

THE PROMISED LAND

When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, God promised He would guide them to a land which would belong to them. In fact, it was the same place from which Jacob and his family had come before moving to Egypt. When the Hebrews approached Canaan, God commanded Moses to send spies into the region. Moses chose twelve men, one from each of the tribes of Israel. They explored the land to find out about its fruits and the people who lived there. The scouts brought back a cluster of grapes so large that two men had to carry it on a pole. From these grapes and the figs and pomegranates, the people could see how rich the country was. The scouts reported that powerful, fierce people inhabited the land. All of the cities were surrounded by strong walls to keep strangers out. Frightened by this report, the Hebrews considered returning to Egypt. But the Lord spoke to them, saying firmly, "O, ungrateful people, how many times did I save you from starvation, thirst, and enemies? Instead of trusting Me, praying, and asking Me for help, why do you begin to grumble?"

Because of their continued disobedience and ungratefulness, the Lord punished the Israelites. For forty years they roamed the desert and God did not allow them to reach the land He had promised them. At last, the Lord took pity on the Hebrews and brought them toward that land. Before

they entered the Promised Land, Moses died, and Joshua took his place as the leader of the Hebrew people.

Strengthened by the Lord's presence, the Israelites finally proceeded into the Promised Land. Again God provided a miracle when He instructed Joshua to have the priests carry the Ark of the Covenant into the Jordan River. The Ark of the Covenant contained the tablets with the Ten Commandments, a chalice with manna, and other holy objects. As the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant stepped into the river, it parted, leaving a dry path for the people to cross.

Having entered the Promised Land, the first task of the Israelites was to gain control of the city of Jericho. The Lord, through Joshua, again commanded the priests to carry the Ark of the Covenant, this time around the city walls. Once a day, for six days, the priests walked around the city walls carrying the Ark of the Covenant. On the seventh day, they circled the city seven times while seven other priests loudly blew their trumpets. As God had commanded, when the people heard the sounds of the horns, they all shouted loudly, and suddenly, the walls of the city fell. The Hebrews established themselves in Jericho. Within six years, Joshua led his people to conquer the entire Promised Land, which he divided among the twelve tribes of Israel.

This story about the departure of the Hebrews from Egypt, their long journey to the Promised Land, and their victory in obtaining their beloved home is called the Passover.

It is a story from the days before Christ's birth that shows us our journey to heaven. All of the history of mankind from the time God told Adam and Eve to leave Paradise is like this journey of the Hebrews. For every Christian, life is a similar journey. We obtain our victory in life upon entering our heavenly homeland. When Christ suffered on the Cross and died and resurrected, He passed from death to life. This was Christ's Passover, or Pascha. As the Hebrews passed over dry land through the Red Sea, and as Christ passed from death to life, so do we hope to pass to a new life with God when our earthly journey has ended.

