

THE PAST REMEMBERED THROUGH TWELVE STONES

When Israel left Egypt under the leadership of Moses and his brother, Aaron, they were a multitude of people of which God created a nation for Himself. The first challenge they faced was the Red Sea in front of them, the Egyptian's army behind and mountain. They all constituted challenges of great proportion, impeding the journey planed by God. Moses, however calmed them saying, "Fear Not; stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians you have seen today you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you and you shall hold your peace and remain at rest". (Exodus 14:13-14). All through their journey to the Promised Land, Israel experienced the supernatural, for God's plan was going to be completed amidst all their troubles. From the parting of the Red Sea for them to go through on dry land, to water provided through the rocks to satisfy their thirsty, to food falling from heaven, called mana; for forty years their clothes and shoes did not wear out; they experienced the presence of God on Mount Sinai, when He Himself came down and touched the mountain, to covenant with them, leaving the mountain wrapped in smoke; Israel heard His audible voice and feared Him greatly (Exo. 19). Those were forty years God used to make a nation out of them, a nation like no other nation, whose God was their King.

Psalm 78 gives a report of Israel's journey through the desert, God's provision and their rebellion against Him. Psalm 107, the psalmist calls to attention the need for us to give thanks to the Lord, as He reminds Israel of God's goodness in all Israel's pilgrimage through the desert to the Promised Land. Verse 20 we read, "He sends forth His word and heals them and rescues them from the pit and destruction; OH, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and loving-kindness and His wonderful works to the children of men" (20-21). At the end of his life, Moses predicted Israel's faithlessness. He said, "For I know that after my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days because you will do what is evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands (Idolatry)" (Deut. 31:29). Israel provoked Moses at the water of Meribah and quarreled with the Lord. Moses struck the rock twice instead of one time he was commanded to do. For that, he was not allowed to lead the people into the promised Land. (Deut. 20:10-13; 3:23-28).

Twelve stones of remembrance served as a testimony "that the hand of the Lord is mighty and that you may reverence and fear the Lord your God forever." (Josh. 4:21b). Stones are silent witnesses of the present and the past. Israel's pilgrimage left enough behind to be remembered. These stones would remind them of all the Lord had done for the nation for their children to know. They had arrived at the end of the road that would take them to the place promised many years ago. Their lives will now change; for they arrived home. Now they were given land to own and establish their lives with their families. A nation now they were considered. With these twelve stones reminding them, for sure that they would not forget their God. These stones remained pointing to them all the blessings of the past. However, they

followed after other gods, as Moses prophesized. They were without excuses to forget forty years of experiencing miracles after miracles, and supernatural miracles.

These twelve stones served as a sign among them when their children ask in time to come, "What do these stones mean to you?" (Jos. 4:6). Their children would then pass unto their children forever. Another set of twelve stone were set up in the midst of the Jordan in the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood. "And They are there to this day" (vs.8). That to me speaks of those Israelites who died in the wilderness for their sin of unbelief. For the place where the priests stood were marked by twelve stones, representing the spiritual leaders of the nation. Those were a sign to the children of Israel, and also to the world, that the God of Israel is the only true, powerful God; besides Him there is no other. It could also represent the Egyptian army left on the bottom of the Red Sea forever, when in pursuit to destroy Israel. While Israel reached the Promised Land, the Egyptians remained buried on the bottom of the Red Sea. It is also a picture of those who will be left behind after the rapture.

After almost forty years of pilgrimage, Moses was denied the continuation of his leading the people to the Promised Land. Being frustrated with the rebellion of the people for lacking water, Moses struck the rock twice, when God told Him to struck once to get water from it. These were called the waters of Meribah (Deut. 3:23-28). By striking the rock twice, Moses failed to uphold the holiness of God in the sight of the people. Psalm 62:2 says, The Lord lives, blessed be my rock and exalted be the God of my salvation. He is the living water. "Now on the final and most important day of the Feast, YAHSHUA stood, and He cried in a loud voice, If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink! He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, from his innermost being shall flow springs and rivers of living water. But He was speaking here of the Spirit." (John 7:37-38, 39a). By striking the rock twice, Moses was representing the nation's rejection of YAHSHUA, as the Living Water. He came to that which belonged to Him, and they who were His own did not receive Him and did not welcome Him. But to as many as did receive and welcome Him, He gave the authority to become the children of God, that is, to those who believe in His name; YHASHUA answered, I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God; what is born of the flesh is flesh; and what is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 1:11-12; 2:5-6).

The past, when we are going through hard experiences, is good to consider in order to realize the faithfulness of our God, especially when our trials are lengthy and difficult. Our past will be like the twelve stones left out of the river as a testimony to the nation of Israel of the goodness and faithfulness of God. As He was then, He is today what He was in our past, when He rescued us from our troubles. By faith we should "strengthen our weak hands and make firm the feeble and tottering knees; say to those who are of a fearful and hasty heart, Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance; with the recompense of God. He will come and save you" (Isa. 35:3-4); "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not faint or grow weary; there is no searching of His understanding; He gives power to the faint and weary, and to him who has no might He increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary and young men shall feebly stumble

and fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall change and renew their strength and power; they shall lift their wings and mount up as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint or become tired” (Isaiah28-31).

My friend, let’s make the Word of God our stone of remembrance, for He is and will always be good to us, even in evil times, as He was to Israel in their journey to the Promised Land and afterward. We are traveling through the wilderness to our heavenly home. Many stones of our past we can gather to hold us trusting our God in our troubled days.