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Breaking Free: Trusting the Lord to Lead Us to Spiritual Freedom

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for many years, suffering under the merciless whip of Egyptian taskmasters. Their bondage was not only physically exhausting but spiritually oppressive; the cruelty of Pharaoh, who did not recognize Jehovah, led him to treat the Israelites with increasing harshness. His destructive fear degraded their conditions, even resorting to infanticide to control their population. The Bible does not soften the description—words like

“ruthless,” “bitter,” “hard,” and “cruel” define their misery. The Israelites’ spirit was broken; what should be one of the chief sources of joy—work and usefulness—became bitter toil through relentless oppression.

But the Lord God Jehovah had not forgotten them. He sent Moses to set His people free. Before their eyes, the Lord displayed miracles: the plagues on Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and the defeat of Pharaoh’s pursuing army. Through these wonders, the Lord showed His immense love for the Israelites and His determination to save them. Yet, He needed their trust and their cooperation. At the threshold of the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey, He instructed Moses to send twelve spies to explore the land—its inhabitants and its riches. The spies returned with tales of abundance, but then also brought fear, warning of fierce battles and giant enemies behind fortified walls.

Discouraged and frightened, most Israelites rebelled. Rather than trust the Lord who had brought them so far, they longed to return to Egypt—to the slavery and the “flesh pots” they had left behind—unwilling to believe that with the Lord’s help, they could overcome the coming challenges (Numbers 13:1-3, 18-20, 26-32; 14:1-9,22-24,31). This story is more than history; it serves as a parable for the spiritual journey each of us undertakes when we leave behind our own “Egypt” and begin to follow the Lord’s leading.

When we commit our lives to the Lord—the greatest Teacher—we start to leave behind our slavery to selfish desires: the urge to control others and to possess what does not belong to us. As we enter this new way of life, new spiritual challenges arise. The “warring tribes” within us—destructive impulses and inherited tendencies—begin to stir. Alone, we cannot overcome them. But if we cooperate with the Lord and trust in His power, believing that our efforts are energised by Him, these inner challenges can be defeated.

Our spiritual enemies, represented by the tribes occupying the Promised Land, are the evils we resist for the Lord’s sake. The “giants” symbolise our swollen egos; the “walled cities” are our entrenched false beliefs and selfish desires. To refuse to move forward with the Lord is, spiritually speaking, to “die in the wilderness,” never reaching our true potential.

Jesus promised His followers peace, even in the face of tribulation: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

The Lord came into the world, taking on a human body, to conquer evil on our behalf—even enduring the passion of the cross. By overcoming every temptation, He put all evil under His authority (see also Divine Love and Wisdom 35, 36). Now, if we do our part, He does the greater work: removing evil influences from us so that we can find true inner peace.

Our individual spiritual journeys are unique—some are arduous, others less so. The Lord redeems everyone, establishing our freedom to choose. Yet, as in ancient times, many hesitate at the edge of the Promised Land: some wish to remain in slavery, some do not

believe or trust in the Lord, some want to turn back, and some remain stuck in the wilderness of indecision.

The Israelites doubted the Lord. The disciples doubted as well, especially Thomas. Yet, when Thomas saw the risen Lord—not just with his physical eyes, but in spirit—he declared, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:19-31). In our own ways, we too are invited to this recognition—to see and acknowledge the absolute reality of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ, who is our Redeemer and Saviour.

Let us trust Him, give Him our allegiance, and with His help, face our inner demons. Let us let go of false beliefs through His Word, and with His mighty arm, strive to live according to heavenly truth. In doing so, our lives can become our own “Promised Land.”

The Lord loves us passionately and desires to make all things new for us. Yet, He leaves us in freedom and reason—inviting us to have faith, dwell on His Word, take risks for good, and live a truly renewed life, always growing and being led onward to eternity.

Amen.

Readings:

- Twelve Spies: Numbers 13:1-3, 18-20, 26-32 & 14:1-9, 22-24, 31
- Doubting Thomas: John 20:19-23, 24-31
- Also: Divine Love and Wisdom 35 and/or 36

Revd. David Gaffney, 11th May ‘26