

## Counting the Blessings So That They May Know

(Psalm 78)

Israel experienced God's presence in their journey through the desert in the form of a cloud and a pillar of fire. The cloud served as an umbrella against the heat of the sun; and the fire as light to show them the way in the dark of the night. God's mercy, love and faithfulness to Abraham were fulfilled many years later in Abraham's descendant. In His mercy, God was to Israel a shield of protection. One reason why God took Israel the long way to the Promised Land was to create in them a righteous nation, from whom He would send His only Son. They were to shine the light of the only true God to all nations through all the signs and wonders they had experienced. In that period of forty years, Israel experienced the presence of God in a supernatural way when He came down to Mount Sinai. It was wrapped in smoke, for the Lord descended upon it in fire; its smoke ascended like that of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked. There He spoke to them in an audible voice. They saw then the glory of His holiness, for which they trembled in fear. After they had lived four hundred years in a land of so many pagan gods, Israel had adopted them for themselves and their spiritual condition had deteriorated and in need for transformation. Only through the long way through the desert, they would not have gone back to Egypt and through the miracles God had performed in their midst Israel's spiritual eyes were opened to believe in the existence of the true God.

God's mercy was seen in every situation of Israel's needs: in their thirst He provided the Rock from where water flowed in abundance to satisfy them. In their hunger He sent them the bread of life- manna until they had reached the Promised Land. For forty years their clothes and shoes were not worn, for He clothed them with His faithfulness, and love. He made a Covenant with them and established them as His people. He also established the Sabbath as a sign between Him and the Israelites forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and earth, and on the seventh day He ceased and was refreshed (Exodus 31:17). God brought Israel through all the trials and in obedience He blessed them, but in their disobedience He punished them. Many died in the desert without experiencing the blessing of the promised land because of their stubborn heart. In the book of Deuteronomy Moses gathered Israel to remind them how special they

were in the sight of God and all the blessings they had received from Him all those thirty-eight years. He said, For what great nation is there who has a god so near to them as the Lord our God is to us in all things for which we call upon Him? And what large and important nation has statutes and ordinances do upright and just as all this law which I set before you? (Deut. 4: 7-8)

God's glory was displayed in their flight from Egypt, when Pharaoh would not let them leave Egypt. God fought for them and delivered them from the slavery tortures of Egypt. He punished Egypt by turning the rivers into blood, swarms of flies, caterpillar and locusts invading their crops; hail and thunderbolts destroyed their flocks, trees and vines; God's wrath intensified against Egyptians with pestilence and the death of their oldest sons; all for the sake to free Israel from their bondage and fulfill the promise given Abraham four hundred years earlier. As a shepherd leads his sheep, God led Israel to the end of the journey. He sustained, protected and provided for all their needs. The desert was unfriendly and harsh; there was no grass for their herds, no water; only dust and wild animals, and yet they never lacked, not even their herds. God never forsook His promise given to Abraham and in the due time He came and saved Israel. In the midst of their idolatry, He still saved the remnant and took them to the Promised Land. The blessings Israel experienced were of supernatural nature. No other nation in this world has seen and experienced so many blessings as they have. Moses told them: The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand, He knows your walking through this wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing (Deut. 2:7). God took them through a place voided of material things, where danger was the master and led them safely to Canaan, the land of milk and honey; the home of the city of the great King- Zion; the place where eternity will find its place, and from there YAHSHUA will reign in righteousness and purity. I am sure Abraham saw it and rejoiced.

God fought their enemies on their way to the Promised Land (Deut. 3: 1-6); their sustenance stopped only when they entered Canaan. As His chosen people, Israel was to be God's peculiar people; a holy people to the Lord above all nations of the earth (Deut. 14:2). A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation [God's] own purchased, special people, that they may display the virtues and perfections of God, Who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light ( 1 Peter 2:9). When God had brought them to Mount Sinai, where He made Israel a nation, He

said, If you will obey my voice in truth and keep My Covenant, then you shall be my own possession and treasure from among and above all peoples; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation ( Exodus 19: 5,6). Israel however forgot her blessed heritage and went the way of the nations, as we read in Psalm 78. Today we witness the results in what they have become, but God remains faithful to them and after a period of refining them, they will know and return to their God; their children will follow the Lord, understanding the greatness of the love God has for them.

There is not a Psalm written to describe the Christian's forgetfulness of the Lord's blessings, as there are for Israel. But we have been unfaithful to our Lord, just the same. Our children are not encouraged to count their blessings, because we have not counted ours for them to see. The more we have, the more we want in the latest of everything. The Christian's god has become the electronic gadgets; we carry them close to our ears and heart, always waiting for it to speak to us, and sometimes disregarding the needs of our children around us. Their needs go unnoticed and life goes on as usual, as if that were the normal way to rear a child. They are future delinquent adults, ignorant of God's love and His blessings toward them. They are future unsatisfied and blind adults following the waves to and fro not knowing that from "God all blessings flow"; everything given to them is taken for granted. And that's the way our children are taught to be. Every generation follows a pattern of life style the world of their time offers. They are submerged in it very deeply not to suffer the bullies from others. They live in a world of chaos and in despair, finding comfort in the use of drugs, a way to get out of the reality of life temporarily. Unless the parents of this generation will take a stand against the schemes of the evil one, they will lose their children to him, as many of previous generations have.

How can they know and recognize the faithfulness of God if we are not telling them? There is a sense of inward happiness only when there is contentment. Contentment is an expression of gratitude that springs from within. Contentment says my needs are met. Paul goes on to say that in just clothing and food we should be content, for we brought nothing into the world and we will not take anything with us to the invisible world. Joshua reminded Israel of God's faithfulness with these words: Know now in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one thing of them

has failed (Joshua 23:14). Once in a while we must bring to mind the blessings of the past, to believe them to be real also in the present, shining the light of God's faithfulness to our children so they too will believe in the goodness of our Lord and share them with their children. "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good"! Tell this generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord; so that they might set their hope in God and not forget His works (Psalm 78).