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Lesson - 1

The Nation of Israel

Central Truth

A chosen race; a royal priesthood; a holy nation; His own people. 1Peter 2:9

Golden Text

And he said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Gen 32:28

Scripture Portions

Genesis 15:5, 18; 32:24-31

In history, many nations have come and gone. However, one nation alone stands out with conspicuous identity. That is Israel which has a cultural and spiritual heritage of 4000 years. In the Bible, they are described as God's own chosen people and His *First born*. (Exodus 6:7, 4:22). All non-Israelites are called as gentiles. Bible scholars have often portrayed Israel as a bush burning but not being consumed. (Exodus 3:2). In this lesson, we are going to study their early history until the beginning of the monarchy.

God called Abraham out of idolatry when he was in Ur of the Chaldees (the present day Iraq). He promised him a land which He would show him. With full faith in God, Abraham obeyed and started his journey with his wife Sarah. God promised him that his descendants would be like the stars of the heavens in number. As promised, Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah. Isaac married Rebekah and two sons (twins) were born to

them: Esau and Jacob. While Esau was adventurous and a ‘man of the field’, Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. (Hebrews 11:9). Jacob believed in the promises of God. However, he, true to his name, cheated his brother and obtained the birthright first and later Isaac’s blessings. Of course Esau was angry towards Jacob and in obedience to the advice of his mother, Jacob fled to Paddan-Aram where his uncle Laban was living. There he married Laban’s two daughters and lived there for twenty years. Eleven sons¹ and one daughter were born to him in his two wives and two maids. Now the time came for him and his family to leave Paddan-Aram and to go to Canaan where Esau was living. He came to the stream of Jabbok.

Twenty years earlier Jacob had crossed the stream Jabbok with only a staff, but now he is the head of a large household. When he came to know that his brother Esau with 400 men was coming to meet him he was frightened and he asked God to deliver him out of his brother’s hand. He then sent his people in batches across the river, but Jacob stayed back in Peniel. There a man wrestled with him till the break of day, and when that man realised that he would not prevail over Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh and caused it to go out of joint. Then he said: Let me go for the day breaketh; but Jacob replied, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” Then God said, “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Israel, for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men and hast prevailed.” And He blessed him there.

Deceitfully Jacob had obtained the birthright from his brother, blessings from his own father, and wealth from Laban, his father-in-law. Yet he received a blessing from God after wrestling with Him and he became a new man before he entered Canaan again. ‘Israel’ means ‘Prince with God’. Later, the twelve tribes who were his descendants were known by the name Israel, the name given by God. The sons of Jacob became the heads of the twelve tribes.

Jacob loved Joseph, Rachel’s son more than the other children. This invited the jealousy of the brothers. It resulted in Joseph’s, being sold as a slave to an Egyptian. However, the Lord was with him and overruled

¹ Benjamin, the youngest son was born later. (Genesis 35:16-18).

the circumstances which made Joseph the Prime minister of Egypt. Because of a great famine in the land, the patriarchs including their father Israel had to go to Egypt and settle there. There Joseph gave them all protection. 430 years rolled on and Israel became great in number. By that time, they were slaves under the rule of a new dynasty. However, God delivered them out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses. They wandered through the wilderness for 40 years. After the death of Moses, Joshua took over. They crossed Jordan and conquered the inhabitants of the land. Joshua divided the land among the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus, Israel became a nation.

In the subsequent period, Israel was ruled by² Judges whom God raised from time to time. The several hundred years of rule by the judges prepared Israel for their request for a king. God gave them Saul, son of Kish as king.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word ‘Israel’?
2. How did Jacob become Israel?
3. How many children Jacob had?
4. Why did the patriarchs move to Egypt?
5. Who gave them protection in Egypt?
6. Under whose leadership, did the children of Israel come out of Egypt?
7. Who took them to the Promised Land? How did they possess it?
8. Whom did God raise to rule over them?
9. Who was the first king of Israel?

Scripture Reading:

Monday:	Gen 12: 1-9	Tuesday:	Gen 21:1-11
Wednesday:	Gen 25:24-34	Thursday:	Gen 28:1-22
Friday:	Gen 32:1-16	Saturday:	Gen 32:17-32

²The events narrated in Judges cover a period of 410 years if taken consecutively. However, such a lengthy time does not agree with the accepted chronology. May be that some judges have ruled simultaneously. Ex. Samson and Jephthah, one in the west and the other in the east.

Lesson 2

Jacob and Sons in Egypt

Genesis 46; Acts 7:5-15

Central Truth:

“I have loved you, saith the Lord. Was not Esau Jacob’s brother, saith the Lord; yet I loved Jacob.” Malachi 1:2

Golden Text:

Joseph said unto his brethren, “I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. God did send me before you to preserve life.” Genesis 45:4-5.

Jacob had twelve sons and a daughter, born to his two wives and their two maids. They were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphthali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph and Benjamin and Dinah. Israel loved Joseph, the son of his old age and gave him a coat of many colours. This caused hatred and jealousy in his brothers towards him. Besides this, when they heard the two dreams that Joseph had seen they hated him all the more. One day Jacob sent his beloved son Joseph to see how his brothers who had been grazing the flocks in Shechem were getting along and how it was with the flocks.

Accordingly Joseph started on his journey from Hebron valley, travelled a long distance and met his brothers not in Shechem but in Dothan. When he reached them, they removed his robe and put him into a pit in which there was no water. Later, they took Joseph out of the pit and sold him to a group of Ishmaelite for twenty pieces of silver. They took Joseph down to Egypt, where he was sold to Potiphar the captain of Pharaoh’s guard. God blessed that Egyptian family because of Joseph. Being a righteous man, Joseph did not fall into the evil trap laid by Potiphar’s wife. Enraged

by that, she got him imprisoned, but the Lord was with him. During Joseph’s imprisonment, Pharaoh had a dream. Only Joseph could interpret the dream. Pharaoh was very pleased and he set Joseph over all the land of Egypt. In the first seven years of good harvest Joseph gathered plenty of food and stored it up in the cities. This period of plenty was followed by seven years of severe famine all over the world. So people from all countries came to Egypt to buy corn. Joseph’s own brothers were among them. He gave them all they needed. When they came to him again for corn, Joseph revealed himself to them and sent chariots to bring his father Israel and other family members to Egypt. When Israel came to know that his beloved son was alive, he rejoiced and along with his complete family—70 members in all—he went to Egypt and settled in Goshen. After 17 years, Jacob became ill. When all his children were standing around his bed, Jacob blessed them and told them what would happen to them in the future. About Judah he said, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a law giver from between his feet until Shiloh³ come.”

Jesus Christ was born in the tribe of Judah and in the house of David. Just as Joseph was cast away by his own brothers, Jesus Christ too was rejected by His own people. As Joseph was the saviour of his people from famine, Jesus Christ, our Lord, is our Saviour from sin and its penalty. Those who went to Joseph with empty hands returned with sacks full of corn. Similarly, all those who go to the Lord will return with heavenly blessings. Today, will you go to Him? He will soon return as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Questions:

1. Who became the heads of the tribes of Israel? How many were they?
2. Explain how Joseph came to Egypt?
3. How Joseph was made a minister over all the land of Egypt?
4. How did the Israelites happen to come to live in Egypt?

3.The sense of the word ‘Shiloh’ is ‘heir’. Obviously it shows the coming Messiah. As priesthood was given to the tribe of Levi, Kingship was given to Judah.