crime he committed of commanding the killing of Uriah the Hittite.

(St. Jerome)

The church has its priorities. What Moses desired to bring the children of Israel into the promise land, God fulfilled on the hands of his disciple Joshua, into whose hands Moses was happy to deliver the leadership. And what David desired, the Lord fulfilled on the hands of his son Solomon.

+ It was high time for the exhausted laborer in the vine of the house of the Lord to have rest..

Perfect in knowledge, knowing that his death is close at hand, David intended to demonstrate clearly his love for the Lord..

Knowing that death will soon come to destroy the temple of his body; he intended to build a holy temple for the Lord his God;

He intended to build a Holy of Holies to the Almighty God of the whole earth;

But when he showed his intentions, God talked to him by the Spirit, saying:

“Son of Jesse, You will not build for Me a house of stone; for only the hearts of the righteous can accommodate Me;

I honor and sanctify the pure soul; but no house built by the hands of men can accommodate Me;

Heaven, My throne cannot accommodate Me in her bosom; And the earth alone is My foot stool (1 Chronicles 28: 2; Psalm 99: 5);

With full authority “*I measured heaven with a span; and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure*” (Isaiah 40: 12)

You cannot build a temple for My glory and honor; for your fingers have shed much blood (1 Chronicles 22: 18; 28: 3);

Your son shall build Me a house to dwell in, and to be worshipped; And I will be with him as I was with you (2 Samuel 7: 12, 13; 1 Kings 5: 19; 1 Kings 6).

(St. (mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

“Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around. His name shall be Solomon, for I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days” (9)

Because he will be a man of rest; he will not waste his time, wealth, or mind, away from this task; Because I will give him rest of his enemies all around, no one can dare to threaten nor to attack him; And because, in his days, there will be peace in Israel; He will be able to build My house. ... Yet we should notice that when God gives rest, He expects work.

The temple was referred to Solomon, for his very name (Solomon) inspires peace; derived from the word ‘Peace’; He was not a man of war like his father. Although God said that Solomon will be a man of peace and rest, that He will give Israel peace in his days; but we know that his peace was not perpetual. There will be One who will stand before the people of Israel, when their leaders reject His call, saying: *“Come to Me, all you who labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11: 28); who will do what Solomon could not do; one of David’s grandchildren; who can grant quietness and peace to the human soul.

Not intending to deny David to get his heart’s desire – building the house of the Lord – God granted it to his son Solomon. On one aspect a father becomes happy when he feels that what he could not personally have, his son will get; the

success of the son brings happiness and gladness to his father. And on another aspect, in spite of the exaltation of David's life, to whom God testifies that he is according to His heart, yet the house of God, the source of peace, would not be built by hands that shed much blood, even though justly; For the house of the Lord refers to the righteousness of Christ, the Grantor of peace.

“He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son, and I shall be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever” (10)

God chose him for that task, and called him to be the one to do it: *“A son shall be born to you, his name shall be Solomon, and he shall build a house for My name”* (9-10). No power will motivate us to serve God more than our knowledge that we are assigned by God to do it. *“And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever”* (10). As we well know, it is the Lord Jesus Christ who fulfilled that promise.

4- DAVID'S ADVISES TO SOLOMON AND THE LEADERS OF THE PEOPLE:

“Now, my son, may the Lord be with you, and may you prosper, and build the house of the Lord your God, as He has said to you” (11)

“Only may the Lord give you wisdom and understanding, and give you charge concerning Israel, that you may keep the law of the Lord your God” (12)

David sought from the Lord to be with Solomon, to give him wisdom and understanding; and exhorted Solomon to keep the law of the Lord. He sought for his son Solomon, *“May the Lord give you wisdom and understanding”* (12). Nevertheless, despite what Solomon got of wisdom and understanding, he was

seduced by his heathen wives and perverted. By that, the Lord confirms to us our need of our Lord Jesus, the wisdom of God Himself, to dwell in us, and to set us a holy sanctuary for Himself.

David prays, saying: *“May the Lord give you wisdom and understanding, and give you charge concerning Israel”*. Whatever task assigned to us by the Lord, we have hope that He will give us the wisdom to do it. Solomon’s eyes might have been on this prayer by his father David, when he prayed himself, saying: *“O Lord, give me wisdom and understanding”*. David ends his talk by saying: *“Arise and work; May the Lord be with you”*. Yet the hope in the presence of the Lord with us should not be a cause for slothfulness on our part; we should *“arise and work”*, by which we would have the confidence that He is with us. If we seek our salvation; God will work in and by us.

David told Solomon to give every thing possible for the sake of building the house of God; He does not need to do the work in haste, nor with the easiest or cheapest way; For there will be no lack of building materials; He says that even in the time of his affliction and humiliation, in the years he was trying to build the kingdom, he strived to gather together everything for building the temple of God; at which God looked and called David a man according to His heart. For God concentrates on the spiritual values more than anything else.

“Then you will prosper, if you take care to fulfill the statutes and judgments with which the Lord charged Moses concerning Israel. Be strong and of good courage; do not fear nor be dismayed” (13)

God said to Solomon the same thing He said to Joshua the son of Nun: *“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be dismayed”* (Joshua 1: 7). This simple commandment is actually addressed to every one of us; For man’s success in his works depends upon keeping the commandments of the Lord.

He commanded him to take care to fulfill the statutes and judgments of the Lord, which the Lord commanded His servant Moses; and not to assume that by building the temple he would have a license to sin; for such a way of thinking would be unacceptable. He will be the king of Israel; yet he should always remember that he is one of the subjects of Israel.

David commanded his son Solomon to keep God's statutes and judgments, probably because he noticed some weakness in him; as his mother Bathsheba probably noticed in him some weakness concerning women. Here we read the advice of David; but whoever wishes to read those of Solomon's mother, let him refer to the last chapter of the book of Proverbs.

Encouraging his son to do that great work, saying: *"Be strong and of good courage"*; David warned him not to be the foolish builder who *"after he had laid the foundation, is not able to finish it"* (Luke 14: 29) We as well, in our spiritual war, we need to have courage and persistence.

"Indeed I have taken much trouble to prepare for the house of the Lord one hundred thousand talents of gold and one million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond measure, for it is so abundant. I prepared timber and stone also, and you may add to them" (14).

By saying *"I have taken much trouble"*, he refers to those he endured in the wars he went through at the beginning of his reign; or to those he endured at its last stage when his son Absalom rebelled against him; or to his physical weakness during his old age. In spite of all those troubles, he strived to prepare an abundance of treasures for the sake of the temple.

In spite of the book's disregard the faults, afflictions, and sufferings of David, in an attempt to provoke the spirit of joy in the souls of those returning from

captivity, to experience the deposit of the eternal life; Yet, in this context, that seems unique in the book, it confirms David's strife by the divine grace in him.

David gave Solomon a list of the extensive preparations he provided for the sake of the temple (14); not with the spirit of pride, and vain glory, but as an encouragement to Solomon to start working with joy, on account of that a solid basis was already set for him. The figures mentioned here of the quantities of gold and silver way look unreasonable; which made some interpreters to doubt some kind of misprinting; or to assume that the 'talent' here is nothing more than a spoonful. Yet verse 16 mentions that the gold and silver were "*beyond measure*"; And David mentions here the things he consecrated (18: 110, to the house of the Lord; namely, not only for the building process, but for the treasury as well. Which would then be more reasonable.

David knows that his son needs encouragement, because that he was raised in the house of women in the royal palace, and was accordingly, not a warrior. We may even say that the words of the Lord Jesus, saying: "*Some have labored, and others have entered into their labor*" (John 4: 39), apply to Solomon who entered into the labor of his father David.

David exhorts his son not to be slothful, concerning the preparations he made for him, but to add to them.

"Moreover there are workmen with you in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all types of skillful men for every kind of work" (15)

"Of gold and silver, and bronze and iron there is no limit. Arise and begin working, and the Lord be with you" (16)

David counseled his son not to open the door before the spirit of failure to crawl through it; that he is perpetually in need to perceive the presence of the lord with

him, and that he should arise and begin working, and the Lord will be with him (16).

“David also commanded the leaders of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying,...” (17)

Here, David calls the leaders of Israel to help Solomon in such a great work before him; For those who sit on thrones could not do the good work they seek to do, unless those around them come to their help; he exhorts the leaders to counsel Solomon, to encourage him, to do their best to make things easy before him, and to support him on every aspect; for however wisdom, and understanding, possibilities, capabilities, and talents, Solomon may have, yet he is in need of the help of others; David therefore commanded the leaders of Israel to help his son, with the confirmation that it is God Himself who works; *“Is not the Lord your God with you?”*.

The two books of the Chronicles concentrated on the collective work with the spirit of fellowship in the Lord.

There is great difference between the spirit by which David thought in the previous chapter, compared to how he does in the present chapter. In the former he numbered the people with the spirit of pride in his heart; while here, in the humility of heart, he serves God; There, corruption prevailed; while here grace had the upper hand.

“Is not the Lord your God with you? And He not given you rest on every side? For He has given the inhabitants of the land into my hand, and the land is subdued before the Lord and before His people” (18)

He motivates the leaders always to remember God's work with them, to give Him thanks for the great things He did for their sake; to remember how He gave them rest on every side; conquest and a good land to inherit (18). For the more we remember the work of God with us, the more we shall give Him thanks, and the more we shall strive to minister to Him.

Concerning God's dealing with us in the past, we perceive that:

- 1- He never forsook us, but He accompanied us all along the journey of our life.
- 2- He perpetually works to give us rest in every aspect of our life
- 3- He longs for us to live with authority, and with the spirit of strength.
- 4- He granted us the promised land, not in this world, but in the heavenly places.

- + So will the righteous be, as though in his secret place (namely in comfort) wherever he goes, and will have dominion over the whole creation (Genesis 1: 26).

(The scholar Origen)

- + You let man have dominion over everything under his feet, to make him be completely dedicated to You. Hence, You let him have only You as his Lord; but set him a master over all Your creation.

(St. Augustine)

*“Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.
Therefore arise and build the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring
the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the holy articles
of God into the house that is to be built for the name of the Lord”*
(19)

Here, king David calls us practically to partake of building the temple of the Lord in our hearts:

- 1- He encourages us to work hard without slothfulness; he calls us to start by setting our hearts and our souls to seek the Lord our God; as though he asks us to set our happiness on pleasing Him, to direct our sight toward His glory; to seek Him as the source and the goal of our main profit; to do all that from our hearts and souls; and to let righteousness be our option and preoccupation. By so doing, we shall never grumble of sufferings, nor of expenses to build the sanctuary of the Lord our God

I wish our heart, as well as our body, with all its members, energies, possessions, and desires, be faithfully preoccupied with God; Namely, use our whole being to minister to God with joy.

Let us, as Christians and as clerics, now ask ourselves, if we are serious enough in doing our mission; or we are just spectators doing nothing. Let us wake up, stand aright, and move toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and say to Him: “We desire to live with You”

- 2- It is befitting of all to work together with the spirit of love and unity; Hence he addresses his talk in the plural sense, saying: Set, arise, build”.

- 3- Building the Most Holy Sanctuary, refers to setting the throne of the Almighty God in our depths. It is befitting of us when praying psalm 132 in the Compline prayer (the twelfth hour), to remember that while sleeping, we should count our hearts and minds as sanctuaries for the Lord, to sing together with the psalmist: *“I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty God of Jacob”* (Psalm 132: 4)
- 4- David provoked the leaders of Israel to cooperate with Solomon, making it clear that building the temple of the Lord is done first by the heart, then by the hand, saying: *“Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. Therefore arise and build the sanctuary of the Lord God...”* (19)
- 5- The prophet David calls us to bear the spirit of resurrection, saying: *“Arise”*, Let us work by the Grantor of resurrection, the Grantor of conquest, even over death. *“Arise and build the sanctuary of the Lord God”*.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 22

WHAT SHALL I PRESENT TO THE NEW GENERATION?

+ David’s soul exulted to perceive that his own son will do what he could not do;

The same way the soul of Moses exulted to deliver the work to his disciple Joshua;

What did the two elders present to the new generation?

The way You (God) was with them, You will be with Joshua and Solomon;

They sought from You for them the spirit of wisdom, understanding, and courage;

They prepared everything they could to help them succeed in their mission

Grant me, O Lord to exult in the new generation;

What we cannot do, our children can;

We seek for them, not only to be like us, but to be better.

+ How much we desire to carry the new generation;

To present them to You, exceed us in holiness, righteousness and wisdom;

We shall never cease to pray for their sake;

To see Your plan fulfilled in their life;

Then we shall offer You a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and praise.

+ Grant them a life full of peace and joy;

Not to relax, and become slothful in Your work;

But, by You, to find comfort, to grow more active and zealous.

+ Grant them the exultant spirit of resurrection;

Not to dwell in the graves of laziness and slothfulness;

But to work to the account of Your kingdom with their whole hearts;

With their souls, and all their spiritual and physical energies;

Proclaim Your glory, splendor, and holiness in them;

To make them glorify Your name all the days of their life

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CHAPTER 23

THE LEVITES PARTAKE OF BUILDING THE TEMPLE

We saw how the author cared to show the work of David in the different ordinances of the temple before his departure from this world. Chapters 23 to 27 came with details of the activities of building the temple and organizing its services; and how chapter 27 ended with the appointment of the political and military leaderships; For David did not separate the political and the military works from the religious works; particularly the care for building the temple, and or organizing the worship in it.

David believed that the work needs all kinds of people with different roles, talents, and abilities; whether they were priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, soldiers, state officials, or common people. God calls all to work; and it is befitting of all to work faithfully in their diverse positions. Ministry to God needs all, and everyone has his own importance; any disturbance in the life of any believer, (as a member of the church) will cause a disturbance in the life of the church as a whole (the body of Christ). What a person does, even if it is something of minor importance, pours a special beauty upon the church work as a whole.

David was preoccupied in his last days, not with the symptoms of old age, as much as with the persistent strife; beside the afflictions that dwelt upon him even from his very beloved son Absalom. He started to deliver his responsibilities to those who could consummate his mission. He appointed his son Solomon as his successor on the throne (and the author did not refer to the struggle around the throne that came in the first book of the kings). Then he appointed the political leaderships, followed by the religious ones. Chapters 23 to 27 came to mention in detail the different commitments of them.

A census according to the will of God:

When David commanded a census (1 Chronicles 21), we saw how the Levites were not numbered, for they were exempted from military service. Now, they are numbered, not to serve in the army, but in the liturgical ministry. Although the Levites were under the priests and helped them in their ministry; yet their work was not secondary, but essential in serving and teaching the people. No wonder that the Christian church, since the first century, set the deacon system, that was like that of the Levites in the old covenant.

The Levites and their role in the temple:

David believed that there will be no success unless the work is done “*decently and in order*” (1 Corinthians 14: 40). In this chapter, the king assigned two kinds of work to the Levites:

- 1- Helping the priests to prepare the offerings (23: 28-32)
- 2- Caring for the temple: To supervise the building activities; to work as musicians, singers of praise, gatekeepers, and store-keepers . Every Levite worked in his own specialization . And being, himself, a musician and a psalmist, David cared for the musicians and the singers of praise; with one goal, namely, to glorify God, and to give Him thanks day and night.

1- Anointing Solomon a king	1
2- David gathers the leaderships together	2
3- Caring for the Levite	3 - 11
4- Different aspects of the ministry of the Levites	14 - 23
5- The duties of the Levites	24 - 32

1 ANOINTING SOLOMON A KING:

“So when David was old and full of days, he made his son Solomon king over Israel” (1)

Feeling that his departure from this world became close, David anointed Solomon a king, to put an end to the attempt of his other son Adonijah to take the throne by force (1 Kings 1, 2); (which was not mentioned in the first book of the Chronicles). Solomon inherited the throne according to a divine ordinance.

Although David was only seventy years old; and yet he was *“full of days”*, and well satisfied with his life in this world . Feeling that his departure was at hand, he ordained what is good for the kingdom before his death; and was pleased to see how the church (the congregation of believers) and the state were well established.

While the author did not mention the details of the enthronement of Solomon, as it came in the first book of the kings, he mentioned in full details the different ministries assigned to the priests and the Levite.

2- GATHERING THE LEADERSHIPS TOGETHER:

“And he gathered together all the leaders of Israel, with the priests and the Levites” (2)

Solomon was anointed a king in the presence of a revered gathering of the leaders and the people of Israel; which made the attempt of Adonijah to take the throne by force look more rude and foolish. Here we notice that securing the throne for the sake of the temple was the greatest blessing for the people, as well as a source of pleasure to those about to depart from this world.

The way David cared to gather together what he could of the building materials, the expenses for the building, choosing the location of the building, and its architecture, he also cared to gather together the human resources and the civil leaderships, to work together with a spirit of unison.

3- CARING FOR THE LEVITES:

“Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and above; and the number of individual males was thirty-eight thousand” (3)

Near the end of David’s reign, he made a census of the Levites from the age of thirty years and above; the age at which they start their service. While the last census was unacceptable to God, and ended in a tragedy (1 Chronicles 21); on account of that it was done by David out of a desire for knowing his human possibilities and resources, with a spirit of haughtiness and trust in his military might;. This census, on the other hand, was only for the Levites, for the sake of organizing the ministry in the temple of the Lord; It was, therefore, for edification and not otherwise..

The priests and the Levites, according to the law, practice work at the age of thirty years (Numbers 4: 3). Yet they were assigned for certain duties at the age of twenty-five (Numbers 8: 24), as a kind of training and preparation for their future responsibilities. But with the increase of the work load, they were allowed to start working at twenty years of age (23: 24). Changing the minimum age was referred by some to the change of circumstances, among which were:

a- Delaying the work of the young Levites until past 25 years of age, led to that many of them, having much time on their hands, were addicted to pleasures and bad habits, something unbecoming of their reputation, and would come against assigning them to ministry later on. To avoid such tendencies, God allowed for assigning them in the earlier age of twenty years.

b- The work of the Levites in the wilderness required physical strength to carry heavy loads; being committed to carry the tabernacle of meeting on moving from one place to another; as well as the two altars, the lampstand and all the holy vessels. Hence God did not allow them to work until they become physically stronger. In ministry and in labor, God does not let us work beyond our endurance.

Concerning the ark of the covenant, it was carried by the priests by poles coated with gold.

After building the temple, there was no more need to carry heavy loads; but other needs showed up for ministering the temple.

c- Now, as God gave comfort to His people, and made Jerusalem His dwelling place forever; there was no more need to carry the tabernacle of meeting and its utensils from one place to another; and the ministry became easier, and could easily be done by twenty years old Levites.

In the days of Moses the number of the Levites from thirty years of age to fifty (Numbers 4: 2-3), were 8580 (Numbers 4: 47-48). But now they grew four times as many, as it did for the rest of the tribes. Those engaged of the tribe of Levi were 38,000.

In the new covenant there is no prior condition of age, but rather for the spiritual, mental maturity, together with reason, understanding, and flaming zeal for the salvation of souls, and the edification of the kingdom of God.

“Of these, twenty-four thousand were to look after the work of the house of the Lord; six thousands were officers and judges” (4)

The Levites were distributed according to their assignments (4-5), to let all work; as there is nothing worse than an idle Levite; and so that every part of the work will be elaborately done. What a great honor to have such a large number ministering to the Lord's house!. As the honor of the great men is measured by the multitude of their entourage; we can see how great was the house of Israel, looked after by God Himself.

Those working to the account of the kingdom of God, represented the servants of the heavenly throne, and the cloud of angel-like men beyond count. How great was Israel's honor to have such a great number of those assigned to minister to God among them. ... Now, if the worship of God in Israel happen to deteriorate, the reason would not be the lack of laborers, but would most probably be slothfulness and unfaithfulness on the part of those assigned to do the work.

The Levites numbered 38,000, were divided into four main groups according to the kind of work allotted to them:

a- 24,000 – the great majority, or about two third, to look after the temple, to lead the work in the house of God; They had to attend to the priests in the task of preparing the sacrifices, of slaughtering, skinning, washing, cutting and burning, to prepare the burnt offering, to remove the ashes, to cleanse the vessels and containers, to bring everything back to its proper place; and to run the ministry in its proper order. They were divided into 24 groups, 1000 every week. This system continued for 400 years until the time of Josiah (2 Chronicles 35: 4).

b- 6000 officers and judges, not to solve any problem that might happen in the temple, as such would be the task of the priests; but to solve the problems of the congregation all over the land according to the statutes of God.

They were distributed on several regions in the kingdom to help the leaders and the elders of every tribe in running justice. They were the 'Shethorim' referred to in (Deuteronomy 16: 18; 1 Chronicles 26: 29)

c- 4000 as gatekeepers and guards to keep anything unclean from entering into the temple, to examine those who intend to enter, and to keep anyone who attempt to enter by force; they, therefore, might probably been armed for their task.

d- 4000 singers and musicians to lead the congregation in a joyful worship; Although that was a new ministry initiated by David who cared much for music; yet it was through a divine inspiration; and they were in contact with David through his prophets (2 Chronicles 29: 25)..

"Four thousand were gatekeepers, and four thousand praise the Lord with musical instruments, 'which I made' said David, 'for giving praise'" (5)

The gatekeepers were assigned to guard the tabernacle of meeting and the sanctuary, to keep away anyone not allowed to enter; and to keep even those allowed from going beyond certain limits (32). They were assigned as well to guard the sons of Aaron, and to help them in their work. They were called 'their brethren' to let the priests remember that, even though they proceed them in rank, yet they all come from the same rock like the regular Levites; hence they should not feel superior to them, but treat them like brethren.

The choir of musicians praising the Lord were 4000 Levites. In the old covenant the concentration was on the musical instrument to support the worshippers; But now in the new covenant, the concentration is on humans with their bodies, souls, holy emotions, feelings, and thoughts; They are like heavenly harps that present a symphony of love, acceptable to the Father in our Lord Jesus Christ.

“And David divided them into divisions among the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari” (6)

Again we find a genealogy of the Levites:

- a- The Gershonites 7 -11
- b- The Kohathites 12 -20 (including Moses and Aaron)
- c- The sons of Merari 21-22

Specific priestly works were assigned to Aaron and his sons (13); to burn the incense, and the ministry in the sanctuary. Concerning the ministry in the Most Holy Place, and offering the blessing in the name of Jehovah (Numbers 6: 23-27), it is the task of the high priest alone.

“Of the Gershonites: Laadan and Shimei” (7)

“The sons of Laadan: the first Jehiel, then Zetham and Joel – three in all” (8)

“The sons of Shimei: Shelomith, Haziël, and Haran – three in all. These were the heads of the fathers’ houses of Laadan” (9)

“And the sons of Shimei: Jahath, Zina, Jeush, and Beriah. These were the four sons of Shimei” (10)

“Jahath was the first and Zizah the second. But Jeush and Beriah did not have many sons, therefore they were assigned as one father’s house” (11)

The Levites were distributed within their families and relatives so as to work in harmony and love, to work together as one spirit, and to be easy to spot anyone who is slothful in doing his duty. That is why the Lord Christ sent his disciples every two together, and He even sent two brothers together. Here two families

were assigned as one father's house (11); the weak were gathered together to have more stature.

"The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel – four in all" (12)

"The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses; and Aaron was set apart, he and his sons forever, that he should sanctify the most holy things, to burn incense before the Lord, to

minister to Him, and to give blessing in His name forever" (13)

It is worth noticing in numbering the families of the Levites, that the descendants of Moses, the great prophet, were numbered on the same level of any regular Levites, and were given no extra privilege or honor; whereas those of Aaron were assigned to priesthood and *"to sanctify the most holy things"* (13). It is mentioned that the sons of (Rehabiah), a grandson of Moses were very many (17). When God said to Moses: *"Let Me alone that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make you a great nation"* (Exodus 32: 10; Deuteronomy 9: 14); Moses declined and interceded for their sake; hence God rewarded him by increasing his descendants, and those of the tribe of Levi.

The task of the priests is to sanctify the most holy things, to burn incense before the Lord, to minister to Him, and to bless His name forever. The Levites, on the other hand had no right to interfere in the task of the priest; Yet they had enough good work to do to which they were assigned (4-5).

God raised Aarons household above the rest of the people, as a reward for his denial of himself. For while making his younger brother a god to Pharaoh, he (Aaron) was made just a prophet and spokesperson, to look after his younger brother, and to do according to his commands. We never heard that Aaron opposed Moses; nor sought the right of the firstborn, but accepted with pleasure what God assigned him to do. He submitted to Moses, and sometimes even

called him 'his lord'. Having submitted himself to his younger brother according to the will of God, God raised his household above that of Moses. Those who are content to condescend to a lower level than their own, would have the chance to rise.

4- DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE MINISTRY OF THE LEVITES:

“Now the sons of Moses the man of God were reckoned to the tribe of Levi” (14)

Moses was called “*the man of God*”; a magnificent title, that reveals someone who perpetually enjoys the divine presence, and in whose life, behavior, and thoughts, God occupies the position of prominence. The work to the account of the kingdom of God in all generations is in need of “men of God”, whose life reflects the presence of God, His splendor, and His divine might.

In spite of what Moses had of a unique role of leadership; also of that of his brother Aaron, the first high priest of the people; the two books of the Chronicles did not assign a special chapter for them, on account of having such a prominent position above the rest of their tribe; but are mentioned among the other Levites and priests; for their role is not separate from the rest of them..

Moses behavior was a role model of self-denial; For, although he had favor in the sight of God and men, and he could easily raise the prestige and wealth of his household, yet he did nothing of the sort, and did not leave them with any trace of special privilege; a sign that he had the Spirit of God, and not that of the world.

In the previous chapter David gave instructions concerning the building of the temple; Here in the following chapters, he establishes the ministry in the temple. In the early days of David, during the periods of wars, we assume that the ministry of the Levites was running, yet not with the supposed accuracy

smoothness, and beauty ; But now, David as a prophet and a king, through an assignment of the divine care, set in order all the aspects of ministry in the temple.

“The sons of Moses were Gershon and Eleazer” (15)

“Of the sons of Gershon: Shebuel was the first” (16)

“Of the descendants of Eleazer: Rehabiah was the first. And Eleazer had no other sons, but the sons of Rehabiah were very many” (17)

“Of the sons of Izhar: Shelomith was the first” (18)

“Of the sons of Hebron, Jeriah was the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth” (19)

“Of the sons of Uzziel: Michah was the first and Jesshiah the second” (20)

“The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Mahli were Eleazer and Kish” (21)

“And Eleazer died, and had no sons, but only daughters, and their brethren, the sons of Kish took them as wives” (22)

It was written that the daughters of Eleazer married their brothers (22); but it is obvious that they married their cousins; for the term ‘brother’ or ‘sister’ was also used for the cousins. In the new covenant, it was said about the cousins of the Lord Christ that they were His brothers; the same way in the Christian tradition, including the reform movement of the protestants in the sixteenth century; that they considered that St. Mary who was sanctified by the Son of God incarnate in her womb, remained a virgin all her life.

“The sons of Mushi were Mahli, Eder, and Jeemoth – three in all” (23)

5- THE DUTIES OF THE LEVITES:

“These were the sons of Levi by their father’s houses – the heads of the fathers’ houses as they were counted individually by the number of their names who did the work for the service of the house of the Lord, from the age of twenty years and above” (24)

“For David said, ‘The Lord God of Israel has given rest to His people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem forever’” (25)

“And also to the Levites, ‘They shall no longer carry the tabernacle, or any of the articles of its service’” (26)

The Levites no more carried the tabernacle of meeting and its furniture; as the temple became the perpetual dwelling place of the Lord.

“For by the last words of David the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and above” (27)

As the ministry in the temple needed more manpower, In his last words, David made the Levites start ministry from twenty years of age;

“Because their duty was to help the sons of Aaron in the service of the house of the Lord, in the courts, and in the chambers, in the purifying of all holy things and the work of service of the house of God” (28)

Those assigned to take care of the work in the house of the Lord (4), had to help the sons of Aaron (28); they had to do the hard work, if we should call any work in the house of the Lord as such; They had the duty to keep the house, its pass ways, and chambers, neat and clean; to put things in their proper place to be ready to use in their proper time; They had to prepare the showbread, the fine

flour for the grain offering; and to make sure that everything is at hand for the priests to use.

We can put the main lines of the ministry of the Levites (28-32) as such:

- a- To take care of the courts and the chambers (28)
- b- To purify all the holy things (28)
- c- To minister to the house of the Lord (28)
- d- To prepare the showbread (29)
- e- To prepare the fine flour for the grain offering and the unleavened cakes (29)
- f- To make sure of the accuracy of all kinds of measures and sizes
- g- To praise the Lord on a daily basis day and night (30)
- h- The ministry bound to the set feasts, like the Sabbath, and the new moon, according to the law (31)
- i- To guard the temple

“both with the showbread and the fine flour for the grain offering, with the unleavened cakes, and what is baked in the pan, with what is mixed, and with all the kinds of measures and sizes” (29)

“To stand every morning to thank and to praise the Lord, and likewise in the evening” (30)

There were two daily liturgical services: a morning and an evening service; which were basic to the Jewish society. Those were adopted by the Christian church according to what suits the service of the new covenant, and were called in the Coptic church: ‘The offering of evening and morning incense’.

“And at every presentation of a burnt offering to the Lord on the Sabbath and on the new moons and on the set feasts, by number according to the ordinance governing them, regularly before the Lord” (31)

The work of the singers was to offer praise and thanksgiving to the Lord in the morning and the evening offerings; beside the other offerings in the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the set feasts, etc. for which Moses commanded blowing the trumpets (Numbers 10: 10). Yet, as the sound of the trumpet was a little disturbing, David replaced it with singing the psalms of praise. Growing from its infancy, the Jewish church became more reasonable in its worship; until, reaching to the right of the gospel, to *“put away childish things”* (1 Corinthians 13: 11; Galatians 4: 3-9).

“And that they should attend to the needs of the tabernacle of meeting, the needs of the holy place, and the needs of the sons of Aaron their brethren in the work of the house of the Lord” (32)

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 23

GRANT US, O LORD, THE FELLOWSHIP OF WORK TO THE ACCOUNT OF YOUR KINGDOM

- + Who is worthy, O my God, to work to the account of Your kingdom?
Grant us the wisdom of David in preparing for building Your house;
He was preoccupied, not only with gathering together gold and silver;
But with motivating his son, the leaders, the priests, and the Levites to
work together;
Do not allow for the presence of any slothful man among us;
Grant us to join the gatekeepers at the entrances of Your house;
Grant our hearts to sing Your praise together with the musicians.

- + Grant us the love of the prophet Moses;

He, who loved his people more than himself, his children, and all his household;
He, who sought Your forgiveness for their rebellion, lest they perish;
He, who sought Your forgiveness for their sin; or else, blot him out of Your book.
He, who sought from You, O King of kings, to lead the procession in the wilderness;
Or else, he would stand still and not move forward;
Grant me such a heart, wide enough to love all mankind.

+ Grant me, O King of kings, the humility of Aaron;
He, who was not disturbed when you said that his younger brother be his god;
He, who did not count this as a loss of his firstbirth rights, nor an insult to his seniority of age;
By whose humility, You made his descendants priests and high priests;
Glory be to You, who works with the old and the young to the account of Your kingdom

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CHAPTER 24

THE DIVISIONS OF THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES

King David put a very elaborate plan for building the temple and for organizing the worship in it. He purchased the land on which the temple would be built; and prepared the building materials; And now, in this chapter, he organizes the system of ministry by the priests and the Levites; according to their fathers' houses.

He informs us that there were 24 groups of priests (1 – 19), and 24 groups of Levites (20-31); Every group had its own schedule of service; so that every individual would have his chance to minister in the house of the Lord.

A group of Levites used to come to serve under the leadership of a priest; then another group would come to replace it under the leadership of another priest. The number of fathers' houses of the Levites so increased, that it would be impossible for all of them to serve at the same time. As we also saw the number of Levites increase from 8000 in the time of Moses to 38,000; Therefore David divided them into groups, through a divine inspiration.

The service in the temple was very well organized. For an elaborate rite does not contradict with the work of the Spirit of God; according to the words of the apostle: "*For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace; ... Let everything be done decently and in order*" (1 Corinthians 14: 33, 40).. Yet, an elaborate rite does not mean a deadly literalism; For although heaven has an elaborate system, yet literalism has no place in it.

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|---------------------------------|---------|
| 1- The divisions of the priests | 1 – 19 |
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1- THE DIVISIONS OF THE PRIESTS:

Priesthood started for the Jews by the divine choice of Aaron as a high priest; He did not inherit it, but since then, it became inherited. Every priest had to be referred to the family tree up to Aaron, the first high priest, the brother of Moses. As two of the four sons of Aaron, died childless (Numbers 26: 61), All priests are therefore descendants of the other sons of Aaron: Eleazar, and Ithamar.

According to some, the author did not include 'Abiathar' together with the priests in the dedication of the temple; on account of that he supported Adonijah the son of David in his attempt to take the throne by force instead of his brother Salomon chosen by God.

That elaborate priesthood ministry symbolizes the heavenly liturgy; *“For the Lord of glory Jesus Christ came as High priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made by hands, that is not of this creation, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place, once and for all, having obtained eternal redemption”* (Hebrew 9: 11, 12). In his epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul presents to us a living portrait of the Lord Christ as a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, bringing us into the heavenly sanctuaries, interceding for us with His precious blood, and offering His life a sacrifice on our behalf. In his fifth chapter he started his talk by the essence of the subject of his epistle; namely, “The Priesthood of the Lord Christ”, not according to the order of Aaron, but to that of Melchizedek forever. He starts talking about Aaron being the first high priest, directly called by God for this task; and surpasses all the high priests who followed him; Yet he was in need of offering sacrifices on his own weakness, before offering them on those of the people; Then to present to us Him, who is un-proportionally superior to him; namely our Lord Jesus Christ, who brings us forth into the heavenly sanctuaries, who intercedes for us on a new and a unique level.

Parading the features and work of the high priest, to reveal the exalted superiority of the Lord Christ, compared to Aaron; and to make clear the priestly work of the Lord Christ for us in the new covenant, the Apostle Paul says: *“The priest always went into the first part of the tabernacle performing the services”* (Hebrew 9: 6); ... *“And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God”* Hebrews 10: 11-12).

While in the shadow of the Aaronite priesthood, was offered the blood of animals led to slaughter against their will; In the new covenant, the High Priest offered Himself, through His own free will, and His obedience to His Father even to death, the death of the cross, and His love for humanity, when it was against Him. According to St. Augustine: [You are the Priest; and You are the sacrifice. You are the One who offers, and the offering]. ... And comparing between the animal sacrifice of the old covenant, and the exalted sacrifice of the new covenant, St. John Chrysostom says: [How great is the difference! He is the ransom, the Priest, and the sacrifice! For if it is not the case, there would be need for offering several sacrifices; and He would be crucified several times].

+ The apostle says: *“Now all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself”* (2 Corinthians 5: 18-19)... By that, there will be reconciliation in and by Him; on account of that the Father remains in Him through the same nature, reconciling the world to Himself, in and by Him.

(St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers)

“Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar” (1)

The line of Eleazar extended more in the royal era; getting a double inheritance for being the firstborn. That line had its importance because of the appearance of Zadok, the most prominent priest since the days of Solomon, who was most probably a descendant of Eleazar. The other line through Ithmar, confirmed its presence after the return from captivity (Ezra 8: 2); hence the author of the book of Chronicles concentrated on it.

“And Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children, therefore Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests” (2)

Two of the four sons of Aaron died childless; and their death was a kind of punishment on a sin they committed (Numbers 26: 61) which was not mentioned in this book. That is why all the priests come from either Eleazar or Ithmar

“Then David with Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithmar divided them according to the schedule of their service” (3)

In this chapter we see Zadok, together with king David, carry out the division of the priests into 24 groups, to minister according to the schedule of the lot. It so seems that this system was not followed before the captivation, but after it until the days of the Lord Christ (1 Chronicles 24: 10; Luke 1: 5). In this system of division, it is noticed”

- a- Those who walk according to the flesh, like Nadab and Abihu, were turned away.
- b- Ithmar lost his priority, yet among the descendants of Eleazar, came Zadok, who occupied a prominent position because of the zeal of Phinehas on the holiness of the house of the Lord
- c- David divided the priests into groups according to their chiefs: Zadok of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of Ithmar.
- d- Eleazar occupied a position of special blessing (4); For, while there were 16 of the fathers' houses from the family of Eleazar; there were only eight from that of Ithmar.
- e- Division was done by lot (5), a sign of delivering the will into the hands of God, and not in those of men; That was long before the Holy Spirit dwelt upon the church (Acts 1: 26; Luke 1: 9).

f- The priests were divided into 24 groups; And in the book of Revelation it came that in heaven, there are 24 elders; The 24 groups of priests are analogous to 24 groups of the Levite singers (25: 31)

The book of revelation proclaimed to us the bond between the worship here on earth and the heavenly liturgy, where the 24 un-corporeal elders worship day and night before the divine throne (Revelation 4: 4. 10), holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (Revelation 5: 8).

“Now there were more leaders found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithmar, and thus they were divided. Among the sons of Eleazar there were sixteen heads of their fathers’ houses, and eight heads of their fathers’ houses among the sons of Ithmar” (4)

“Thus they were divided by lot, one group as another, for there were officials of the sanctuary and officials of the house of God from the house of Eleazar and from the sons of Ithmar” (5)

What was done by the lot was fixing the priorities of schedule, and not of those who become officers of the sanctuary (5). to say who among the chosen heads of their fathers’ houses, to minister first, and who is next; to let everyone of them know exactly his set time to serve. Of the 24 heads of their fathers’ houses, 16 were from the house of Eleazar, and 8 from that of Ithmar; on account of that the later was supposed to have decreased since the verdict issued on the household of Eli the priest who belonged to that house. The way by which the lot was cast, as mentioned in verse 6 of the chapter, was as such: *“One father’s house was taken for Eleazar, and one for Ithmar” (6)*. The names of the 16 heads of their fathers’ house from Eleazar were put in one basket, and the eight from that of Ithmar were put in another basket; and in turn, two were drawn from the basket of Eleazar, followed by one from that of Ithmar.

Such a system was followed to organize their ministry; For *“God is not the author of confusion”* (1 Corinthians 14: 33) particularly in the issues pertaining to the ministry of his Worship. A great number without order is valueless, and may be a cause of confusion . In the body of Christ (namely His church), every member has his own work for the benefit of the whole body (Romans 12: 4-5; 1 Corinthians 12: 12).

The Levites used to cast the lot before the king and the leaders, to let everyone know to which group he belongs; by which every cause of controversy or anger for taking sides would be eliminated; and no one could claim that he was unjustly treated. God, being a God of order, He is as well, God of peace; and as said by Solomon the sage: *“Casting lots causes contentions to cease”* (Proverbs 18: 18).

Using the lot for holy purposes is according to a divine will (Leviticus 21: 18; Numbers 26: 55; 1 Samuel 14: 41; Proverbs 16: 33; 18: 18); particularly before the feast of Pentecost, when the lot was publicly cast with great piety and reverence, in the presence of the king, the leaders, and the priests; to eliminate any chance of fraud; on account of that the lot was a call for the intervention of God. The apostle Matthias was chosen to replace the traitor Judas by lot and prayer (Acts 1: 24, 26).

“And the scribe, Shemaiah the son of Nehaneel, one of the Levites, wrote them down before the king, the leaders, Zadok the priest, Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and the heads of the fathers’ houses of the priests and Levites, one father’s house taken for Eleazar and one for Ithmar” (6)

In this chapter, the name of “Shemaiah” a Levite official assigned to writing the names on which the lot is to be cast, was mentioned

Ahimelech; was a son of Abiathar, and a grandson of another Ahimelech, one of the priests killed by king Saul (1 Samuel 22: 11-18). Both Abiathar and Zadok were high priests in the days of David; the former in the tabernacle in Jerusalem, where the ark of the covenant was, and the later in Gibeon, where the tabernacle of meeting was. And it so appears from (1 Chronicles 18: 16), that Ahimelech started to carry out some of the duties of his father Abiathar when he grew old.

“Now the first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah” (7)
“The third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim” (8)

Each of the 24 groups used to minister in the temple, a shift of two weeks every year; and the rest of the time to minister in their home towns. This system was followed even until the days of our Lord Jesus (Luke 1: 5-9).

“the fifth to Malachijah, the sixth to Mijamin” (9)
“the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah” (10)

Of the 24 groups, the eighth was of ‘Abijah’, mentioned in (Luke 1: 5); a member of which was ‘Zechariah, father of John the Baptist

It is obvious that the groups set by David, despite stumbling during the reign of the bad kings, and stopping altogether during the captivity; yet they resumed later on until the second temple was destroyed on the hands of the Romans.

“the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah” (11)

“the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim” (12)

“the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab” (13)

“the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer” (14)

“the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizzesz” (15)

“the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jachin to Jehezkeel” (16)

“the twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second to Gamul” (17)

“the twenty-third to Delaiah, the twenty-fourth to Maaziah” (18)

“This was the schedule of their service for coming into the house of the Lord according to their ordinance by the hand of Aaron their father, as the Lord God of Israel commanded him” (19)

Every division was called by the name by which it was set from the beginning by Aaron their father (19). Whoever called a high priest had to be revered and honored by the priests as their father; the way Aaron was honored.

The Lord Christ is a High Priest over the house of God; and those who believe in Him are a chosen race, and a royal priesthood, who should submit to Him (1 Peter 2: 9).

2- THE DIVISIONS OF THE LEVITES:

The tribe of Levi was of little fame during the days of the judges, until the appearance of Eli and Samuel; but when David revived the worship, the Levites became more famous, and of them some were found who were able to honor their tribe.

“Now the rest of the sons of Levi: of the sons of Amram, Shubael, of the sons of Shubael, Jehdeiah” (20)

Most of the Levites here were previously mentioned in chapter 23; and were among those who stood before the priests in the ministry of the house of the Lord; but they were mentioned here again as heads of the 24 divisions of Levites who ministered under the 24 divisions of priests; hence they used to cast the lot together with their brethren the sons of Aaron, who did not prevail upon the priests of God, but, according to St. Peter: *“Not as being lords over those entrusted to them, but being examples to the flock”* (1 Peter 5: 3).

For the whole ministry to be supported by God, the heads of the fathers' houses used to cast the lot among their lesser brethren; Namely, those who belong to a higher house were treated on the same

level as those who belong to a lower house; to take their position, not according to seniority, but to a lot according to a divine ordinance. For, to Christ Jesus, there is no difference between a slave and a free man, or between the older and the younger, The younger brethren, in case they are faithful in faith, are as acceptable by God as the older ones. The young Levites had the same portion as the heads of their fathers' houses.

"Concerning Rehabiah, of the sons of Rehabiah, the first was isshiah" (21)

"Of the Izharites, Shelomoth, of the sons of Shelomoth, Jahath" (22)

"Of the sons of Hebron, Jeriah was the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and jekameam the fourth" (23)

"Of the sons of Uzziel, Michah,; of the sons of Mich, Shamir" (24)

"The brother of Michah, Isshiah; of the sons of Isshiah, Zechariah" (25)

"The sons of Merari, were Mahli and Mushi; the sons of Jaaziah, Beno" (26)

"The sons of Merari by Jaaaziah were Beno, Shoham, Zaccur and Ibr" (27)

"Of Mahli: Eleazar, who had no sons" (28)

"Of Kish: the son of Kish, Jerahmeel" (29)

"Also the sons of Mush were Mahli, Eder, , and Jerimoth. These were the sons of the Levites according to their fathers' houses" (30)

"These also cast lots just as their brothers the sons of Aaron did, in the presence of king David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the heads of the fathers' houses of the priests and Levites. The chief fathers did just as their younger brethren" (31)

The set duties in the temple:

(1) The administrative duties:

- a- Officers to look after the work of the house of the Lord (1 Chronicles 23: 4-5)
- b- General administrators (1 Chronicles 26: 29-31)

(2) The priesthood duties:

- a- Priests (1 Chronicles 24: 1)
- b- Prophets (1 Chronicles 25: 1)
- c- Helpers in the presentation of the sacrifices (23: 29-30)
- d- Helpers in purifying of all holy things (23: 27-28)

(3) The supporting duties:

- a- Bakers of the showbread (1 Chronicles 23: 29)
- b- Watcher on all kinds of measures and sizes (23: 29)

c- Officers to take care of the Most Holy Place (23: 28)

(4) The financial duties:

a- Over the treasuries of the sanctuaries (26: 20)

b- Over all the treasuries of the dedicated things (26: 26- 28)

(5) The artistic duties:

a- Musicians (1 Chronicles 25: 6)

b- Singers of praise to the Lord (1 Chronicles 25: 7)

(6) The guarding duties:

a- Guards of the temple (23: 5)

b- Gatekeepers and storehouse keepers (26: 12-18)

(7) The Individual duties:

a- Scribe (26: 6)

b- King's seer in the words of God (25: 5)

c- King's personal prophet (25: 2)

d- Chief of guards (26: 1)

e- Overseer of the treasuries (26: 23-24)

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 24

GRANT ME, O LORD, TO EXPERIENCE THE DEPOSIT OF HEAVEN

- + When You commanded the prophet Moses to build for You the tabernacle of meeting;
You showed him a model to help him do it according to heaven;
He saw all the details of the model, to make it a true icon of heaven;
You raised his heart and his inner insight up high;
To ignite his depths with longing to the exultant heavenly life;
He desired that all the priests, the Levites, and all the people be like a heavenly host;
So that when they set forth to eternity,
Their liturgies and praises would be in harmony with the angelic work;
To become a wonder in the sight of the heavenly creatures.

- + Then came David seeking to build a temple for You;
 You revealed to him a heavenly model;
 That came conforming in his spirit to the tabernacle of meeting;
 David made an elaborate system for the priests and the Levites, from which they should not
 divert;
 He set an elaborate rite of the worship;
 Not to be practiced according to the deadly letter;
 But to be practiced with deep spirituality, and with order.

- + You granted us Your Holy Spirit, to set us a holy temple;
 To bless it by Your amazing presence. O heavenly High Priest!
 And to pour on it the joy of the Spirit;
 So that the body members would partake of the praise together with the soul and the Spirit;
 With Your divine presence, the enemy would not be able to crawl to corrupt my love for You;

- + In the Tabernacle, as well as in the temple, the priest slay the clean animals and birds;
 But in my heart, You are the Priest, the sacrifice, and The One who receives the offerings;
 In the tabernacle and the temple, millions of sacrifices were offered, yet unable to sanctify the
 heart;
 The sacrifice of Your cross, though it happened only once;
 Became the secret of the reconciliation of the past and present generation to the Father;

- + When a high priest dies, another of the descendants of Aaron is chosen to replace him;
 He dies with no return until the day of Your second coming on the clouds;
 The garments of glory would be taken off him to put on the new priest;
 Corruption will come on his body, until You raise him in Your great day;
 As to Your death, it has shaken Hades and destroyed its gates;
 No Corruption could ever come to Your body;
 But those who have fallen asleep will exult in You, and will perceive the secret of Your salvation;
 You ascended to heaven by Your body risen from the dead;
 Intercede before the Father on behalf of all Your believers;
 Glory be to You, O the High Priest, the heavenly Intercessor.

AN ANNEX TO CHAPTER 24

AARON IS THE HIGH PRIEST; AND OUR CHRIST IS THE HEAVENLY HIGH PRIEST

1-The heavenly High Priest challenges death:

The first book of the Chronicles cared for the priests and the Levites; who bore a symbol of the heavenly High Priest, I intend to refer to the role of the Lord of glory as the heavenly High Priest, and to compare Him to the priests of the old covenant.

It is difficult to express the feelings of the multitudes of the people of Israel in the old covenant toward the glory of the priests in general, and the high priest in particular. Hence the Lord proclaimed that the tribe of Levi would have no portion in the promised land; to let each of them sing together with the prophet Jeremiah, saying: "*The Lord is my portion, says my soul; Therefore I hope in Him*" (Lamentation 3: 24); Cities were set aside for them in the midst of the tribes, both on the East and on the West bank of the Jordan; to let them become like the salt in food, and the light in the world; according to the words of the Lord Christ, saying: "*You are the salt of the earth*" (Matthew 5: 13); "*You are the light of the world*" (Matthew 5: 14). It is therefore befitting of them, as well as of us, to support our brethren in corruption; and to give them light in the darkness; through the grace of God working in us.

To perceive the seriousness and holiness of their work, Whoever stretch his hand to the priestly work from any other tribe, will be subject to the divine wrath, even if he is a king like Saul, who, on account of offering a burnt offering and peace offerings, the kingdom was taken away from him (1 Samuel 13: 13-14); And when king Uzziah entered by force into the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense, the Lord struck him with leprosy until the day of his death (2 Chronicles 26: 19-31).

The high priest represented the heavenlies when he puts on the priestly garments; and everyone stood trembling when he enters into the Most Holy Place once a year on the great day of atonement. The spirit of many priests were broken down when they were led into captivity, and were denied of their priestly work.

But there is a great difference between the high priest from the tribe of Levi, and the heavenly High Priest, the only begotten Son of God. Aaron the high priest and all his descendents died in weakness against their will, being descendants of Adam the sinner; Whereas Jesus Christ died with His own free will for the sake of His love for humanity; then was risen to let us rise together with Him.

By portraying the episode of Aaron's death on the mountain, after the transfer of his priesthood to his son, St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi intends to reveal the helplessness of the Levite priesthood, for the high priest has a beginning and an end of days; his work is only temporary, goes from one generation to

another, until the symbol comes to an end, and “*a High Priest over the house of God*” (Hebrew 10: 21), comes; ...”*A High Priest who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heaven*” (Hebrew 8: 1); He who, not only challenges death, but grants us to challenge it as well.

+ The Lord said to Moses: Why are you standing; approach, and “take the garments of your brother Aaron off”

Take off from him the priestly garments, and put them on Eleazar, the priest I have chosen;

Take off from him the rank of a Levite, take off his garment to go naked to death;

Like your father Adam who stood naked among the trees;

Having entered into the world with holiness, was not defiled, and did not sin against Me, I shall take him away with holiness;

Moses approached his brother as he was commanded; and seeing him approaching, Aaron bowed his head;

Aaron delivered himself to be bared of the priestly garments, then to go to the new world;

Moses approached, stretched his hands, took off the crown of glory from his brother’s head, and put it on his son’s;

He took off from him the glorious turban, and put it on his son’s head;

He took off his tunic from him, and put it on Eleazar before his father’s eyes;

Watching his brother Moses take off his clothes of the sanctuary, Aaron was not disturbed;

Taking off his priestly garments, the old man became bared of priesthood;

And putting them on the young man, he received the secrets of the house of God

Watching his son clothed in his garments in splendor as a high priest;

Aaron rejoiced and his heart exulted; on account of that he is replaced by his son;

How watched him putting on the crown, the tunic, and the sash.

The trouser, the golden bells, the twelve pomegranates that embody a great secret;

He watched the young man being adorned like a groom for the wedding,

The two brothers (Moses and Aaron) stood on the top of the mountain, Aaron naked like Adam between the trees;

While Eleazar had on him the divine priesthood, Moses stood barely able to hold his tears;

Who could hold his tears, seeing Aaron naked, bared of priesthood, and about to die?

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

While Moses laments the death of his brother, and his loss of priesthood; the gospel calls us to exult in the death and resurrection of the Lord Christ.

+ Today, salvation came to the world, both the seen and the unseen;

Christ is risen from the dead; Let us rise together with Him;
Christ came back and sat in His place; Let us come back together with Him;
Christ was liberated from the grave; Let us be liberated from the bonds of sin;
The gates of Hades were opened, death was destroyed; The old Adam went away; and the New Adam came back to us;
“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5: 17); We should also be renewed.

(St. Gregory the Neanzian)

+ It was written: “He shall put the holy linen tunic” (Leviticus 16: 4); whose fiber threads come from earth. They are holy tunics worn by Christ, the true High Priest; having taken upon Himself our earthly nature; about which it is said: “Of dust, and to dust he will return” (Genesis 3: 19). My Lord and Savior took an earthly body, intending to raise up him who descended to earth, to carry him up and ascend together with him to heaven.

(The scholar Origen)

2- By His Priesthood, He granted us the general and the sacramental priesthood:

Our Savior, the Lord of lords, sets out of us an icon of Himself; ... the King of kings, set out of His believers spiritual kings; ... The heavenly High Priest, in the water of Baptism, “*Has made us kings and priests to His God and Father*” (Revelation 1: 6)... Our Lord Jesus Christ chose for Himself disciples and apostles, to practice the shepherding and sacramental work, not to take His place, but to work in and by them, to fulfill the salvation of humanity, in the worthiness of His precious blood, and through the work of His Holy Spirit, according to the pleasure of the Father. We therefore, praise and glorify God and give Him thanks for the riches of His gifts, and the exalted work of His grace.

+ O the Greatest Clergy, the High Priest, the Lord of the sacrifices, help me to talk about Your Divinity;
O the Grantor of life, and the Revealer of secrets to all the simple; Reveal Your secrets to me, to reveal them to the needy;
He, from whom is the Word, the reason, and the tongue; help me to raise my voice, and sing delightful tunes.

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi).

3-By His priesthood, He removed the veil from the church of the old covenant:

When the Lord Christ cried out on the cross, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27: 51). That veil, according to St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi, was worn by the church of the old covenant, betrothed to the anticipated Messiah. But, having come, and she did not accept Him, He removed the veil from her; not to be called betrothed any more; and to be denied the heavenly wedding.

+ The veil of the holy temple was torn in two, to proclaim to the city that her Lord is dead;

When the Lord of the sanctuary, who was rejected by the clergy, cried out, the sanctuary was shaken and exposed;

The veil of the temple was torn in two, when it heard the cry out of the Lord of the sacrifices on the Golgotha.

When the only begotten Son cried out on the cross, the ark of the covenant was terrified, and in anger its power tore the veil.

The house was desolate because its Lord was crucified, and the Spirit refused to dwell in it any more;

When the Lord yielded up His Spirit, He tore the veil, to turn the house where its Lord was insulted desolate;

When the bride got out of her mind, and crucified her Groom; His Father was provoked to anger, entered, and tore her clothes, and drove her out of His inheritance.

He uncovered her head, for she despised the Lord of the house, made her a ridicule among the congregations, for she got corrupted.

After having her face covered by the veil of betrothal, to be chaste in her secret place; being corrupted, He tore her veil up, uncovered her head, to become the ridicule of the whole earth.

O Levites! From now onward, your house is left desolate, without priesthood, nor sacrifices (Matthew 23: 38).

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)



CHAPTER 25

THE MUSICIANS

According to some, the author of this book, having such care for the singers of praise, was most probably one of the singers in the temple (15" 16-22; 16: 4:-42; 2 Chronicles 15: 12-13; 29: 27-30; Ezra 3: 10; Nehemiah 12: 27). The persistence that the musicians had to be of the Levites appeared in (1 Chronicles 15-16); And the reference to the heads of the three families of the musicians came in (1 Chronicles 6: 31-47). Heman here was given prominence; while in (1 Chronicles 16) it was given only to Asaph. It is obvious that prominence among the three families of the musicians differed from one period to another after the return from captivity.

The musicians were divided into 24 divisions, just like the priests and the Levites; each division had to work two weeks; with the confirmation that the temple should never be left without this service. Again he mentions the three families of the musicians: the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, The divisions of the singers, were known for their order and discipline, and were bound to the priests.

Music was not considered as a secondary work in the Jewish liturgy; On the same level of the sacrifices; it was called "the sacrifice of praise". Praise was an essential part in the worship of God, who brings joy to the hearts. While the Levites prepared the sacrifices, and the priests offered them, the musicians praised the Mighty God, to whom the sacrifices were offered.

The first book of the chronicles, caring for the category of the singers among the Levites, dedicated a full chapter to them. The second book of the chronicles, likewise, cared for singing praise in the temple, and sometimes even on the battle field against the enemies, as Jehoshaphat did (2 Chronicles 20: 19).

How beautiful was the verse: "*They cast lots for their duty, the small as well as the great; the teacher with the student*" (8). All honored one another; the great appreciates the zeal and swift movement of the minor, who cherishes the experience of the great. The teacher does not despise the student; who feels no jealousy toward the teacher, nor look at him as belonging to a backward generation of the past.

1- Heads of the musicians' families	1
2- The sons of the heads of the musicians' families	2 - 6
3- Skillful musicians	7
4- Casting lots to organize the service of the musicians in the temple	8 – 31

1- HEADS OF THE MUSICIANS' FAMILIES:

“Moreover David and the captains of the army separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, , and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals. And the number of the workmen according to their service was:” (1)

“Those who should prophesy with harps, ...” The book of the Chronicles was the only book to give the title of ‘prophet’ or ‘seer’ to the singers of praise in the temple. For the prophecy is not confined to revealing the future, but includes the singing of praise and preaching, as well. The author counts singing praise with the spirit of joy as a prophecy, for it presents to us the deposit of heaven.

The use of this honorable title, namely, prophecy, to describe the ministry of singing praise in the sanctuary, is a warning against looking at it as a hobby. Indeed, not all who were engaged in this ministry have been honored by having divine visions, or by prophesying future events. It is said about Heman that he is *“the king’s seer in the words of God”* (5); But the psalms by which they sang praise were written by prophets, and several of them were prophecies, for the edification of the church, and glorifying God. Singing praise at the time of the prophet Samuel was called ‘prophesying’ (1 Samuel 10: 5; 19: 20). And probably that was what the apostle Paul meant by what he called ‘prophecy’ (1 Corinthians 11: 4; 14: 24).

Speaking of Asaph, the author says, he *“who prophesied according to the order of the king; And of Jeduthun, he says: “who prophesied with a harp to give thanks to, and praise the Lord”* (2-3). And David, *“the sweet psalmist of Israel”* was called ‘a prophet’

1- THE SONS OF THE HEADS OF THE MUSICIANS' FAMILIES:

“Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asharelah; the sons of Asaph were under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied according to the order of the king” (2)

The fathers: Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, supervised this ministry (1); and the sons were under the direction of their fathers (2, 3, 6). This gives a role model to the fathers in how to raise their children, and instruct them on the ministry to God, and particularly to sing praise to His holy name; For nothing is more important or more honorable for the elders, than to transfer the talent to the generation to follow; And for the young to submit to the old, and to be guided by them, on account of that they have the experience and knowledge.

It is most probable that Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, have been raised by Samuel in the schools of prophets that he established and headed . They were students, and now they are teachers. This very important task to praise the Lord, initiated by Samuel, was consummated by David, then by Solomon. I wish all do their best for the sake of ministering to God and the church, even if they do not live long enough to see the ultimate fruits of their endeavor; As after their departure, God is able 'to set out of the stones' those who can consummate the work they initiated.

"Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the direction of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp to give thanks and praise to the Lord" (3)

To glorify and honor God; *"to give thanks and praise to the Lord" (3)* were the main purpose of using the music in the temple, whether by voice or by musical instruments; which conforms to the continuation of the tradition in the church of Christ, namely, of *"speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5: 19)

"Of Heman, the sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romamti-Ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, and Mahazioth" (4)

"All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to exalt his horn. For God gave Heman fourteen sons and three daughters" (5)

"All these were under the direction of their father for the music in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, stringed instruments, and harps, for the service of the house of God.

Asaph, Jeduthum, and Heman, were under the authority of the king" (6)

"Under the authority of the king" (2 and 6). David as a prophet cared to organize and to put in order the old and the new divine ministry, which was a role model for everyone of authority, to use it to spread the worship and the teachings of the Lord Christ.

3- SKILLFUL MUSICIANS:

"So the number of them with their brethren who were instructed in the songs of the Lord, all who were skillful, was two hundred and eighty-eight" (7)

Beside the sons of those great men, there were other Levites they called their brethren, probably on account of their longing to join their ranks; those who learned how to praise the Lord, and became

skillful in it. Their number reached 288 singers, and musicians who played music on cymbals, stringed instruments, and harps (6-7):

Although this number of skillful musicians were large enough to minister in the house of the Lord; following the lead of king David who was always preoccupied with writing divine poetry and psalms to praise the Lord, yet it was however small, compared to the 4000 whom David appointed to praise the Lord (1 Chronicles 23: 5). ... Where have the rest gone? They have probably been distributed all over the kingdom to supervise this ministry everywhere. For, although sacrifices, according to the law of Moses, were offered only in one place; the psalms of David could be sung everywhere.

4- CASTING LOTS TO ORGANIZE THE SERVICE OF THE MUSICIANS IN THE TEMPLE:

“And they cast lots for their duty, the small as well as the great, the teacher with the student” (8)

Twenty-four persons were mentioned at the beginning of this book, the sons of three great men: Asaphj, Heman, and Jeduthun. Although Ethan was the third (6: 44); yet he probably died before establishing this system, and was replaced by Jeduthun, or probably Ethan and Jeduthun were two names of one and the same person.

According to the will of God, Asaph had four sons; and Jeduthun had six sons, (five of whom were mentioned in verse 3, but it is assumed that ‘Shimei; mentioned in verse 17 was the fifth); and Heman had 14 sons, the total to be 24 sons (2, 4), qualified and called for service. But now the question was by what order will they serve? That was established by casting lots to avoid any tendency to competition on the priority, which is a sin that easily could dwell upon many.

The lot was cast without partiality to divide them into 24 divisions, on the same level, the small as well as the great, the teacher with the student, regardless of the age, or the grade they had in their study of music. Everything was left to the ordinance of God (8), before whom all are equal, without any consideration of priority or discernment (See Mathew 20: 23). He often raised the younger over the older.

The singers were divided into 24 divisions to conform to the 24 divisions of the Levites (24: 7-18).

“Now the first lot for Asaph came out for Joseph, the second for Gedaliah, him with his brethren, and sons, twelve” (9)

“the third for Zaccur, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (10)

“the fourth for Jizri, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (11)
“the fifth for Nethaniah, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (12)
“the sixth for Bukkiah, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (13)
“the seventh for Jesharelah, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (14)
“the eighth for Jeshaiiah, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (15)
“the ninth for Mattaniah, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (16)
“the tenth for Shimei, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (17)
“the eleventh for Azarel, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (18)
“the twelfth for Hashabiah, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (19)
“the thirteenth for Shubael, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (20)
“the fourteenth for Mattithiah, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (21)
“the fifteenth for Jeremoth, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (22)
“the sixteenth for Hananiah, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (23)
“the seventeenth for Joshbekashah, his son and his brethren, twelve” (24)
“the eighteenth for Hanani, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (25)
“the nineteenth for Mallothi, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (26)
the twentieth for Eliathah, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (27)
“the twenty-first for hothir, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (28)
“the twenty-second for Giddalti, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (29)
“the twenty-third for Mahazioth, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (30)
“the twenty-fourth for Romanti-Ezer, his sons and his brethren, twelve” (31)

OF THE SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS CONCERNING THE MUSIC:

According to St. John Chrysostom, together with many of the fathers of the church, like St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi, man is a musical being, and music has its living role in man's life since his childhood until the last breath in his life, whatever is his age, position, or education. Proclaiming the role of the spirit of discernment in the life of the true believer, St. John Chrysostom says that drawing the soul to a certain kind of music separates the children of God from those of the devil.

- + We need to learn music to give sweetness and purity to our behavior ... Refraining from music is wrong.
- + We are trained for peace and not for war. While war needs great preparations, peace and love, are two tranquil sisters who need no weapons, nor huge expenses.

While many peoples use military music to stir up the spirit of war, the Christians use the Word of God as a tool for peace.

- + I may call him 'educated', who puts the truth in everything he does. In geometry, music, language, and even in philosophy itself, he chooses what is of benefit, according to faith.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

- + A harp cannot give music by itself, and stays mute and silent, unless someone plays on it with his fingers to wake up music in it,
The string of the harp is the soul, which stays silent, until you, O Lord, strike on it to produce exalted sound of music to glorify You.
You are in no need for the glorification of the earthly creatures, but it is mankind who are in need for You, O Rich One.

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

- + Nothing provides the soul with wings, takes it up from the earth, rids it from the bonds of the body, and teach it to despise the temporal things, like singing praise with the right tunes.
- + The soul by nature is sensitive to music. To deny the demons the ability to inspire the ungodly songs in men, God set the psalms to protect them; for they are attractive and of benefit at the same time. By the spiritual songs, the soul set forth, together with the lips by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Abusing music:

St. Clement warns us against abusing music, so we would be like the male deer that could be drawn to fall into nets set by hunters, by the sound of flute; or like the female horses that are stirred up by music to

help inseminate them. According to him, the Holy Spirit discerns between the music that stirs up corruption, and the music played by the Holy Spirit when the church sings praise to God. The main tool of music

is man himself, who is truly a musical instrument for peace, when all the other musical instruments are for war and battle; that kindle the feelings toward lusts, bearing arms, or to stir up anger and hate.

- + The only musical instrument for the sake of peace is the Lord, the Word, Himself, whom it is befitting of us to use to praise God (the Father); after whom, we no more need to use the classical musical instruments used by those who have no fear of the Lord in their hearts, which they use in their carnivals and meetings, to wake up their pervert minds by their tunes. ... Let our senses be in harmony with the divine law.

- + It is befitting of us to refrain from singing the songs of corruption, but to confine ourselves to sing praise to God, according to the psalm: *“Let them praise His name with the dance; Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp”* (Psalm 149: 3).

- + it is befitting of us to refrain as much as we can, from those loose songs that seduce man toward corruption; when the serious respectable tunes, take the effect of wine away from its drinker, and bring him back to reason.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 25.

GRANT ME, O LORD, THE SPIRIT OF JOY AND PRAISE

- + Grant me to keep Your commandment;
“My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe My ways” (Proverb 23: 26)
 What kind of heart You seek other than the heavenly heart?
 That knows nothing but the spirit of joy and praise;
 It is Your pleasure, for all to become exultant in You.

- + Let me, together with the heads of the musical families,
 Deliver to the generation to come, the spirit of inner exultation;
 Grant me to be faithful in this concern;
 To let the generations to come experience the deposit of heaven;

- + My depths desire to see all mankind like the angels of God;
 To see all attached to You, O Source of joy.

CHAPTER 26

THE GATEKEEPERS, THE STOREKEEPERS, AND THE JUDGES

In chapter 24 the author spoke of the organization of the priests and the Levites in general. And in order to reveal that even if organization is elaborately and firmly performed, yet it provokes the spirit of joy and exultation in the hearts of the worshippers, he speaks in chapter 25 about the musicians and the praise. David intended for the temple of the Lord to an icon of heaven, where the sound of praise is unceasingly heard, and the worshippers enjoy the spirit of joy. As joy is a basic feature in the life of the believer, he is committed to perceive his responsibility to work; the believers do not know the life of licentiousness nor slothfulness; but as "*the Father has been working until now, and the Son is has been working*" (John 5: 17), it is befitting of us not to cease working.

Although caring for organizing the work, David set gatekeepers, treasure keepers, officials, and judges, and allotted for each category its specific task, yet, being the children of God, it is befitting of us to practice all these tasks together..

As a gatekeeper , the believer is committed to keep any wrong thought, pervert emotion, or unfitting behavior, away from himself; As a treasure keeper, he is committed to perceive the precious gifts of God, and that he himself has become a storehouse of heavenly treasures; And as an official in the palace, or as a judge who fulfills justice among the people, he is committed to fulfills his duties faithfully..

1- The gatekeepers or the guards of the temple	1 - 19
2- The Levites assigned to guard the treasuries of the temple	20 - 28
3- The officials and the judges	29 - 32

1-THE GATEKEEPERS OR THE GUARDS OF THE TEMPLE:

Those huge buildings of the temple with all its possibilities, its golden and silver furniture, and the valuable gifts generously offered to it; specially after the return from captivity, had to be guarded.. Here

he speaks about the gatekeepers or the guards, as being a group of Levites (1 Chronicles 9: 17-27), who do a vital role in worship, to keep the temple against the entrance of what is unbefitting of the house of the Lord, beside their role, to guard the gates against the general public, yet keeping them open before the priests. Having such an important role, the gatekeepers had to bear certain features or characteristics like those of the priests (9: 13), it is befitting of them to have humility and self-denial, together with holy zeal, courage, and strength.

Their role does not stop at guarding the gates, for the psalms testify to their task in the temple as some kind of worship, saying: *"Lift up your heads you gates! And be lifted up you everlasting doors; and the king of glory shall come in"* (Psalm 24: 7).

"Concerning the divisions of the gatekeepers of the Korahites, Meshelemiah the son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph" (1)

The list mentioned here about the gatekeepers, is the most detailed of the three lists (" 17-27;16: 26-42). There were 4000 guards of the temple (23: 4-5), called gatekeepers, all Levites. Their work may seem to some as lowly of no much prestige; Yet they actually had a vital role in the service of the temple; carrying out several other tasks, among which:

- 1- Guarding the entrances to the temple, and all the ways leading to it. They are responsible for the sanctity of the temple, keeping anything that may defile it away.
- 2- Opening, closing, and keeping an eye on the outer doors, not only in the official occasions, but during the regular services; to guide the worshippers through the courts of the sanctuary; to encourage the repentant; to keep the strangers and the unclean away; and to guard the temple against the thieves and the enemies of the house of the Lord. In all this there is a hint to the role of the priests of the new covenant, who are entrusted on the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to bind and to loose according to the statute of the Lord Christ (Matthew 16: 19).
- 3- Taking care of the tools and vessels used every day, and making sure of bringing them back to their proper place.
- 4- Taking care of the furniture of the temple, cleaning them, and preparing the sacrifices for offering.
- 5- Mixing the incense or the daily burning.

The first guarding task mentioned in the Holy Book occurred after the falling of Adam, as it is written: *"At the east of the garden of Eden, He placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning, to guard the way to the tree of life"* (Genesis 3: 24).

If the temple of Solomon had to be strictly guarded against anything unclean; it would be a commitment to keep the sanctity of the church of the Lord Christ, which He redeemed by His precious blood, and sent His Holy Spirit to her to be sanctified and prepared for the heavenly wedding. And the believer, as a member in the holy church, carrying treasures in his depths, that need strict heavenly guarding; cries out every morning, saying: "*Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips*" (Psalm 141: 3).

The pious Levites can guard the gates and treasures of the temple, and take care of its cleanness; But who can guard my inner mouth, my senses, and my depths against any sin, but You, O my Lord? My depths. cry out, saying: "*Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain*" (Psalm 127: 1). You alone, having set Your kingdom in me; and made me a temple for Yourself; Guard me, O Lord, for I am Your possession; and the devil never ceases to attack me, to rob Your treasures in me.

- + We should bridle the tongue to keep it from talking nonsense; and if it can talk reason, it should not be kept slothfully silent. Meditating in this, the prophet says: "*Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth, keep watch over the door of my lips*" (Psalm 141: 3). Here the psalmist did not seek from the Lord a wall, but a door that could be opened and closed; to teach us when to open our mouths with wisdom, and in the proper time, when to close it with silence.

(Father Gregory the Great)

- + He did not say "a wall", but "a door" that could be opened and closed; opened for confessing sin; and closed against justifying it. Let it be a strong door, but not for destruction.
- + "*Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain*" (Psalm 127: 1) ... As stewards of God, we guard you; Yet we, as well, pray to Him to guard us together with you. We are your shepherds, yet we are as well under the care of God; for we are your fellow sheep. We are your teachers,; yet, concerning God, we are your fellow students in His school
If we wish to be guarded by God who became humble for our sake, and glorified to keep us; let us be humble as well; let no one of us count himself as something, for there is nothing good in anyone, unless it is given to him by God, who is alone good.
- + That is the house we build by the living a virtuous life, built by the help of God; For: "*Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it*" (Psalm 127: 1)

(St. Augustine)

- + Why would we suffer for having no house, nor cover, nor support?. Would it not be better for us to dwell in the Builder of our house, and under the protection of the Watchman of our city? ... If David found no comfort until he found Him (God his comfort); How could we seek comfort outside Him?

(St. John Saba)

- + Although God made every ability to resist the devil within the limit of man's will and freedom, Yet He did not give man an absolute power to control his own psychological reactions and his covetousness; hence the prophet says: *"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; And unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain"* (Psalm 127: 1)

(St. Abba Maccari the Great)

"And the sons of Meshelemiah were Zechariah the firstborn, Jediael the second, Zebadiah the third,

Jethniel the fourth" (2)

"Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, Eljehoenai the seventh" (3)

"Moreover the sons of Obed-Edom were Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, joab the third, Sacar the fourth, Nathanel the fifth" (4)

Obed-Edom: Most prominent among the gatekeepers, together with his family; He had 62 of sons and their brethren; and as it is written *"For God blessed him"* (5). After the death of Uzza the ark of the covenant was kept in Obed's house; for which God did not forget his faithfulness (13: 14; 16: 38); He guarded it when David brought it forth to Jerusalem; And here we see him together with his big family, gatekeepers of the temple in the days of Solomon. It was said about his sons that they were mighty men of valor in their service.

"Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peulthai the eighth; for God blessed him" (5)

Sixty-two of the sons of Obed-Edom were engaged in this task; and on account of that he was the one who gave hospitality with joy and reverence to the ark of covenant; God rewarded him by:

1-God blessed him by eight sons (5); for the children are an inheritance from the Lord. It is a great blessing to have many sons in the family, especially when they are capable and skillful in ministering to the

Lord.

2- His sons were lifted up to more sensitive ministries in the sanctuary; For those who were faithful in ministering to the sanctuaries of the Lord in their own house, were found qualified to minister to them in the

house of the Lord (1 Timothy 3: 4-5); And as David says: *"I keep Your law, O Lord; This has become mine, because I kept Your precepts"* (psalm 119: 55-56) .

"Also to Shemaiah his son were sons born who governed their fathers' houses, because they were men of great ability" (6)

"The sons of Shemaiah were Othni, Rephael, Obed, and Elzabad, whose brothers Elihu and Semachiah were able men" (7)

"All these were the sons of Obed-Edom, they and their sons and their brethren, able men with strength for the work; sixty-two of Obed-Edom" (8)

"And Meshelmiah had sons and brethren, eighteen able men" (9)

"Also Hosah of the children of Merari had sons: Shimri the first (for though he was not the firstborn, his father made him the first)" (10)

About someone it is said: *"Though he was not the firstborn, his father made him the first"* (10). Because he was excellent, or because his older brother was very weak; his father made him first; yet not in inheritance, which would be against the law (Deuteronomy 21:16-17); but in ministry that requires personal qualifications.

"Hilkiah the second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth; all the sons and brethren of Hosah were thirteen" (11)

"Among these were the divisions of the gatekeepers, among the chief men, having duties just like their brethren, to serve in the house of the Lord" (12)

"And they cast lots for each gate, the small as well as the great according to their father's house" (13)

The gatekeepers and the singers of praise were assigned by casting lots; everyone had his own gate or location (13). Although it is not mentioned here, they must have been divided into 24 divisions, because

they were 24 names, and so were their divisions.. Happy were those who dwell in the house of the Lord; for they are well fed, educated, used, and protected; The gates of the temple were guarded by men; but

the angels of God guard the gates of the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21: 12).

"The lot for the East gate fell to Shelemiah. Then they cast lots for his son Zechariah, a wise counselor, and his lot came out for the North gate" (14)

It is to be noticed that many of those called for ministry were "men of great ability" (6), "able men" (7), "men with strength for the work" (8), One of them was "a wise counselor" (14), " who has served well...

obtained for himself a good standing" (1 Timothy 3:13);, and was promoted from gate keeping to the body of counselors. While those of physical strength, courage, and wisdom, were either well qualified for the tasks allotted to them; or will be qualified by God.

"To Obed-Edom the South gate, and to his sons the storehouse" (15)

"To shuppim and Hosah the lot came out for the West gate, with the Shallecheth gate on the ascending highway-watchman opposite watchman" (16)

"On the east were six Levites, on the north four each day, on the south four each day, and for the storehouse two by two" (17)

"As for the Parbar on the west, there were four on the highway, and two at the Parbar" (18)

"These were the divisions of the gatekeepers among the sons of Korah and among the sons of Merari" (19)

2- THE LEVITES ASSIGNED TO GUARD THE TREASURIES OF THE TEMPLE:

"Of the Levites, Ahijah was over the treasuries of the house of God, and over the treasuries of the dedicated things" (20)

Some Levites were assigned to guard the treasuries of the temple, the spoils and the optional offerings; beside preparing the sacrifices; and holding the accounts concerning the donations. They kept the

treasuries against rust, termites, and thieves; and prudently dispense them according to the need. With such a huge house, it needs several kinds of treasuries to keep. On a daily basis, flour, wine, oil, salt, fuel,

lamps, clothing, and holy vessels were dispensed; beside the money needed to purchase all these things, which came from the peoples' donations, which was so abundant that a great part of it was kept for

emergencies. These treasuries symbolize the abundance in the Father's heavenly house; as in Christ (the true temple) there are the treasuries of wisdom, knowledge, and uncountable riches.

“The sons of Laadan, the descendants of the Gershonites of Laadan, heads of their father’ houses of Laadan the Gershonite, Jehieli” (21)

“The sons of Jehieli, Zetham and Joel his brother, were over the treasuries of the house of the Lord” (22)

Zethan and Joel his brother together with Shebuel and Shelomith, were members of a special committee that took care of the general treasuries of the sanctuaries dedicated by king David, heads of the fathers’ houses, and the chiefs of the armies; similar to that formed in the days of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 13: 13; Ezra 8: 23).

“Of the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites:” (23)

“Shebuel, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, was overseer of the treasuries” (24)

“And the brethren of Eliezer were Rehabiah his son, Jeshaiiah his son, Joram his son, Zichri his son, and Shelomith his son” (25)

“This Shelomith and his brethren were over all the treasuries of the dedicated things which King David and the heads of their fathers’ houses, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the army, had dedicated” (26)

“Some of the spoils won in battles they dedicated to maintain the house of the Lord” (27)

The spoils of war (27) were mainly a portion for the victorious army, yet some soldiers used to offer their portion to the temple, as an expression of reverence to God, and thanksgiving for the divine protection; as

did by Abraham who gave one tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek (Hebrew 7: 4); and as in the days of Moses, when the men coming back of war used to offer of their portions in the spoils to the Lord.

This

blessed practice was then revived, not only by Samuel and David, but also by Abner and Joab (28).

Concerning deeds of righteousness, God expects from us a lot out of what He pours upon us of great success..

“And all that Samuel the seer, Saul the son of Kish, Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruiah had dedicated, every dedicated thing was under the hand of Shelomith and his brethren” (28)

3- THE OFFICIALS AND THE JUDGES:

The last part of chapter 26 speaks of the role of the Levites in their relationship with the people; as some of them were assigned as officials to serve the people and the king, to carry out other official tasks, like collecting the portion of the temple, teaching services, and as judges all over the land to provide justice. 107 thousand, appointed west of the River Jordan; 2700 east of it in Gilead, to take care of the issues pertaining to God and the king.(32); have got special privileges, and were in direct contact with the king.

God's intention in the first place was for Israel to be a theocratic nation governed by God. The tabernacle of meeting was in the midst of the people, and the priests drew their decisions from God; but owing to the failure of the Levites, God set judges for them. But as the people requested a king. Israel became a royal kingdom, and David came on the throne, yet he concentrated on bringing it back under the authority of God.

"Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons performed duties as officials and judges over Israel outside Jerusalem" (29)

The Levites were also used for bringing forth justice to the people, beside the leaders, and the heads of the tribes, because of their knowledge of the statutes of God more than anyone else, on account of that this was what they studied

"Of the Hebronites Hashabiah and his brethren, one thousand seven hundred able man, had the oversight of Israel on the west side of Jordan for all the business of the Lord, and in the service of the king" (30)

Assigned for God's work and that of the king, the Levites took care of both the civil and the religious issues , like collecting the tithes of God, and the taxes of the king, executing punishments for the various crimes done against God, the government, and the peace of the People; confronting tendencies of idol-worship, and practices of oppression, and putting the statutes of the law into effect. Some of them were

probably assigned for the religious issues, while others were assigned for civil issues; and by their cooperation together they could render good service to God and to the king.

“Among the Hebronites, Jerijah was head of the Hebronites according to his genealogy of the fathers. In the fourth year of the reign of David, they were sought, and there found among them capable men at Jazer of Gilead” (31).

“And his brethren were thousand seven hundred able men heads of fathers’ houses, whom king David made officials over the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, for every matter pertaining to God and the affairs of the king” (32)

The number of Levites assigned upon the two and a half tribes east of the Jordan was 2700, namely more than those assigned upon the rest of the tribes west of the Jordan (1700) (30, 32); on account of that,

either the number of judges for the former tribes was not enough, or being far from Jerusalem, on the border of the surrounding nations, they were in more danger of being influenced by idol-worship, and were

therefore in need of more Levites to protect hem against perversion..

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 26

SET A GUARD, O LORD, ON MY DEPTHS

- + David appointed pious and mighty men of valor as gatekeepers;
To guard the entrances to the temple, to open and close them;
To keep unclean things from entering Your sanctuaries;
And thieves from robbing their treasures;
By Your love, You set me a temple for Yourself, and Your Holy Spirit dwells in me;
Keep on, I pray, pouring Your treasures into my depths;
Who can guard my senses, emotions, and thoughts but You?
When You open, no one can close; and when You close no one can open;
Guard me by Your grace, so that nothing foreign from You may enter into my heart;
Surround me by heavenly guards, that no one may rob Your gifts and treasures from me;
You have set angels on the gates of the High Jerusalem (Revelation 21: 12);
Here is my heart, Your Jerusalem and dwelling place; Set angels to guard it, until I pass over in peace to You.

- + King David set keepers to guard Your treasures;
To receive the offerings, the gifts, and the spoils of war of gold and silver to the account of Your temple;
To keep the attires of service, and the holy vessels;
To keep the storehouses against rust, termites, and thieves;
Grant me Your wisdom to deposit as much as I can with my brethren, the poor, the needy, and those who suffer;
To keep for me, to get double as much on the last day to come;

- + Count me, O Lord, among the officials, to serve Your people;
To seek what is for the edification of Your church, and not what is for my own benefit;
I wish justice and righteousness prevail among Your people;
Here I am in Your hands; Tell me what I should do;
Guide me, sanctify me, and support me to do every good thing.



CHAPTER 27

APPOINTING THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERSHIPS

The political and the military organizations:

It is to be noticed that the system mentioned here and in the previous chapters is a new system, although not exactly conforming to what came in the Mosaic law, yet not contradictory to it. It suits the building of the temple as a new stage; a development to how things were in the wilderness, or in the days of Joshua, the judges, and the beginning of the era of the kings. It is a new system set upon a direct guidance of God.

The list of leaders here came conforming to what came in chapter 11, of David's mighty men of valor

We notice that the author sets his lists based upon the figure 12, and its derivatives (1 Chronicles 24: 7-9; Ezra 8: 24); he probably finds in this figure a kind of perfection; as the year is divided into 12 months;

and this figure has its holiness for the Jews, who are divided into 12 tribes. ... The army, like the Levites served in divisions:

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1- Those responsible for organizing the monthly service | 1 - 15 |
| 2- Officers over the tribes of Israel | 16 - 24 |
| 3- The senior state officials | 25 - 31 |
| 4- The king's counselors | 32 - 34 |

1- THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MONTHLY SERVICE:

“And the children of Israel, according to their number, the heads of fathers' houses, the captains of thousands and hundreds and their officers, served the king in every matter of military divisions. These divisions came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year, each division having twenty-four thousand” (1)

Here we find a description of how the armed forces of the kingdom were organized. Having been a man of war, who engaged in many battles, David now, being given by God comfort from his enemies, tends to

organize his army. He did not gather them together in one place, for that could create trouble for him and the state; And he did not release them nor scatter them; for that could subject the kingdom to danger

from the enemies; and the people might forget the art of war on which they were trained. But he planned to keep a steady portion of the army on a permanent level;

1- He kept 24000 men permanently armed, probably as one division in a certain location of the kingdom, strong enough to keep peace and security for the people.... We, likewise, as true Christians, should be

properly instructed about the spiritual war; for we have spiritual enemies, against whom we should always stand by.

2- He used to change them every month; hence the total number of the militia would be 288,000; namely one fifth of the able men in the kingdom; Dividing them into 12 divisions , would guarantee that they will all

be well trained and instructed in the military issues. No one therefore was committed to serve longer than one month every year, which was certainly within their capacity, except in cases of emergency, when

they would be easily and quickly deployed.. It would be wise of the leaders, while providing security to the people, to plan it, as much as possible, in an easy and effective way, with the least burden upon the people.

3- Every group had a supreme leader, beside the captains of thousands and hundreds. Those twelve were mentioned among David's mighty men of valor in (2 Samuel 23; 1 chronicles 11)

The heads of the fathers' houses, were individuals or members of a household who steadily provide king David with the services necessary for building of the temple.

"Twenty-four thousand"; According to some, the figure 1000 here does not necessarily indicate the actual number, but rather refers to a division or a company of men, whatever its size is.

:

“Over the first division for the first month was Jashobeam the son of Zabiel, and in his division were twenty-four thousand” (2)

“he was of the children of Perez, and the chief of all the captains of the army for the first month” (3)

“Over the division of the second month was Dodai an Ahohite, and of his division Mikloth also was the leader; in his division were twenty-four thousand” (4)

Dodai the Ahohite had Mikloth with him (4), to replace him in case of his absence, incapacity, or death.

“The third captain of the army for the third month was Benaiah the son of Jehoiada the priest, who was chief; in his division were twenty-two thousand” (5)

“This was the Benaiah who was mighty among the thirty, and was over the thirty; in his division was Ammizabad his son” (6)

Ammizabad, Benaiah's son was in his division (6), followed by Asahel his other son (7); which indicates that organizing the Militia was done at the beginning of the reign of David, for Asahel was killed by Abner

while David reigned in Hebron; then he renewed it after he had comfort from his wars, to provide his son Solomon with peace... If we assume that we are in peace, as long as we are still in the flesh, we should always be ready for spiritual wars.

In the East, there was a common proverb of significance, sent by kings to their enemies; namely, *“Let not the one who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes it off”* (1 Kings 20: 11); namely, it is not

befitting of him who puts on weapons, to boast as though he went into battle and came back victorious. He is committed first to conquer to boast his conquest. According to Solomon the sage, *“Do not boast*

about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth” (Proverb 27: 1). And according to the apostle: *“Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls”* (1 Corinthians 10: 12).

+ Our abidance here is not secure; until we get out of the currants of the present life, and sail to the safe haven. Do not boast therefore, that you stand fast, but take heed lest you fall; For, if Paul so fears, he who is stronger than all of us, how much more it is befitting of us to do?!

+ He who reviles the others will fall into their same sins; hence we are advised by the blessed Paul, saying: *“Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls”*.

- + The first feature of the military tactics, is to know where you stand; for many things depend on it. Hence Paul often talks about standing fast; saying: “*Stand fast in the faith, be brave and strong*” (1 Corinthians 16: 13); “*Stand fast in the Lord*” (Philippians 4: 1); “*Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls*”; and, “*That it may be well with you, and you may live long on earth*” (Ephesians 6: 3). He certainly means the right way of standing fast. Those who are more experienced in war know the great importance of how to stand fast.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“The fourth captain of the fourth month was Asahel the brother of Joab, and Zebadiah his son after him; in his division were twenty-four thousand” (7)

“The fifth captain for the fifth month was Shamhuth the Izrahite; in his division were twenty-four thousand” (8)

“The sixth captain for the sixth month was Ira the son of Ikketh the Tekoite; in his division were twenty-four thousand” (9)

“The seventh captain for the seventh month was Helez the Pelonite, of the children of Ephraim; in his division were twenty-four thousand” (10)

“The eighth captain for the eighth month was Sibbechai the Hushathite, of the Zarhites; in his division were twenty-four thousand” (11)

“The ninth captain for the ninth month was Abiezer the Anathothite, of the Benjamites; in his division were twenty-four thousand” (12)

“The tenth captain for the tenth month was Maharai the Netophathite, of the Zarhites; in his division was twenty-four thousand” (13)

“The eleventh captain for the eleventh month was Benaiah the Pirathonite, of the children of Ephraim; in his division were twenty-four thousand” (14)

“The twelfth captain for the twelfth month was Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel; in his division were twenty-four thousand” (15)

2- OFFICERS OVER THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL:

“Furthermore over the tribes of Israel: the officer over the Reubenites was Eliezer the son of Zichri; over the Simeonites Shephatiah the son of Maachah” (16)

They still follow the same system set by Moses in the old days in the wilderness; namely, that every tribe should have a leader or chief; which probably continued to be followed by election or by inheritance

within the same family. Those mentioned here were the acting ones when those events were narrated.

Elihu or Eliab, who was a chief of Judah, was the eldest son of Jesse, who came as a descendant of

Nahshon and Salmon, who were the chiefs of the tribe in the days of Moses; Yet we assume that their authority diminished from what they used to have when every tribe acted alone. For now, all the tribes

submit, not only to the king, but to the chief of the tribe as well.

Being Christians, we are committed to “*submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good*” (1 Peter 2:13-14).

The list of tribes came in a certain order:

First the sons of Leah in order: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

Then the sons of Rachel: Joseph represented by his two sons: Ephraim and Manasseh; then Benjamin.

Then the sons of Belha; (not in a chronological order): Naphtali and Dan.

Then the sons of Zilpah: Gad, Asher (not mentioned here)

The names of the heads of the tribes of Israel in the days of David, refer to the existence of a kind of cooperation, comfort, and peace between them and the king; contrary to what happened in the days of

Solomon, when a kind of controversy was obvious, that became more prominent directly after Solomon’s death.

“Over the Levites, Hashabiah the son of Kemuel; over the Aaronites, Zadok” (17)

“Over Judah, Elihu, one of David’s brothers; over Issachar, Omri the son of Michael” (18)

“Over Zebulun, Ishmaiah, the son of Azriel” (19)

“Over the children of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Azaziah; Over the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joel the son of Pedaiah” (20)

“Over half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo the son of Zechariah; over Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner” (21)

“Over Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner” (21); Despite the fact that Abner was an enemy of David, and was an opponent to giving the throne to him; yet David did not come against this promotion, but probably

recommended it himself; which teaches us to pay evilback with good. A marvelous portrait of David's personality, who practiced the gospel commandment while under the law.

- + It may not be easy for man *"to love his enemies, bless those who curse him, does good to those who hate him, and pray for those who spitefully use him and persecute him"* (Matthew 5: 43, 44); but if he remembers the mutual human nature between him and them, he will not care for the sufferings they cause to him; and the more cruel they are, the more compassionate he will be, as a father toward his retarded son..

Paul, having diagnosed the ailment that provoked his enemies to act in such a way, his care for them as sick increased.. We hear him talking with exalted compassion about those who scourged him five times (2 Corinthians 11: 24), who stoned, shackled, shed his blood, and intended to cut him to pieces, saying: *"For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge"* (Romans 10: 2); And addressing those who afflicted him, he says: *"Do not be haughty but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, he may not spare you either"* (Romans 11: 20, 21). And when he realized the judgment to dwell upon them; he unceasingly wept and wailed for their sake.

- + By becoming one with those who revile and slander you, and mixing with them, you will overcome them (by love and faith). And as the yeast hidden in dough will not perish, but will rather alter the nature of the **dough**, so it is with preaching the gospel. Therefore do not fear, when I tell you that afflictions are to come; for your light will never be quenched, but will prevail on all men.

(St. John Chrysostom)

"Over Dan, Azarel the son of Jeroham, These were the leaders of the tribes of Israel" (22)

"But David did not take the number of those twenty years old and under, because the Lord had said He would multiply Israel like the stars of the heavens" (23)

Giving his command to number the people, David did not allow it for those under the age of twenty years, with the assumption that by so doing he would alleviate the bad impression of what he was doing; yet that exemption was a weak, attempt, on account of that it was not customary to number those under twenty years, but only grown up men.

That failed census was not consummated for the wrath of God dwelt before Joab completes it; and probably because David, ashamed of what he did, ordered to keep the records of the census secret, and refrained from using its results. Being done out of the pride of David's heart, it was reluctantly done by Joab, Feeling shame for doing it, David probably wished it to be forgotten, on account of that the divine chastisement dwelt upon Israel because of him.

A good man, will not find pleasure in doing what provokes God to anger, and will not be able to use anything he got via sin. David did the old census in a moment of pride and lack of faith; but now he does no census, but trusts in God's promises.

He has 12 officials responsible for the local affairs; as well as counselors and friends providing him with counsel.

“Joab the son of Zeruiah began a census, but he did not finish, for wrath came upon Israel because of this census; nor was the number recorded in the account of the chronicles of king David” (24)

3- THE SENIOR STATE OFFICIALS::

The last part of the chapter refers to the possessions of the king, and his sources of income, that were used in running the kingdom, which doubled during his reign. It is to be noticed that after more than four centuries, the possessions of the royal household was recorded in a more accurate way (Ezekiel 46: 16-18).

David did not collect taxes from the people, and did not stretch his hand to the spoils of war, but left them to the account of the temple (26: 26)

“And Azmaveth the son of Adiel was over the king's treasuries; and Jehonathan the son of Uzziah was over the storehouses in the field, in the cities, in the villages, and in the fortresses” (25)

“Ezri the son of Chelub was over those who did the work of the field for tilling the ground” (26)

“And Shimei the Ramathite was over the vineyards, and Zabdi the Shiphmite was over the produce of the vineyards for the supply of wine” (27)

“Baal-Hanan the Gederite was over the olive trees and the sycamore trees that were in the lowlands, and Joash was over the store of oil” (28)

“And Shitrai the Sharonite was over the herd that fed in Sharon, and Shaphat the son of Adlai was over the herds that were in the valleys” (29)

“Obil the Ishmaelite was over the camels; Jehdeiah the Meronothite was over the donkeys” (30)

“and Jaziz the Hagerite was over the flocks. All these were the officials over king David’s property” (31)

“The officials over the king’s property”, as they were called, were supervising the king’s vineyards, olive trees, flocks of camels, donkeys, and sheep. Beside the high officials, everyone was engaged in a service that suits his abilities, according to the simplicity of those days. Having been a disciplined man of war, David was a great instructor and ruler; and a faithful steward over his own property; according to what is written: *“The king himself is served from the field”* (Ecclesiastes 5: 9). The rulers who want their subjects to be diligent, have to make themselves role models of diligence and business administration . We find later how the poor of the land vinedressers and farmers (2 kings 25: 12); but now David let his elites do those works.

5- THE KING’S COUNSELORS:

“Also Jehonathan, David’s uncle was a counselor, a wise man, and a scribe; and Jehiel the son of Hashmoni was with the king’s sons” (32)

As the Holy Book did not refer to an uncle of David who was his counselors, therefore some interpret the word “uncle” as (a close friend). The entourage of the king were known for their wisdom, and eloquence; therefore that one so called “David’s uncle”, chosen as a counselor, was not only a learned man of experience in politics, but in the Holy Books as well; Another one, similarly knowledgeable and skillful, was made a mentor of the king’s sons; And ‘Ahithophel, was a clever and a crafty counselor; But the faithful ‘Hushai was the king’s companion and his trusted secretary. They all were men of great abilities; for the

wisdom of a ruler is demonstrated in their choice of their counselors. But, in spite of those trustworthy and beloved counselors, relatives, and friends, David preferred the Word of God over all, “*Your testimonies are my delight and my counselors*” (Psalm 119: 24).

“Ahithophel was the king’s counselor, and Hushai the Archite was the king’s companion”
(33)

‘Hushai’ being faithful saved David’s life from the evil council of Ahithophel (2 Samuel 15-23);

“After Ahithophel was Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, then Abiathar, and the general of the king’s army was Joab” (34)

‘Ahithophel’ whose painful story came in (2 Samuel 15, 17), was like ‘Joab’, a man of great privileges, but unfaithful.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 27

GRANT ME, O LORD, A LIFE OF PERPETUAL READINESS

- + My God, my soul perpetually blesses You;
For You set me a soldier in the salvation army;
You are my Leader; You are my Weapon;
You are the Grantor of conquest, and the Giver of crowns;
You granted me to get up from my fall, and made me steadfast in You;
Make me perpetually attached to You, lest I fall again;
Keep me company all the way, until I encounter You face to face.

- + By You, I enjoy faith and love;
By faith, I do not fear the devil, my enemy;
By You, the hosts of darkness cannot prevail over me; for You are with me;
I would not fear death; for You are my Life;
By Love I challenge my weak nature;
I desire the salvation of all my oppressors;
I love all humans, and rejoice in their fellowship with You.

- + Glory be to You, O Lord of hosts; who keeps Your children against evil

DAVID'S LAST DAYS

(1 Chronicles – chapters 28-29)

In the last two chapters of the first book of the chronicles, with his last days on earth, David sought to encounter all the leaders of the land in a great assembly, to present a message to Israel, and another to his son Solomon, in the hearing of the whole nation, he presented it with an amazing wisdom.

Although he almost dedicated his last days on earth to prepare for the building of the temple, yet he was more preoccupied with preparing the heart of his son Solomon, and those of the leaders and the people to work in unison with faithful and loyal hearts. David's heart was not preoccupied with parading his preparations for building the temple before the leaderships, for the sake of his personal glory; but, with a spirit of wisdom, love, and humility, David made it clear that that work, done by the Lord, was the subject of pleasure for all Israel, leaders and people.

Having found pleasure in finding a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, he intended for the leaders and the people to have the same feelings, to adopt the idea as though it comes from them, and to consummate it with the spirit of diligence. In psalm 132: 3-5 he expressed his desire concerning building a house for the comfort of the ark of the covenant of the Lord; and intended for all to have the same holy desire and zeal. ... We, likewise, find our comfort when the Lord dwells in us, being His holy temple.

- + We shall indeed not cease to watch, pray, strive, and work, until the Lord is pleased with our souls, and chooses them a dwelling place for himself, saying: "*This is My resting place forever. Here I will dwell, for I have desired it*" (Psalm 132: 14)

(Father Martyrus the Syrian)

- + Where did David look for a place for the Lord? Being meek, he looked for it in his soul.... How can someone be a place for the Lord? ... Listen to the prophet say: "*On this one will I look: on him who is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word*" (Isaiah 66: 2).... Do you wish to be a place for the Lord? Be as Isaiah says..

- + Seek the friendship of Christ without fear; for He wishes that you give him hospitality in your house; to set a place for Him.... What does it mean to set a place for Him?... Do not love yourself, Love Him. ... For if you love yourself you are closing the door before Him; but If you love Him you would open the door before Him; and If you do, He will enter; and you will be with Him who loves you.

(St. Augustine)

- + Do not seek the comfort of the body; but pray diligently and fervently; do not ever pray slothfully; Stand up and pray from the depth of your heart, for it is your duty toward God. "*I will not go up to the comfort of my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty God of Jacob*" (Psalm 132). But if you allow yourself to pray with slothfulness, and not from your whole heart, you will not find comfort in your prayer, nor after your prayer. If you wish to find comfort indeed, cleanse your sins with your tears before God; saying: "*At night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears*" (Psalm 6). Therefore beware not to stretch your body before God, and despise prayer for the sake of the comfort of the flesh

(St. (Mar) Isaac the Syrian)

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CHAPTER 28

DAVID ADDRESSES THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL

The beginning of the book of the kings, concerning the last days of David, introduced Solomon, yet not in a way as shining as did the present chapter and the following one of the chronicles; in which we see the awesome farewell of David to his son and subjects. In which we notice:

- 1- What Solomon did in building the temple of the Lord, has been realized as a symbol of what we should realize through the truth, having the Lord dwell and find comfort in our hearts as His own house.
- 2- Although David prepared huge provisions for building the temple, yet he could not provide the inner comfort of the soul; until our Christ comes to grant us comfort and peace.
- 3- God chose Solomon as His son, to build Him a house (10) (Hebrew 2: 3-4); And considers Solomon's kingdom as the Lord's kingdom (5)
- 4- This could be realized on one condition, namely : *"If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever: (9)*
- 5- The book of the chronicles did not give us an account of the attempt of Adonijah to take the throne by force; and the weakness of David in his last days, but concentrated on God's work to give the throne to Solomon.
- 6- The assembly was not intended to set an architectural plan for the building; as the temple came as an extension of the tabernacle of meeting, set by Moses through a divine proclamation (Exodus 25: 9).
- 7- The beginning of David's address reveals his sound view of the royalty; the king speaks to his people as a brother who cherishes them; considers that he was chosen for their sake (1 Chronicles 14: 2), and not for his own benefit, whether material or mental; and that the relationship of the king with God is like that of a son with his own father (60
- 8- The style of the address is similar to the language of the book of Deuteronomy and some of the writings of the prophets; the style of preaching, and the desire to serve the Lord with a complete heart (Deuteronomy 6: 5; Jeremiah 24: 7).

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1- David assembles all the leaders of Israel | 1 - 8 |
| 2- David gives Solomon a commandment, a promise, and a warning | 9 - 10 |
| 3- David provides Solomon with the building plans of the temple | 11 - 19 |
| 4- David encourages Solomon to start work right away | 20 – 21 |

1-DAVID ASSEMBLES ALL THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL:

David assembled all the leaders, to reveal to them his desire to build the temple of the Lord, and the reasons why he was denied that honor; and to reveal, as well, the reasons behind choosing Solomon to replace him on the throne. He spoke to the officers of the tribes, the heads of the divisions, the captains of the thousands and hundreds; the stewards over all the substance and possessions of the king, and all the valiant mighty men of valor. Nothing preoccupied him in his farewell address but the building of the house of the Lord; and instead of complaining for being denied the honor of building it, he proclaimed his care for preparing his son Solomon for the work.

“Now David assembled at Jerusalem all the leaders of Israel; the officers of the tribes, and captain of the divisions who served the king, the captains over thousands, and captains of hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possessions of the king, and of his sons, with the officials, the valiant men, and all the mighty men of valor” (1)

“After serving his generation by the will of God” (Acts 13: 36), David, approaching the time for his departure from his body; and as an example of the “Son of David”, who, the nearer he came to the end of His time on earth, the more He strived to consummate His mission; we see David restore a little of his vigor after the weakness mentioned in (1 Kings 1: 1), he got a little stronger, probably in response to his prayer in (Psalm 71: 18), to have a chance to present a final service to God and his people.

David called all his elites to bid them farewell together (1), the way Moses did (Deuteronomy (31: 28), and Joshua (Joshua 34: 2; 24: 1). He did not declare the name of his heir on the throne except in the presence of those who represented the people. He held a great assembly of all the leaders of Israel to support the enthronement of Solomon as his successor. He confirmed to them that his choice of Solomon was not based upon hereditary factors, but according to the will of God Himself..

“Then king David rose to his feet and said, ‘Hear me my brethren and my people; I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God; and had made preparations to build it’” (2),

Talking as an old man in the last stage of his life, David introduced himself as no more than someone to his brethren, saying, "*Hear me my brethren and my people*" (2). It gave him great pleasure to have them as his servants (21: 3), but now he calls them his brethren whom he loves, and his people whom he shepherds, and not his servants whom he leads. Addressing them with a great deal of respects, he not only got up from his sick bed to meet them; but being activated by the occasion, he even got up from his chair and rose to his feet (2)

in awe to the Lord whose will he was going to proclaim, and in reverence to that great assembly of Israel.. It is as though he sees himself less than them as an assembly, although he is greater than anyone of them; and although his advanced age, frailty, beside his great stature as the king, would be enough for him to address them while sitting; but he intended to show the humility of his heart, by rising up to his feet. It is befitting of the leaders to talk to their subjects with humility and compassion; for this will not lessen their honor, but will increase their love for him; ... By so doing, David drew their attention to what he was going to say.

According to St. Basil the Great, the virtue of humility is the best lesson we learn from the Lord Christ Himself, and an imitation of Him. He says that it is befitting of the leader to be in good relationship with all his brethren, which would reveal all the secrets of their hearts; To be a role model to appreciate; To love his brethren "*just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children*" (1 Thessalonians 2: 7); And to be like a physician of their souls, to provide the proper medication for every sickness they may have. He also says:

[He should be before God, a servant of Christ, and a steward of His sacraments, who always fear to say or to do something against the will of God, to become accordingly a false witness to him; Or to be accused of defiling the sanctities, through presenting what contradicts the teachings of the Lord, or what does not give Him pleasure, in his relationships with the brethren, like a nursing mother cherishing her

own children. He should desire to provide everyone, not only with the gospel of God, but to present what is for the benefit of the whole congregation, like the commandment of our Lord and God Jesus Christ, saying: *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you”* (John 13: 34); *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends”* (John 15: 13)].

“But God said to me, ‘You shall not build a house for my name, because you have been a man of war and have shed blood’ (3)

Here David made it clear that he had the intention to build a temple for God, but that was not according to the will of God (2-3); which he previously revealed to his son Solomon (22: 7-8). Here he made it clear that a house for the comfort of the ark of the covenant is a footstool for God; For heaven is the throne of God, and the earth and the most magnificent of temples are nothing but His footstool. There is great difference between the proclamations of the divine glory in the high and the low worlds; In the former, the angels surround His throne (Isaiah 6: 2); and in the later, we the weak and poor creatures, worship at His footstool. (Psalm 99: 5; 132: 7).

As an evidence of his faithfulness and readiness to build the temple, David told the assembly about what he prepared for it; God did not allow him to build the temple because God assigned him to perform something else; the wars of Israel were enough for one individual to carry out; he had to serve the people by the sword; while another had to serve them by the tools of building. The time of peace is the time of building and edification (Acts 9: 31)

“However the Lord God of Israel chose me above all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever; for He has chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father, He was pleased with me, to make me king over all Israel” (4)

“And of all my sons (for the Lord has given me many sons), He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel” (5)

He proclaimed that choosing him and Solomon after him for the throne, were according to a divine ordinance; they both were therefore, the most worthy of the kingdom, for the Lord God of Israel has chosen them by prophecies (4-5).

Here the right of the firstborn did not apply; but that of worthiness, as it was in the following previous situations::

- 1-Judah was not the firstborn to Jacob; yet God chose his tribe to be the ruling tribe; And Jacob prophesied that Christ will come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49: 10).
- 2- It so seems that the family of Jesse was not the greatest of the tribe of Judah; For Shiloh was before Perez; And it is not clear if he was a descendant of Nahshon or of Salmon; and Ram, father of Nahshon, had an older brother (1 Chronicles 2: 9); So probably were Boaz, Obed, and Jesse.
- 3- David was the youngest of the sons of Jesse; Yet God loved him and chose him to be a king. God chooses whom He loves, to make him like Himself; as He did with David whom He made "*a man according to His heart*".
- 4- Solomon was among the youngest of David's sons, Yet God chose him to sit on the throne, and to build the temple; on account of that he was the most wise and tending to peace. It is obvious from this chapter that king David, so far, has not completely and obviously given the throne up to Solomon.

The way David himself did not take the throne through the laws of inheritance, the enthronement of Solomon after his father David was not according to these laws, but through God's own choice; for he was not the firstborn, as proclaimed by David on that occasion. It is obvious that not all the leaderships received that proclamation well; but the author of this book disregarded the inner intentions of the other sons of David to take the throne.

What preoccupied David's heart was not the mere enthronement of Solomon, but building of the temple, and putting a firm and detailed plan to realize that.. David's instructions to his son as he delivered

the throne to him, came concerning the building of the temple; as though that was the foremost and most prominent task for the coming king.

5- David's instructions in harmony with what came in the book of Deuteronomy and in the prophets; It came carrying the portrait of preaching in a sermon-like way. In it David, the prophet and king concentrated on the need to diligently keep the commandments of the Lord with the whole heart (Deuteronomy 6: 15); and to seek to find Him (Deuteronomy 4: 29).

Here, the author proclaimed in a simple way that God commanded David to deliver the throne to his son Solomon, to let him build the temple, that he himself could not realize, but prepared all the possibilities to realize.

The way Solomon was not the firstborn to David to follow his father on the throne; David himself was not the firstborn to his father Jesse. This trend began since the first generation of humanity; as God chose Seth to get the blessing, and not his elder brother Cain; and chose Jacob, and not his older brother Esau the firstborn. God's accounts completely differ from human accounts. While men seek the firstborn according to age; the true firstborn in the sight of God, is the more holy one.

We as believers, became members in the church of the firstborn, not for the sake of the element of time, but through our unity and fellowship with Christ the Firstborn.

As the kingdom concerns God himself, He chooses whomever to set as a king, with no commitment to the regular laws of heredity; as David was not a heir of Saul; nor Solomon the oldest of David's sons.

In a talk by St. Gregory of Nyssa about the creation of man, he believes that God created the world with all its magnificence, as a great palace He prepared for Adam and eve as king and queen; And that God provided to man all the possibilities of happiness and authority over the creation He brought to existence for his sake.

In an article "A comparison between the king and the monk" (*Comparatio Regis et monachi*), St. John Chrysostom reveals a Christian principle, namely, the perception of the believer, whether a monk, a priest, or a member of the congregation, that he looks into the grace of God working in him, to make him a king of authority, greater and more exalted than many kings.

And according to St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi: God created the earth, with everything on and under it; and created the stars; as a preparation for his steward or ambassador on earth, man! ... As though He was preparing a royal palace for the sake of the king.

“Now He said to me: ‘It is your son Solomon who shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his Father’ (6)

David feels that Solomon’s true Father was God Himself, who said: *“For I have chosen him to be My son, And I will be his Father” (6)*

According to St. Jacob El-Serougi, man by entering into the water of baptism, enters into his new spiritual birth, and is liberated from his old physical birth. Instead of having Adam, smitten by the serpent, a father. He came to have the heavenly One as a new Father; and instead of the fallen Eve, he came to have the holy baptism as a new mother; By that we entered into a new life and new possibilities.

- + Your Father is in heaven and not in the pit ...
We forgot Eve, and received our new mother the holy baptism, without whom we would be cast from up high down to the depths.
We forsook Adam, for God counts us as His children;
Now we do not call that needy miserable Adam a father to us; for we found for ourselves another Father full of riches.
- + Enjoying the work of His divinity in the water of baptism; we truly became His children; and since then we have the right to call Him “Our Father”; who gave us His Spirit by baptism.
- + O the Son, who made us children to His Father in the water of baptism; By You, I talk about our spiritual birth;
O the only begotten, who gave us His Spirit in the water of baptism; Grant me the Word to sing Your praise by it with love;
O Lord, who chose to be a brother to the wicked servants; Fill me with Your teachings to preach Your grace every day;
O the Great Sun, who dwelt with His light in the water of baptism, shine in me to be enlightened and to describe Your beauty, with amazement.
O Son of the Virgin, who also gave us a Virgin mother;

Let my tongue and my loud voice proclaim Your praise, by reason, and without any confusion nor controversy.

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

“Moreover I will establish his kingdom forever, if he is steadfast to observe My commandments and My judgments, as it is these days” (7)

Here the author made clear the purpose of God’s grace concerning Solomon (6-70: *“For I have chosen him to be My son”*); by which he proclaimed Solomon, as a symbol of the Lord Christ: *“You are My Son”* (Psalm 2: 7); the son of His love, who is called ‘Jedidia’ because God loved him; And the Lord Christ is His beloved Son:

1- About Solomon He said: *“Solomon shall build My house”* (6); And the Lord Christ is the Founder and the Foundation of the temple of the gospel.

2- About Solomon He said: *“I will establish his kingdom forever”* (7). This prophecy was fulfilled in the kingdom of the Messiah that will endure forever (Isaiah 9; 7; Luke 1: 33). As far as Solomon is concerned, establishing his kingdom is with a condition: *“If he is steadfast to observe My commandments and My judgments, as it is these days”* (7) If Solomon continues to be as good as he is today, his kingdom will be established, or else it will not be. ...

Let us take heed that, if we are steadfast in our duty, and not otherwise, we shall expect the endurance of God’s favors on us. I wish those who have been raised good, and have a good start, take heed

that, if they continue to be good they will be happy; for persistence leads to the crown.

- + God, in the compassion of His love presented to us purifying commandments; so that if we choose to keep them, we can be purified, not only from the sins, but also from the evil desires; for sins are something and the evil desires are something else. The evil desires are: anger, boasting, love of pleasures, hate, and unclean desires, etc. Whereas the sins are putting those desires practically into action; namely, man, by his body executes the works stirred in him by his evil desires. ... Man may have evil desires, yet he may not put them into action..

The law in the old covenant intended to teach us not to do what we do to others what we do not like for ourselves; namely it forbade us the practical execution of evil. But now, in the new covenant, we are commanded to drive the evil desires themselves away from our minds, those that motivate us toward evil.

(St. Dorotheos)

- + He who does not keep the commandments, has no love for the Lord.

(St. Dedymus the blind)

“Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the congregation of the Lord, and in the hearing of our God, be careful to seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God, that you may possess this good land, and leave it as an inheritance for your children after you forever” (8)

God is He who sets the king on his throne; It is therefore befitting of the king, appointed by God, to keep the divine commandments.

Not allowing David to build a house for Him, God intended to set David himself a house in which to dwell. According to the scholar Origen: [Let there be for the soul an altar in the middle of the heart, on which are offered prayers, and burnt offerings of mercy, on which are slain the bulls of pride by the knife of meekness; the rams of anger, and the goats of pleasure and evil desires ... Let the soul know how to set in the most high place of her heart, a lampstand that will unceasingly shed light].

That is what the prophet David perceived; hence he counseled his people before he departs, saying: *“Seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God”* (8). After telling them about God’s promise that his son Solomon will built His house (6); he intended to make the whole people a holy house for the Lord.

The way David prepared for his son huge possibilities for building the temple (1 Chronicles 28: 11-19), he sought from the people to be careful to seek all the commandments of the Lord, to stretch His hand and build His house. He directed them to attach themselves and be steadfast in God and in their duty toward Him (8). Here we notice the following:

1-The subject of guidance: *“keep and seek all the commandments of the Lord your God”.*

The Lord is their God, therefore they have to be governed by His commandments; they have to honor them all, and keep them all; to search for them in the Holy Books; to give heed to the council, and seek the statutes from those entrusted for them by their lips; and to pray to God to instruct and guide them; For the commandments of God are not kept except by maximum care.

2- Give reverence to guidance: He guided them *“in the sight of Israel the congregation of the Lord, and in the hearing of our Lord”*; a good council and a clear warning; which they would be wrong to disregard, for God and men will be witnesses against them (1 Timothy 5: 21; 2Timothy 4: 1). Those who minister in the church should be faithful in their ministry, and have favor in the sight of God and men.

3- The goal of observing the guidance: *“That they may possess the good land, and leave it as an inheritance for their children after them forever”* (8).

- + It is befitting of us to believe that any delay in doing according to the commandment is considered as a time of disobedience for those who follow it afterward ... Hence, we should remember the saying: *“Do not delay to turn back to the Lord, and do not postpone it from day to day”* (Sirach 5: 7); And, *“Do not say to your neighbor: ‘Go and come back, and tomorrow I will give it”* (Proverb 3: 28)

(The scholar Origen)

- + David heard the words his Lord directed to him; and assembled all the people of Israel; He gave the command, and brought thousands forth without census to the royal palace; The good shepherd started talking to his flock, to feed them with the spiritual food and drink; He opened his mouth up like a fountain that gives forth life, and quench the thirst of the people with good drink;
“Hear me my brethren and my people; I am going on the great journey of the whole earth, and be buried like all my fathers” (1 kings 2: 2).
I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant before I die; but God was not willing to let me build it (6)
God said to me: *“It is your son Solomon who shall build My house to dwell and be sanctified in it”* (6)
Now, my son Solomon is young and inexperienced. May the Lord who created him guide him and grant him wisdom (1 kings 3: 7; 1 chronicles 29: 1).

Walk along the way of God, do not divert from it to the right nor to the left.

Be careful to seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God, that you may possess this good land, and eat its produce, as it is written (8).

Do not do like your fathers who ate and dared; and the Lord cast their carcasses in the wilderness (Numbers 14: 29)

Remember how I was surrounded by tribulations and evil dangers, but the Lord saved me, and made me stronger than all the kings (2 Samuel 22).

You, likewise, if you abide with him with perfect love, you will not be harmed by wars, dangers, or difficulties

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

3- DAVID GIVES A COMMANDMENT, A PROMISE, AND A WARNING TO SOLOMON:

It is befitting of us to compare between David's commandments to his son Solomon concerning the building of the temple of the Lord, at the end of the first book of the chronicles, with what he himself gave to him in (1 kings 21: 1-9). In the book of kings, after presenting the commandments, David commanded the killing of Joab and Shimei; But here, after an extended talk concerning the building of the house of the Lord, his commands concerned the priests of the temple and the worship in it.

“As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve him with a loyal heart, and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands all the intents of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever” (9)

David ended his talk by giving advises to Solomon himself (9 – 10). He cared very much for Solomon to be religious; Being a great man, he should not look down at worship; he should be wise; and in worship there will be his wisdom. In his advises to his son, we notice the following;

1- To know the God of his father, his good father, who dedicated and raised him to God.

Having been born in a house of God, he is bound to do his duty toward Him, and to give Him thanks; “Your, and your father's Friend, you should not forsake”. You should know God and serve Him.

We will not truly serve God, unless we know him; And we shall not know Him unless we serve Him by the whole heart, mind, and ability; namely, serve Him with a perfect and upright heart.

2- As all the secrets of our souls are exposed before God, for He searches the hearts, and even the unsearchable deepest of depths (Proverbs 25: 3); We, therefore should be faithful; for if we deal with

Him with deception, He will know it, for no deception could pass undetected by Him. We should preoccupy our thoughts and use them to serve God, who knows both the pure and the evil thoughts.

3- From here, we may experience either true happiness or misery forever, according to what we do or not do to serve God; For if we diligently seek Him, we shall find Him, which is enough to make us happy (Hebrew 11: 6); and if we forsake Him, forsake His service, and did not follow Him, he will reject us forever, which is enough to make us miserable. We should know for sure that God will never forsake anyone, unless he first forsake Him.

It is befitting of the kings and rulers to feel dedicated with their whole hearts and motives to the Lord; bearing the features of God of love, compassion, holiness and good behavior.

+ *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you. If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him” (1 Corinthians 3: 16-17). And, “If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him He will cast you off forever” (9).*

(St. Jerome)

+ The commands of God are: purity; mercy, and the abiding and unchangeable peace; and all the rest of the beautiful virtues, crowned with beatitude.

Strive to observe the commandments of the Spirit, that grant life to your souls, and by which you receive God in your souls. It is the safest way.

Without the purity of the heart and the body, no one could be perfect before God; as it is written: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5: 8).*

Perfection comes from the purity of heart; for the heart is the center of the natural good and of the un-natural evil. And evil is the source of the sufferings of the soul, of revile, hatred,

vain glory,, etc.; Whereas the good will give birth to the knowledge of God, the holiness, and the purity of the soul, from all sufferings.

(St. Anthony the Great)

- + How could he get the purity of heart, he who does not keep the commandments revealed by the apostle, saying: *“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”* (Galatians 6: 2); and he who does not have the virtue of love; which: *“suffers long, and is kind, love does not envy, love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ... bears all things, ... and endures all things”* (1 Corinthians 13: 4-7); *“For a righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel”* (Proverbs 12: 10).

(Father Sherimon)

- + We may see how some of those who rejected the things of this world, not only the gold and silver, but even the huge possessions, would probably become disturbed and annoyed for the sake of a knife, a pen, a pin, or a feather; when, if they direct their sight upon the purity of heart, they would never be disturbed for the sake of such little things. Having forsaken the great riches, they will also forsake every other thing.

(Father Moses)

. . .

“Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong and do it” (10)

The Lord chose you to build a house for the sanctuary; Now, seek the Lord, Serve Him, so that the work would be consummated in the right way, and would be acceptable to God. In short David’s advises to his son Solomon were to:

- 1- Know the Lord personally
- 2- Keep the commandments of the Lord, and obey His judgments.
- 3- Worship the Lord with the purity of heart.
- 4- Serve the Lord with joy
- 5- Be faithful: *“ take heed against anything that is or seem to lead to evil”*
- 6- Be strong and brave; Do not leave any range for fear; for we will not be able to consummate our work as we should, unless we persist and support ourselves by the divine grace.

4- PROVIDING SOLOMON WITH THE BUILDING PLANS OF THE TEMPLE:

There is no place for any human views in how to build the temple, As it happened with Moses, the model of the temple was presented by the Spirit.

“Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat” (11)

The way Moses got the plan of the tabernacle of meeting from God (Exodus 25: 9); the plans of the establishments here was presented by David as inspired by God (19)

Although the architectural plan of the temple and all its courts and chambers were referred to king David; the architectural plans of the tabernacle of meeting were referred to the prophet Moses (Exodus 25: 9; Hebrew 9: 1-2); and the architectural plans of the temple of the new covenant, secretly to the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 46-48); the three plans were claimed to be proclaimed by the Holy Spirit (12-19).

Those establishments, designed according to models of heavenly sanctuaries seen by the prophet Moses on the mountain, were proclaimed by God to David and Ezekiel, and seen in a vision by John the beloved. It is therefore befitting of the true believer to practice the worship of God on earth, as an icon of the worship in heaven.

Concerning the advises given by David to his son Solomon to seek God and His service; the book of law was to be his only reference. As far as the building of the temple is concerned, David provides his son with a model of the building, which included features, neither he nor his architects have ever seen before. The way the model of the tabernacle of meeting God showed to Moses on the mountain (Hebrew 8: 5); the model of the temple was given by the hand of God to David (19), probably by the service of angels.

David gave the model to Solomon to know what to make according to a certain law; And the Lord Christ, when he gave his disciples instructions to build the church of the gospel, provided them with an elaborate model of it, and commanded them to follow His instructions to the letter.

“And the plans for all that he had by the Spirit of the courts of the house of the Lord, of all the chambers all around, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries for the dedicated things” (12)

In the case of the tabernacle of meeting, the prophet Moses saw a model before his eyes on the mountain, and intended to do it accordingly. Here, David proclaimed that the organization of worship in the temple is by a divine inspiration (12).

Even the holy vessels in the temple, although different from those in the tabernacle of meeting. Yet they did not differ in their sense.

“And the plans for all that he had by the Spirit”: It is not possible to depend on David’s piety or Solomon’s wisdom in something that big; the temple, to be holy and to refer to the Lord Christ. It has to have, not only all comfort and fitting things, but, also some kind of the holy secrets; and therefore, should not be left to the art or imagination of man, but has to be divinely inspired.

Christ is the true temple; the church is the temple of the gospel, heaven is the eternal temple; and all of them are divinely inspired.; and a model of each has been set through divine wisdom, even before the foundation of the world, for the glory of God, and our glory.

“also for the divisions of the priests and the Levites, for all the work of the service of the house of the Lord, and for the articles of service in the house of the Lord” (13)

David provided Solomon with plans of the courts of the house of the Lord, of the chambers all around, of the treasuries of the house of the Lord and of all the dedicated things (13); a list of all vessels, and a model of the chariot of the cherubim (18). Beside the two cherubs over the cover of the ark of the covenant, there were two other cherubs much larger in size, and their wings stretched to touch the walls on both sides (1 kings 6: 23, 28). David provided Solomon with a model called “the chariot”, because the angels are “the chariot of God” (Psalm 68: 17)

“He gave gold by weight for things of gold, for all the articles used in every kind of service; also silver for all the articles of silver by weight, for all articles in every kind of service” (14)

As every thing had to be done according to the model, and not less, David provided Solomon with the exact weight of every item in gold or silver (14).

“The weight for the lampstands of gold, and their lamps of gold, by weight for each lampstand and its lamps; for the lampstands of silver by weight, for the lampstand and its lamps, according to the use of each lampstand” (15)

In the tabernacle of meeting there was one golden lampstand (Exodus 25: 31-40); but in the temple there were ten of them (1 Kings 7: 49), all assumed to be carried by hand (15).

“And by weight he gave gold for the tables of the showbread, for each table, and silver for the tables of silver” (16)

In the tabernacle of testimony there was only one table of showbread (Exodus 25: 23); but here there were ten more (2 Chronicles 4: 8), beside silver tables; for being much larger than the tabernacle, the temple had to be furnished with larger items to suit its large size..

“And pure gold for the forks, the basins, the pitchers of pure gold, and the golden bowls – he gave gold by weight for every bowl; and for the silver bowls, silver by weight for every bowl” (17)

“and refined gold by weight for the altar of incense, and for the construction of the chariot, that is, the gold cherubim that spread their wings and overshadowed the ark of the covenant of the Lord” (18)

The ark of the covenant was in the form of a throne, and not in the form of a chariot; Yet, we find the book says that it was in the form of a chariot, which, at the same time, according to the prophet Ezekiel, is the divine throne (Ezekiel 1)

Concerning the altar of incense, the gold used in it was said to be “*refined gold*” (18); for, referring to the atonement intercession of Christ, nothing surpasses it in purity and perfection.

“All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans” (19)

5-DAVID ENCOURAGES SOLOMON TO START WORK RIGHT AWAY:

And David said to his son Solomon: ‘Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God – my God – will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord’ (20)

The way David carried the people as though (on the arms of his soul), to deliver them to the true Leader; here he encourages his son Solomon, confirming to him that God preserved him since his birth, and granted him wisdom, enlightenment, and strength, to judge in the controversies according to the divine inspiration.

For God to help you, you should first look up at Him (20); The Lord God, my God, whom I chose to worship; who was with me all along my days, and gave me success; with whose power, and goodness, according to my personal experience, I introduce Him to you; will be with you, to guide you, give you strength, and make your ways successful; He will never reject nor forsake you..... We should be sure that God who acquired our fathers and carried them in their ministries in their days, will also be with us, and will never forsake us, if we remain faithful to Him, as long as there is work for Him in and by us. The encouragement presented to Joshua (Joshua 1: 5), and Solomon, is presented to all believers (Hebrew 13: 5), He will never reject nor forsake us; For God forsakes no one unless he forsakes Him first.

+ [Father, what shall I do if they sought from me to issue a certain verdict in the court of law; for I am just a boy, and have no experience?

David answered him, saying: The Lord who kept me safe since my childhood, and provided me with wealth and treasure of prophecy, will grant you wisdom, enlightenment, strength, and knowledge, to

enable you to judge in controversies]

(St. (mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

“Here are the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God; and every willing craftsman will be with you for all manner of workmanship, for every kind of service; also the leaders and all the people will be completely at your command” (21)

“All (good) people will support you”. The priests and the Levites will guide you, and you should seek their **counsel**; and “*every willing craftsmen will be with you for all manner of workmanship, for every kind of service*”. Skill and willingness are two important features of those who work in the temple. And finally “*the leaders and all the people will be at your command*”; they will never be a cause of opposition nor delay of the work; For the good work shall continue as long as those partaking of it work from their whole hearts.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 28

PREPARE, O LORD, MY WHOLE BEING TO SET YOUR TEMPLE IN MY DEPTHS

- + King David got preoccupied with building a temple for You;
He provided all what he has with love and joy;
For he found his happiness and joy in You;
He prepared the heart of his son and of all the leaders and people;
For all to partake with pleasure of building Your great house.

- + Who will set my heart, mind, and all my energies for this work?
I have no gold nor silver to present for building Your temple;
But, by Your precious blood, Your amazing love, and exalted grace,
You set that amazing building in me;
Which needs no human hands;
Nor stones, wood, or building materials;
For You set it by Your Holy Spirit.
You grant me a flood of Your holiness, meekness, and love;
A flood of Your divine secrets, splendor, and light;
To set a place for Yourself to rest Your head;
To set a new heaven that gives pleasure to the heavenlies;
To set in it an inexhaustible spring of love;
To set in it an unceasing flood of joy, and exultation.

- + Come, O Lord Jesus, together with Your Good Father, and Your Holy Spirit;
To proclaim Your divine presence in my depths;
For it is You who made the plan of the building;
And it is You who dedicate it with Your holiness;
And adorn it with Your splendor;
You keep and protect it;
So that the devil will not crawl into it.

- + David, the man of war, needed Solomon, the man of peace, to build the house;
And I, the first among the sinners, am in need of You, O King of Peace;
To set Your throne in me;
To transfer my heart of dust to Your kingdom;

To reign, to consecrate, and to open the doors of my heart for Your righteousness.



CHAPTER 29

DAVID'S PERSONAL OFFERINGS FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE, AND HIS THANKSGIVING TO GOD

1- David's personal offerings	1 - 5
Offerings by the rulers and the leaders	
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4- Declaration and anointment of Solomon a king	22 - 25
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1- DAVID'S PERSONAL OFFERINGS:

After proclaiming that he gathered together much for the building of the house of the Lord, David offered from his own pocket gold and silver, and exhorted the people to offer generously for that cause. For those offerings from the hearts, both the people and the king rejoiced. The king presented himself a living role model, not only to the people, but to all the leaders. Offering joyfully and generously from his own possessions (2 Corinthians 9: 7), motivated everyone to do likewise.

“Furthermore king David said to all the congregation: ‘My son Solomon, whom God alone has chosen, is young and inexperienced; and the work is great, because the temple is not for man but for the Lord God’ (1)

David sought from them to take into consideration that Solomon whom God alone has chosen, was young, inexperienced, and needs their help to carry out that great work that needs all hands to accomplish. As the temple is not for man but for the Lord God; the more they offer for the building, the more splendid it will be. ... It is always good to encourage the young and the weak who minister to God.

This book ends by longing to enjoy the true David and the true Solomon. ... Solomon was anointed as a symbol of the Lord Christ, about whom God said on the tongue of His prophet Isaiah: *"Behold, My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights"* (Isaiah 42: 1). While Solomon was a symbol of the true King, the Lord of glory Jesus; Yet he was young, and the work was great. The Lord Christ, on the other hand, is alone able to reign forever, to sit on the heavenly throne, and has no weakness nor shortcomings.

It is to be noticed that the author here, used the Persian word 'berah' for the temple, meaning (a palace), which was never used in any other book, even in the books dating back to the Persian or Greek era; And he also used for the wealth offered to build the temple, the name of the golden currency of Persia (Derham or Darics) (17).

"Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might: gold for things to be made of gold, silver for the things to be made of silver, bronze for things of bronze, iron for things of iron, wood for things of wood, onys stones, stones to be set, glistening stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, and marble slabs in abundance" (2)

David told his people about the great preparations he provided for the work; for he did not want to burden them with the whole responsibility; nor to let the whole project be based upon offerings; but he, nevertheless gave them the chance to show their good intention in addition to what he did. So he says: *"I have prepared with all my might"* (2). The work of God, we have to do with all our might, following the lead of David who offered gold and silver, etc. Whereas the King of kings presented His precious blood to build His holy church.

- + Qualify me, O my Lord Jesus Christ to contribute to building Your house ...
I long to offer gold for the cover (Exodus 25: 17), to the ark of the covenant, to the lampstand, or to the lamps. But having no gold, I would offer silver to make the boards and their bases (Exodus 26: 25)
Allow me, O Lord, to offer precious stones to adorn the robe and breastplate of the high priest; ... and if I am too poor to do that, let me offer goats' skin, so that I would not appear barren without fruition.
Let us build and adorn the tabernacle of the God of Jacob, our Lord Jesus Christ.

(The scholar Origen)

"Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my

own special treasure of gold and silver” (3)

He presented to them a good example. Beside what he provided to that work, of spoils of war and gifts from the surrounding nations; he offered much from his own possessions: “*Three thousand talents of gold, and seven thousand talents of silver (3-5)*; Yet he did not give them the way the Pharisee did, to be seen by people, but because he likes to sit in the house of God, as he said: “*They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life*” (Psalm 36: 8, 9). Here he proved it; for those who dedicate their hearts to minister to God, would never think of the sufferings nor of the expenses that will cost them. Our gifts will give pleasure to God, when they come out of love. Those who direct themselves toward the heavenlies, dedicate their heart to the house of God, through which they find their way to heaven.

- + Those who are fed from the fullness of the house of God, and drink from the river of His pleasures, will be satisfied (Psalm 36: 8). (Getting drunk) this way David could behold that divine beauty that no mortal can behold.

(St. Gregory bishop of Nyssa)

David told them what he offered to make them follow his lead; for those who have reached a high level of honor, have to make their light apparent to all people, on account of that their impact would be more powerful and of wider extent than others.

St. Basil the Great often talked about the commitment of the leader to be a role model to his subordinates.

- + As it is befitting of the congregation to obey the leader and submit to him in every way; it is very important that the one chosen to be a guide should be a role model for every virtue before those who look up toward him. He should be as the apostle say: “*temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, and able to teach*” (1 Timothy 3: 2). It is therefore advisable to search the life of a candidate for leadership, not just concerning his age, for it so happen that childish features go together with grey hair and wrinkles; but to make sure if his personality and characters have grown befittingly; on account of that what he will do and say, as a leader, could represent a kind of law and a way by which the congregation will be committed.

- + Woe to the leader who abuse his authority, and treat his subjects with arrogance and haughtiness; for punishment will be waiting for him from the Just Judge, according to the way he used in dealing with the saints of God.
- + I wish the leader would not be puffed up because of his high position, lest he would be denied of the blessings of humility; I wish the greater would be like the lesser,
- + It is befitting of those who occupy the higher positions to be ready to present even the physical services, according to the role model of the Lord Jesus who washed the feet of His disciples.

(St. Basil the Great)

“Three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses” (4)

“The gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all kinds of work to be done by the hands of craftsmen. Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?” (5)

David offered to the temple gifts set apart even since the days of the prophet Samuel;, Saul, and Abner. He offered his own wealth, and encouraged the others to follow his lead and give generously for the building of the temple (1-5). His words came like those of the prophet Moses to Israel concerning the building of tabernacle of meeting in the wilderness (Exodus 35: 4 – 19).

Once and again he exhorted the others to give generously from what the Lord has given them: He exhorted them to follow his lead, saying: *“Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?” (5)*

- 1-We should all, everyone in his own range, minister to the Lord, dedicate our ministry to Him, separate it from anything strange that would interfere with it; and direct it toward the honor and the glory of God.
- 2- God longs to see all people minister in His house. God’s ministry should be for us our main preoccupation *“to consecrate ourselves to the Lord”*; namely to offer plenty, as it came in Moses’ law; There is enough work for everyone; and *“consecrating ourselves”*, should imply serving Him alone by the freedom of will and by the strength of the grace drawn from Him.

3- We should work with readiness, good intention, and swiftness, namely, we should do it today. And not postpone it till tomorrow.

1- OFFERINGS BY THE RULERS AND LEADERS:

“Then the leaders of the fathers’ houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king’s works, offered willingly” (6)

“They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron” (7)

“And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, into the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite” (8)

The leaders followed the lead of the king (2 Corinthians (: 7), for *“each one gave as he purposes in his heart, and not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver”*; they offered as is befitting of the leaders of Israel.

“Then the people rejoiced for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the Lord; and king David also rejoiced greatly” (9)

The common people rejoiced to have the chance to honor God from their own possessions; and rejoiced to see the generosity of their leaders, and their appreciation of that great work. David rejoiced as well to see how his psalms had such a great impact upon them; to see his son and heir on his throne, surrounded by people full of love toward the house of God; and that the work on which, for so long, he has put his heart, is going to progress. For it is a great privilege for the righteous people to know before they depart that they are leaving behind them such zealous men toward the worship and its continuation.

David did not seek from the leaders and the representatives of the people to participate, in putting the plan of building the temple, for it was already done by the Lord, and according to his divine thinking, but he sought from them to partake of the work itself, for which the people, as well as David himself rejoiced; for they all saw that what they give to God is of what He has already given them. David’s mind was preoccupied with how the people should give their hearts to God; and with how his own son would minister to God with his whole heart. For the gift loved by God is that the believer would give his heart before his possessions; and to renew his covenant with God with his whole heart.

David cleverly spoke to all to exhort them to partake of the building of the house of God. It is our duty, not only to do good, but to exhort the others to do it as well. There were many rich people in Israel, who benefited from the days of peace, during which the temple is being built; whom David did not commit to give as a tax, but only exhorted them to use the chance to give generously and with the freedom of will, as all the works of righteousness and generosity should be done.

2- DAVID'S MAGNIFICENT PRAYER AND PRAISE OF THANKSGIVING:

David cared to praise and glorify God; confirming that all are much indebted to him; Whatever much they gave it would be nothing compared to the gifts God has given them. David's gift to God is a prayer of thanksgiving (Genesis 24: 27; Daniel 2: 20-23; Tobit 8: 5-7)

David and all the people did the following:

- 1-They celebrated the glorious name of God
- 2-They offered with generosity and pleasure from what God has granted them. From His hand they took to give Him back.
- 3- David sought from God to grant all: the king, the leaders, and the people, a perfect and upright heart.

Here, the book presents to us the most magnificent prayer of thanksgiving; David's farewell prayer came rich in the holy liturgical thought, befitting of worship in all eras. It is a prayer of "the secret of the temple" or of "the secret of its dedication to become a temple for the Lord". He presented his prayer with all humility, that it could be said about him what was said about the humble tax-collector: "*This man went down to his house justified rather than the other*" (Luke 18: 14)

Here we see how the first book of the chronicles cares for David's liturgical worship; about which, in the books of Samuel came 77 verses, while here there are 323 verses. The book of Chronicles cares to present David to us as a man of worship; while those of Samuel and the kings cared to present him as a king.

David seeks from the Lord to bring forth the hearts of His people, and of his son Solomon to Him, and to keep them upright.

"Therefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation, and David said: Blessed are You, O God of Israel, our Father forever and ever" (10)

In this magnificent prayer, David refers to God as the source of all the gifts that are willingly offered to his temple; which are brought back to Him in a true way that brings pleasure to Him. Here we see David presents an awesome prayer on the occasion of the contribution of the leaders to build the temple (10). In it David blessed the Lord, not only in his secret place, but before the whole congregation as well. That is what we would expect when we read in verse 9 of this chapter that "*King David rejoiced greatly*". Such a godly man would be expected to make this situation a subject of his thanksgiving, as well as of his rejoice; for looking around with comfort, he would certainly raise himself up high with praise.

David now came to be a frail old man, looked forward to the end of his days on earth. It is befitting of the saintly old men, on their death beds, to have their hearts filled with praise and thanksgiving; as that will calm down the moans of their physical weakness, and make their expectation of death less grim. Most David's psalms at the end of the book of psalms are psalms of praise; For the closer we get to the world of perpetual praise, we shall find out that we talk and work by the language of that heavenly world. In the address of David we see that he extremely loves God, and refers to Him the glory as the God of Israel "*blessed forever and ever*"; the same way the Lord's prayer ends by saying: "*Yours are the majesty, the power, and the glory*"", a praise befitting of God, in a holy awe, godliness, and proper emotion.

According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, [By praise, we become equal to the angels in honor]. According to St. Athanasius the apostolic: [The well-established soul forgets all its sufferings, and by singing the holy words it looks forward to Christ alone]. And According to St. Basil:[Praising God is the work of angels]; And, talking to us about the personal and collective praise, St. Basil the Great says:

- + Singing a praise by a psalm would bring calm to the spirit; to abide in peace; would calm down our violent tempests of emotions, as it controls our lusts, and would quench the fire kindling in our chests before it consumes everything.

Do you wish to see all bound in friendship; the adversaries reconcile, and the enemies forgive one another? Sing a psalm!... For how could one embrace animosity against another who praise God with one voice? Love is the greatest goodness; and singing praise by psalms brings forth love, by bringing forth a kind of a bond of unity; and bringing people together in one harmonious choir.

It is the point of beginning for the novice; help for those who are already on their way; and a source of strength for the mature. If it so happen that a certain psalm brings forth sadness, it will be a divine sadness; for the psalm could grant tears to the stony heart.

- +` What could be a greater rejoice than to liken the angels on earth? At the beginning of the day, man wakes up to pray and to praise the Creator with singing spiritual songs; And at sunrise, he starts work accompanied with prayer wherever he goes; seasoning his work with praise. The tranquility of solitude is the start of the purification of the soul, by keeping the mind from being confused for any reason; or being distracted through the senses by the issues of this world; it would return to itself, and its thoughts would be lifted up to God. In the tranquility of solitude, man would find in the Holy Books – as in a drug store – the proper treatment of his ailment.

(St. Basil the Great)

“Yours, O Lord is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and majesty; for all that is in heaven and on earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord; And You are exalted over all” (11)

God’s exaltation is unlimited, not only because He is great, strong and splendid, but because He has the power, the blessing, and the glory; all those features are from, and in Him; He is the Fountain of every splendor and blessing; He is worthy of all what we refer to Him of the praise of glory.

His is the **greatness**; huge and imperceptible; All are little or nothing compared to Him.

His is the **power**; whole, unlimited, and un-opposable; He has the power in all His creation, coming from, and dependable upon Him.

His is the **glory**; All the glory we offer Him from our hearts, lips, and life, are not enough to give Him His due..

His is the **conquest**. He surpasses all, can defeat and submit everything to Himself.

His is the **victory**. Both personal and true, awesome, inexpressible, and unimaginable.

His is the **authority**. Unlimited and undisputable ; He is the true King and Lord of all *“For all that is in heaven and on earth is His”*.

His is the **majesty**. For He is the king of kings, To Him should be the glory and worship, for He is exalted over all.

We are all familiar with the Lord's prayer. When the disciple sought from the Lord to teach them how to pray, He gave them a model prayer, and referred them to that of David; For "*Your kingdom comes*" has been in David's heart.

The short and simple words in David's prayer, gather together the hopes and aspirations of generations and centuries; of the greatest in the old testament; whole, royal, full of reverence, praise, and thanksgiving; deny any worthiness of man, and proclaim his dependence on God; reveals the humiliation of the soul

"Both riches and honor come from you, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might. In Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all" (12)

God as the whole authority; Whoever is rich or honorable among men, draws his riches and honor from God. Such confession, David intended for the leaders of Israel to share; lest they would assume that, by their generosity they are worthy of being rewarded by God; on account of that they have drawn their riches and honor from God; and what they presented to Him is nothing of the plenty He has granted them. Any power we may have is given to us by our Father, the Lord God of Israel (Psalm 68: 35).

"Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name" (13)

Here, by thanksgiving, David confesses God's grace, that made them able to give willingly to the building of the temple (verse 13-14): "*Now, therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name*". For the more we minister to God, the more we become indebted to Him; for He gave us the honor of becoming His servants.... For, has the servant any favor for doing what he is commanded to do (Luke 17: 9) No! ... but he should thank God abundantly. Here we notice:

1- It was a moment to reveal the power of God's grace in us, when we can willingly minister to God, for He desires from us to intend and to work; for "*Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power*"

(Psalm 110: 3)

2- We should give glory to God on everything good we, or the others do. We should not boast our good work; because the greatest honor and pleasure in the world is to minister faithfully to God.

We are exhorted by St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi to mix, even our food with praise, being the word of life and the food of the spirit, saying:

+ Whoever eats without giving thanks to God will be like animals that do not know how to praise God.

Having a mouth, word, and reason, we are better than animals.

If we do not meditate in our honor, as it is written, we shall be like beasts.

Our table with its food stirs praise in us;

Do not care for the food just because it is delicious; Mix the word of life with the food;

Looking at the bread, let us praise its Creator; so that our food becomes a motive for singing praise;

The Creator, indeed, is amazing, and glorified in His works; in how He creates, and in How He sustains the living on a daily basis?

(St. (Mr) Jacob El-Serougi)

“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come of Your own we have given You” (14)

Here David humbly talks about himself and his people, concerning the donations they offered, saying:

1-Concerning himself and those who partook of his work, David wonders how would God ever acknowledges them, and does such things with them (14): *“Who am I, and who are my people?”*. Despite the Fact the David was the most honorable among the kings, at the time; and his people the most honorable among the peoples; Yet he so talks about himself and about them, as unworthy of that divine favor. Although David was great and ruling a great people; and although he and they offer substantial gifts to honor God, yet he sees himself little and lowly in his own eyes. *“Who am I, O Lord, and who are my people?”*. *“We are aliens and pilgrims before You”*; we are miserably and lowly creatures. ... The angels are at home in heaven; and the saints are aliens and pilgrims on earth. *“Our days on earth are as a shadow”*. Although David’s days were exceptionally of a high caliber, on account of that he was good, and of great benefit to others; but now he is no more than a frail elderly man, and sees his days on earth like a shadow. That means that our life on earth are mortal and will eventually come to an end. Here, anticipating no endurance of anything great; there is no point in boasting our minister to God, for it is limited within a tiny period of time, to claim any worthiness from it.

2- Concerning their gifts, he says: *"For all things come of Your own we have given You"* (14); And, *"All this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for Your holy name is from Your hand,*

and all are Your own" (16). Having them as a gift from You, we are indebted to use it for You. What we offer You is nothing but a small portion or a rate of what is Yours

"For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers. Our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope" (15)

"O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for Your holy name is from Your hand, and is all Your own" (16)

David blessed the Lord, worthy of every honor, the Head of all, the Source of all riches. And says that he and his people are not worthy to offer Him anything; for what they offered are of what He has given them (14-16). What is important is that, although we cannot give God anything; for everything is His from the beginning; yet He will bless us when we do. The reason some of us are poor, little, and narrow-minded, is because we are not generous with God. God will bless us when we open up our hearts to Him. It is befitting of us, therefore, to acknowledge God in all our spirituals, and to refer every good thought, goal, and work, to the work of His grace which He pours on us. *"He who glories, let him glory in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 1: 31).

"I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the righteousness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things; and now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer willingly to You" (17)

He appeals to God concerning his faithfulness in what he did (17). David, as a good man, knows that God *"tests the heart and have pleasure in uprightness"*, and that he knows whoever misunderstands or despises it. What brought comfort to David's heart, is that God knows how he has given from what is his; and that He saw how his people have willingly given. He did not boast his good work, nor felt envy toward those who did.

"O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the intents of the thoughts of the heart of Your people, and fix their hearts toward You" (18)

Seeing how the hearts of his people exult in the Lord, David sought from Him to make them steadfast in perfection, in loving Him, and in keeping His commandments. He prayed to God for the sake of his people, and for the sake of his own son Solomon, to let them continue in what

they started to do. In his prayer, he addressed the Lord as “*God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*”; God of the covenant with them, and with us for their sake ...

O Lord, grant us the grace to consummate our commitment to the covenant, lest we would lose its benefit. They were kept in their perfection by the grace of God that supported their way; I wish the same grace, which was their portion, be ours likewise.

David prayed for the sake of his people, that the good thought which God has put in their minds, He would keep in them forever. That they would not decrease from how they are so far; that they would not lose their faith in which they are steadfast, that they would not become lukewarm in their love for the house of God; but to have the same thoughts perpetually. For the great consequences depend upon what are in the inner depths in our hearts and minds; and upon what we seek, and what we think. Any good thing that reign upon our hearts and those of our beloved, we have to refer to the grace of God, praying: [David set the necessary materials for the temple; But, O Lord, set the hearts of Your people to be worthy of this privilege. Steadfast their will; for they have good intentions. Keep them, O Lord, like this even after my departure from the body].

“And give my son Solomon a loyal heart to keep Your commandments and Your testimonies and Your statutes, to do all these things, and to build the temple for which I have made provisions” (19)

He prayed for the sake of his son Solomon (19), saying: “*Give him a loyal heart*”. He has already advised him to serve God with a loyal heart. He did not pray to God to make Solomon rich or great, but to make him loyal and faithful; for there is nothing better than that. “*O Lord, give him a loyal heart*”, not only to keep Your commandments in general, but to concentrate his eyes on building the temple in particular.... Yet, building the temple does not prove the loyalty of his heart, unless he is alert to keep the commandments of God; Namely, building churches will not save us, if we disobey the commandments of God.

David’s heart had comfort until the last moments of his life; and he blessed his son to carry out the task. Behold, the old David departs exultant to the place of rest, enjoying the divine beauty reflecting on him; and the boy Solomon enjoys the divine secrets, putting them on as a splendid garment. ...

God, in His love for man who seeks His grace, will pour over him His divine blessings in his childhood, youth, and until his old age; And his children who walk in obedience of His commandments, will enjoy the exalted secrets.

+ David blessed all the people and his son Solomon; then departed to rest among his fathers.

The tired warrior entered into the place of rest; and in his place, the boy Solomon came to lead the kingdom.

That old age full of beauty finally found rest; and in his place came a young man clothed with secrets.

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

The rite of delivering the responsibility of building the temple to Solomon, ended with the holy blessings, and an exultant celebration; and another celebration will be held when the works is done.

“Then David said to all the congregation: ‘Now bless the Lord Your God’. So all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed their heads and prostrated themselves before the Lord and the king” (20)

David called his people to bless the Lord; a magnificent portrait of submission before God in great awe.

- 1- Having partaken of David’s worship of God, When he ended his prayer, he sought from his people them to proclaim their consent, saying: *“Now, bless the Lord your God” (20)*
- 2- They showed respect to the king, looking at him as a tool in the hand of God for their own good; and by honoring him they honor God.
- 3- The next day they offered the Lord a multitude of sacrifices (21): burnt offerings wholly consumed by fire; and peace offerings shared by those who offered them. By that they gave God great glory, as thanksgiving for their good life, in spite of that David went the way of all the earth.
- 4- *“They ate and drank before the Lord with great gladness” (22)*. As a sign of their gladness in the Lord, and of their fellowship with Him, they ate of the peace offerings; they celebrated by what they offered to the Lord; which hints to the fact that they will lack nothing by their generous offerings.
- 5- For the second time, they made Solomon the son of David king; for they found it befitting to repeat the celebration for the people’s benefit; because Solomon, the first time was anointed in a hurry on account of the rebellion of Adonijah; So *“anointed him before the Lord” (22)*/

4- DECLARATION AND ANOINTMENT OF SOLOMON A KING::

“And they made sacrifices to the Lord and offered burnt offerings to the Lord on the next day, a thousand bulls, a thousand rams, a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel” (21)

“So they ate and drank before the Lord with great gladness on that day; and they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him before the Lord to be the leader, and Zadok to be priest” (22)

“Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him” (23)

The verses (23 – 30) raise Solomon to his throne, and send David to his place of comfort in his grave. By that a new generation comes forth to replace the old one; *“Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord”* (23); not the throne prepared by the Lord in heaven, but the throne of Israel, called *“the throne of the Lord”*, not only because all nations and kingdoms submit to him, but because he is, in particular, the king of Israel (1 Samuel 12: 12); The Lord founded their throne and occupies them directly by kings by His command; the civil laws of their kingdom were divine, and the prophets were their personal counselors; their throne was therefore, the throne of the Lord; Whomever He calls to it will prosper by the blessing of the Lord. as long as he follows the divine counsel.

“All Israel obeyed him” (23); *“and all the leaders and the mighty men, and also the sons of king David, submitted themselves to king Solomon”* (24); in spite of the fact that his brothers, because they were his seniors in age, and had more right to be enthroned ahead of him; they most probably felt that they were unjustly treated. ... Yet it was God who intended to make him king, and, accordingly, He made him worthy of it; and made all submit themselves to him, to make his throne a peaceful one. ... Although his father David might have been better than him, yet he came to sit on the throne with extreme difficulty, after a long time, and long and slow steps. But having a stronger faith, his was a stronger temptation.

“All the leaders and the mighty men, and also all the sons of king David, submitted themselves to king Solomon” (24)

“So the Lord exalted Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed on him such a royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel” (25).

Because Solomon was not disturbed when his father delivered all his inheritance for the temple, God granted him more than what he would inherit. David gave his heart, kindled with the love of

God as an inheritance to his son Solomon, who, in turn presented all possibilities to build the house of the Lord.

“So the Lord exalted Solomon exceedingly” (25); for those who honor God, will be honored by Him. *“He bestowed on him such a royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel”* (25); and made everything he did or said worthy of admiration; more than all the kings and judges of Israel before him have enjoyed.

+ Then all the people of the house of Israel shouted loud glorifying God who granted Solomon wisdom;

They said: [Blessed be the Lord who kept His love to His servant David, set his son after him, and filled him with wisdom];

[Blessed be the Lord who revealed His justice to king Solomon, made him wise to be able to reign after his father David];

[To exalt the throne of king Solomon over Israel; and to make his reputation spread among the princes and peoples of the earth];

[To let the queen of Sheba come from her far country to test his wisdom (1 Kings 10); bringing with her all kinds of spices];

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi)

5- THE REPOSE OF DAVID:

The book ended by presenting a short account of the years of David’s kingdom, with reference to the sources of the book..

“Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel” (26)

What came in (1 Chronicles 26-30) conforms to what came in (1 Kings 2: 10-11).

“And the period that he reigned over Israel was forty years: seven years he reigned in Hebron, and thirty-three years he reigned in Jerusalem” (27)

“So he died in a good old age, full of days and riches and honor; and Solomon his son reigned in his place” (28)

Here, the author brings David the great man to his last days on earth; he lets him sleep, and draws the curtain down on him:

- 1- He presents a short account of his reigning years (26-27): He reigned 40 years, like his predecessors: Moses, Athaniel, Deborah, Godeon, Eli, Samuel, and Saul; as well as his son Solomon after him.

- 2- He gives a short account of his repose (28); only to say that *“he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor”* (28).
 - a- He was very rich and honored by both God and men; having been a man of war since his youth, he carried his soul on his hand; he, however was not *“taken away in the midst of his days”*, but was
kept safe through all his battles; to die peacefully in his own bed.
 - b- Although he died in a good old age, riches, and honors; yet he was ready to die and to leave everything behind, as he said in psalm 49: 15, “God shall receive me”; and in psalm 23: 4: *“For You are with me”*. A good man may have a long life, riches and honor, yet is never satisfied, except in the compassion of the loving God.

6- SOURCES OF THE BOOK:

“Now the acts of king David, first and last, indeed they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer” (29)
“with all his reign and his might, and the events that happened to him, to Israel, and to all the kingdoms of the lands” (30)

In a detailed account of David's life and his kingdom, the author refers to his first and last acts, written in the book of Samuel the seer, and after his death, in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer (29); in which came an account of his reign inside his kingdom, as well as of his wars outside it (29, 30). As those records were there, then were lost; it is possible to refer instead to the trustworthy documents of the church, even if they are not considered as divine inspiration.

That was what God recorded of David's life; for he wants us to know His feeling toward David, a man according to His heart, whom He loved, and with whom He dealt as we saw. This encourages us, for God will deal with us with the same compassion and firmness He used with

His servant David. God is amazingly good. If we are unable to build a temple for His name, we can offer Him the temples of our bodies; Although He draws no benefit from our worship, yet He possesses us. It is therefore a great joy to put ourselves in His hands and to live for Him.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CHRONICLES 29

SET YOUR HOUSE, O LORD, IN MY HEART

- + You did not allow David the prophet and king to build Your house;
But promised him that his son Solomon will do it;
For that, his soul exulted, and his heart kindled with zeal;
He dedicated all his energies and possibilities to prepare the way for his son;
Grant me, O Lord, to make my soul exult in all my children;
What I cannot do myself, the next generation will joyfully do;
My soul exults in any holy task done by the youth.

- + Grant me and my brethren to encourage every believer to work;
To rejoice in the dedicated hearts and hands to the account of Your kingdom;
Give us and them pure and loyal hearts;
For You wish to rest Your head in our hearts.

- + The little David started his life by singing Your praise, even while shepherding the sheep;
He walked with the same spirit of praise even in his tribulations;
He dedicated all the energies of his kingdom to praise You;
He mixed his work, even his food, drink, and dreams with praising You;
By this he trained himself on the angelic life, and was prepared for the heavenly glory.
He delivered his spirit in an exultant holy old age;

- + He ended his life by stirring up the spirit of joy and exultation in the life of his people;
They set his son Solomon a king over them;
And You granted him wisdom, greatness, and riches;
He sat on the throne of his father;
And You counted his throne as Your throne, O Son of God;
You covered him with Your mercies, and supported him with Your grace;
The hearts of all the people, together with their leaders and rulers, exulted;

Glory and greatness be to You, O King of kings, and Lord of lords;
Yes indeed, David passed away from this world;
But You came from his seed, incarnate, and set out of his heart a temple for Yourself;
What more shall we seek from You?
Come, O Lord Jesus, and reign in us.

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A COOMENTARY ON THE FIRST BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES

BY

FR. TADROS Y. MALARY

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