

The Divine Pedagogy of Formation - XII THE FORMEE WHO ACCLAIMS, "THE LORD SAVES"

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Abstract

Joshua (the lord saves) was true to his name to the very end. He lived, moved and had his existence in the Lord he served diligently. From the perspective of formation he passed through two separate stages: first under the direction of Moses and then directly under Yahweh. Under Moses he had to play the roles of a warrior, aide, attendant, keeper of the Tent of Meeting, explorer, pacifier, distributor of the land and a co-singer. After being well groomed under the watchful eyes of his human master in the second half of his life Joshua began serving his Divine Master and started taking instructions directly from him. However he always kept in mind the fact that whatever success he achieved in his new ministry was granted to him by the mere grace and generosity of his Divine Master. There is nothing to be proud of. We are mere instruments in the divine hands; what is expected of us is to carry out our duties diligently and then raise our minds to the Lord in gratitude, love and praise for allotting us a role in his divine play.

The Name

The Hebrew name *Yhoshua'* means "the Lord saves". Joshua lived up to his name. He, by words, deeds and life proclaimed this truth. To use the words of Paul, he lived, moved and had his being in it (Acts.17:28). Here

we find the real trait of a formee. A *guru's* role is to enable the called one to live, move and have his/her being in God/Christ. The Apostle himself attested to this truth "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal.2:10); "To me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil.1:21). Jesus is the new Joshua, whose Hebrew name was *Yhoshua'*. In full sense we can say that He lived, moved and had his being in his Father. Through thoughts, words, acts, death and resurrection the Son of Man acclaimed, "The Father (Lord) saves!"

From the formation perspective there were two stages in the life of Joshua. First he lived as the disciple of Moses, then as the formee of Yahweh. Indeed, such a distinction is not fully correct, since Moses was the Lord's envoy. While ministering to the human master, the young man was actually serving Yahweh himself. We find such two stages in Samuel, who was first the disciple of Eli, and Elisha, who served first Elijah.

PART: I

A DISCIPLE OF MOSES

Roles of Joshua

The young man played different roles as a disciple of Moses. We find him as a warrior, aide, attendant, keeper of the Tent of Meeting, explorer, pacifier, distributor of the land and a co-singer.

It is said in Num.11:28 that Joshua was serving Moses since youth. The details are not given. We do not know the early stage of his life and the story of his call. One may surmise that the young man was attracted by Moses' life as a prophet and as a man of God, his ventures of confrontation with Pharaoh, the undisputed Sovereign of that time, risky process of liberation, as well as the adventurous steering of the Israelites through the wilderness. Probably the enthusiastic youth wanted to give a helping hand to the daring leader, and volunteered himself to his service. Joshua lived as a faithful and obedient attendant of Moses. The master taught him through his words and deeds how to become an instrument in the divine hands in the process of Yahweh making Israel his covenant people, and giving them the Promised Land. The disciple learned more from the living example of Moses.

Warrior

The name of Joshua appears first in Ex.17:8-16 in which he was assigned a task. Moses asked him to go out to fight the Amalekites with a band of men. The master promised him the spiritual help of prayer with the staff of God in his hands. The obedient disciple fought the Amalekites

as Moses had ordered. The *guru* went to the top of the hill in order to pray with lifting the divine rod atop in his hands. (Ex.17:10-13). There happened an extra-ordinary thing. Whenever Moses held up the staff in his hands, Joshua could win; but whenever he lowered his hands, the enemies were winning. Then the two men who were with Moses held his hands up and made them steady till sunset. Thus Joshua could defeat the Amalekites. At the victory Moses, according to the instruction of Yahweh, recorded the miracle in a scroll and recited it in the ears of Joshua, saying the Lord will completely erase the memory of the Amalekites from the earth, and built an altar, naming it, "Yahweh is my banner" (Ex.17:14-15).

Reflection I

The human formator was teaching the formee the salutary lesson that battles could be won only with the help of the Lord. In future Joshua should never forget this truth. The disciple must imprint in his mind that the battles which he would have to fight, are actually Yahweh's battles. He has to put his total trust in the Lord, and do everything according to the divine instruction. He must never succumb to the temptation that it was he, a mere human who won the battles.

Moreover, Moses, following the divine command wanted to implant in the mind of the young man the certainty that Yahweh will utterly exterminate the memory of the Amalekites from the earth. The future leader should never get discouraged or dismayed at seeing sophisticated chariots and the advanced weaponry of the enemies. The Lord is mightier and muscular than human adversaries.

Here we find a suitable pedagogy in the art of formation, which could be followed by the present formators. From the beginning itself they should try to engender two ever-valuable principles in the mind of the candidates. A religious/priest is called to be a warrior in spiritual and moral sense. He/she has to be engaged in waging war of faith. Paul thus puts it: "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strong holds. We demolish arguments and every pretention that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor.10:4-5). The Apostle gives a vivid articulation how a disciple of Christ should get ready to fight against the evils of the world: "Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of

righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph.6:13-17). Formees should know that the warfare is not theirs, but God's with whose help they could defeat the personifications of evil. They should not attribute the success to themselves, but to God, and offer the sacrifices of praise and gratitude at the altar of their hearts.

Aide

Two words, *msaret* and *na'ar* are used to designate Joshua as helper of Moses, the man of God. The root of the first term *srt* mainly denotes doing cultic service. We find also *na'ar* performing liturgical functions.

Companion

In Ex.24:13 the master takes Joshua as his companion to the Sinai Mount. It is not explicitly said that the *msaret* actually went up to meet Yahweh. Probably Joshua accompanied the man of God but not to the top to the mountain (see Ex.32:15-20). Master seems to have assigned to Joshua the role of keeping an eye to what happens at the camp. Indeed he reported Moses who was coming down from the top of Mount Sinai the noise of the people shouting, which he misunderstood as the sound of war in the camp (Ex.32:17). Anyhow, Moses gave to his disciple an enviable position, probably because of his extra-ordinary faithfulness and total devotion to the master. One can say, the formee adorns here almost the status of a companion. The present formators may imitate this pedagogical act. If the master could make the disciple his/her companion, it would motivate the formee to attain the maturity within a brief period. Jesus had said: "A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher and the servant like his master" (Mt.10:24-25).

Attendant

The term *msaret* appears also in Num.11:28. As Moses felt burdened with doing the task of leader alone, Yahweh appointed 70 elders as his assistants and bestowed upon them his Spirit which enabled them to prophesy (Num.11:16-17, 24-25). But two men named Eldad and Medad, who remained in the camp, also received the Spirit and began to prophesy (vv.26-30). At this news Joshua, the minister of the Tent of Meeting ran to Moses and asked him to forbid them. In the thinking of the zealous formee, this was against the divine will and must be

prevented at all cost. The master's reaction was indirectly a reproach: "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!"

Reflection II

Humanly speaking the formee's action can be justifiable. Eldad and Madad did not belong to the 70 elders, and they also did not attend the ceremony when Yahweh came down in the cloud, and took some of the Spirit that was upon Moses, and bestowed it upon the 70 elders. Still both of them received the Spirit and could prophesy. Now the master, with a generous heart, could scrutinize in that event the work of Yahweh, wanted to lift up the disciple from his tiny micro-cosmic mentality to a macro-cosmic attitude which belonged to God, the benevolent provider of the gifts both upon the righteous and unrighteous persons (cf. Mt.5:45). In the parable of the owner of the vineyard He asked the labourers: "Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?" (Mt.20:15). An authentic disciple of Christ should learn to live in the world of God, where the logic of the human world will be turned upside down. He/she should not try to imprison the working of the Spirit. As Christ will say "the wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (Jn.3:8). Only those who are born of water and Spirit, can see the kingdom of God (cf. Jn.3:3) and be always prepared to be open to the working of the Spirit. Moses wanted to teach his disciple this sublime lesson. The present formators themselves should have a macro-cosmic mentality and be ever ready to see the working of the Spirit in unexpected persons and places. Only then they could discern the different modes of the working of the Spirit in the candidates, and accordingly direct them through God's ways which are inscrutable to the ordinary minds.

Custodian

In Ex. 33:11 Joshua is named *na'ar* who is entrusted with guarding the Tent of Meeting. The Hebrew term denotes child, youth, and young man. He is often employed as household servant of wealthy persons, performing miscellaneous tasks. In few places *na'ar* appear in cultic contexts (Ex.24:5, 33:11; Jgs.17:7, 11f; 18:3, 15; 1 Sam.1:24; 2:11, 18, 21, 26; 3:1, 8), serving at sanctuaries. In our text Joshua is entrusted with the task of the custodian of the Tent of Meeting. It is said that he did not depart from the holy place, even when Moses went to the camp.

Reflection III

The modern formators should never forget that the most important task, for which the candidates are to be trained, is for the sake of giving leadership to the liturgical congregations. Other roles are to be evaluated as subservient and conducive to this main office. They should imprint in the mind of their subjects this truth. Although all will theoretically accept the importance of liturgical formation, there is a tendency to connive at it, since there is very much pre-occupation with the contemporary social and cultural issues.

Explorer of the Land of Canaan

According to the command of Yahweh Moses sent men from all the tribes to spy out the Promised Land (Num.13:1-33). Joshua was the representative from the tribe of Ephraim (Num.13:8, 16).

Reflection V

The loyal disciple was not given here a unique role. He was included in the list of other men. Here we find an element in the pedagogy of formation. The master does not give the prime position to the loyal disciple. He was treated as one among others, who were not even candidates. Elevating the beloved formee above others may create antagonism and rivalry in the community.

A Pacifier

All the explorers except Joshua and Caleb brought a totally negative and pessimistic report (Num.13:26-29, 31-33). At this the people rebelled against Moses, and rejecting his leadership wanted to go back to Egypt (Num.14:1-4). At this Joshua, together with Caleb tore the clothes and addressed the assembly, in order to pacify them. These faithful ones described Canaan as an exceedingly good land, which they could conquer with the divine help. They requested the people to desist from rebelling against Yahweh (vv.5-9). But the people did not listen to them, and even attempted to stone them (v.10).

Reflection VI

The formed one did not try to save his skin by running away when his master faced threats and rebellion, as the disciples of Christ did. On the contrary he stood with Moses and tried his best to pacify the agitated crowd. At seeing the threatening attitude of the people Joshua first tore his cloths and pleaded with them not to rebel against the Lord. The tearing of the garments symbolized his horror and inner agony (cf. Lev.10:6; 21:10; 2 Kgs.19:1). The called one stood for the truth and did

his best to convince the people of the reality, but in vain. They turned against him and an attempt was made to stone him. The behaviour of Joshua sets an example for the present formees. Only those who stand for the truth and defend their innocent masters, even at the risk of their life could deserve the designation of disciples.

A Co-Singer

In Dt.32:44 Joshua is said to have sung with his master the so-called song of Moses (vv.1-43). In it Yahweh’s act of salvation as well as Israel’s history of unfaithfulness, which brought the divine punishment are underlined. This is meant to be a warning for the future generation. At the same time the song does not end with a negative note; it speaks of the eventuality of the future salvation.

Reflection IV

Moses, who was about to make his adieu from the people wanted to remind them of the grave consequence of their eventual unfaithfulness to Yahweh, in order to induce them to lead a life of loyalty. He, as instructed by the Lord has already proclaimed the obedient disciple, Joshua as his successor. Now he wanted to make the formed one participate in his written address to the assembly. Such an action will serve as a model for the present formators. Giving publically an equal role to the dutiful disciples will create in them self-confidence and will equip them to undertake successfully the future ministry.

The Bountiful Act of Yahweh

The heroic fidelity showed by Joshua to Moses was ultimately a demonstration of his faithfulness towards Yahweh. The Lord indeed responded with magnanimity. He promised Joshua the grace of entering the Promised Land (Num.14:30, 38; 26:65; 32:12). Moreover Yahweh made him the successor of Moses (Num.27:15-23). The human formator, the Lord’s representative entrusted his disciple to take decision about the future of the tribes of Gad and Reuban (Num.32:28-30). Joshua was given the task of assigning the future land to the tribes of Israel (Num.34:17).

Reflection VII

Humans can never outshine God in magnanimity and generosity. He will reward them a hundredfold for a least sign of affirmative attitude. One may say, that it is He who provides the gifts of fidelity and ability to respond positively. This thought may help to create in the candidates courage and confidence to persevere in their call.

PART: II

A DISCIPLE OF YAHWEH

Now began in the life of Joshua a period of serving directly the Divine Master of his human master.

Installation

There exist different accounts of installation of Joshua as successor of Moses: Num.27:15-23; Dt.31:7, 14, 23; 34:9; Jos.1:6, 7

Num.27:15-23

When Yahweh intimated Moses of his imminent death, he pleaded the Lord, whom he addressed "the God of the spirits of all flesh," to appoint a worthy leader and a good shepherd for the people. Then Yahweh chose Joshua, whom he designated as one in whom is the spirit. The installation ceremony consisted of the following rituals:

- Laying the hand of Moses on the candidate
- Making him stand before Eleazar, the priest and the entire assembly
- Commissioning him in their presence
- Giving him some of Moses' authority
- Standing before Eleazar the priest, who inquires the Lord through the means of Urim

Reflection VIII

The basic trait of a person selected for the office of spiritual leadership is the presence of the Spirit in him. The one who chooses such a candidate is not a human person but God himself. Jesus has made this clear: "You did not choose me but I chose you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last" (Jn.15:16). There should be an investiture ceremony, such as laying hands upon the candidate, which signified passing of the some of the authority of the celebrant and the Spirit in him (also in Dt. 34:9; Num.8:10; Acts.6:6; 19:6; 13:3; 1Tim. 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim.1:6), presenting the chosen one before the liturgical congregation, who has to acclaim him as their leader and avow allegiance to him, and before the priest, the spiritual head who, after consulting the Lord, has to give the final approbation. The elements of this ceremony make clear that the liturgical assembly is to be given a say in elevating someone as their leader and head. Such a tradition had existed in the Syro-Malabar Church in the earlier times. At the same time a priest has to function

as the divine representative, who has to make public the divine choice of the candidate.

Dt. 31:14-23

In this text Yahweh asks Moses to take Joshua his aide with him to the Tent of Meeting that He may commission him to the office of his master. As both of them presented themselves in the sanctuary the Lord appeared there in the pillar of cloud. After a premonitory speech about the eventual disobedience of the people (vv.16-22) Joshua received the charge (v.23) with the words: "Be strong and be bold, for you, you shall bring the children of Israel into the land that I swore to them, and I, I will be with you" (v.23). The phrase "be strong and be bold" occurs also in Moses' words of charge to Joshua in Dt.3:28; 31:7. In those texts Moses utters that phrase according to the instruction of the Lord. In 3:28 and 31:7 it is used to strengthen and embolden his successor, for he has to cross over before the people and cause them to inherit the Promised Land. The commissioned one needs strength and boldness in his task to conquer Canaan. The second personal pronoun you is used twice in the commissioning (Dt.31:23) in order to emphasize that it is Joshua alone who has to lead the people. To God's bedrock promise ("I will be with you") is added the personal pronoun for emphasis. The personal presence of the Divine Master to Joshua is assured also in Dt.31:8. That phrase occurred also in Dt.1:21, 29-31; 7:17-21; 9:1-3; 31:6. It gives certainty to Israel that He will easily route the foes vastly larger and stronger than Israel. The words "I am/I will be with you" is the pre-eminent promise in the Bible (Gen.26:3; 28:15; Ex.3:12; Dt.2:7; 20:1, 4; 31:6, 8, 23; Jos.1:5, 9; Jgs.6:12, 16; Jer.1:8, 19; 15:20; 30:11; Is.41:10; 43:5; Mt.28:20).

Reflection IX

The human formator has the duty to strengthen and embolden the faith of the candidates in the One who has called them. He will be personally present in their day today life, and if they learn to entrust themselves into his hands, they could live their heroic call with their whole heart, soul, mind and strength, and achieve wonderful things which nobody can even imagine, since it is not they but the Lord who lives and works in and through them. The story of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara attests to this fact.

Josua 1:5-9

In this text Yahweh directly addresses the disciple of Moses after his master's death. First He commands Joshua to arise and cross the Jordan

River at once to the land of Canaan, which He will give to Israel. Then the proper installation ceremony occurs, which has the following elements:

- The promise of invincibility, v.5 a
- The promise of the divine presence with three assertions, v.5 b
 - o " I will be with you"
 - o " I will not abandon you"
 - o " I will not desert you"
 - o Threefold demand "be strong and courageous", vv.6, 7,9
- Obligation to strictly stick to the covenant law as a condition for success, v.7 b
- The way to stick to the covenant clauses, v.8.
 - o The law should be never missing from the lips
 - o Recite it day and night for observing it
- The promise of success, v.8 b
- Exhortation not to be frightened or dismayed
- Assurance of the divine presence

Reflection X

First of all Joshua is commanded: Arise! cross! at once! The reason for such an order may be this. The death of the master would have touched deeply the beloved disciple. The great sorrow seems to have incapacitated Joshua. He should be brought back into action, so that he could forget his personal anguish and despondency. That is why the Divine Master gives him two commands arise, cross, to which He adds *at once*, as a freighted time expression. There is no single minute to be lost for bewailing at the personal misfortune. Such an approach is to be recommended in the present process of formation. The candidates needs help to shed off the temptation to become introverts and supine ones.

It is pedagogically very effective to introduce the call with the promise that the called one could achieve great things without fail. To this the Divine Pedagogue adds a threefold assurance of his uninterrupted presence in the life of the formee. Such a pledge will embolden the disciple to be whole heartedly ever active in performing the assigned mission. With Paul he/she could exclaim: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil.4:13).

Next Joshua is asked thrice: "be strong and courageous". How can one be afraid if he/she is assured of the unceasing presence of God in his/her life? To show fear or despire will be a sign of the lack of trust in the Calling One. The called one should never desist from uttering the words of the Psalmist: "I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side" (Ps.3:6); "even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and staff, they comfort me" (Ps.23:4); "the Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps.27:1); "why should I fear when evil days come, when wicked deceivers surround me?" (Ps.49:5).

Yahweh made the installed one to remember his duty to strictly adhere to the covenant law and minutely implement it, if he wants success in his mission. The Master teaches the formee how to do it: the law shall not depart from his mouth; he shall recite it day and night. This is a salutary lesson for the modern formators. The traditional old practice of making the candidates to learn by heart the pertinent verses from the Bible together with the Constitutions, has become more relevant today, since very often the young as well as old priests and religious appear to have forgotten the rules and regulations of the Church and of the Institute. The present crisis in the life of the consecrated persons would have never occurred if they had appropriated the words of the Psalmist: "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Ps.1:1-2).

The installation account concludes by repeating once more the promise of success, advice not to be afraid of anyone and pledge of Yahweh's presence. The repetition of these three elements may help the called one to fortify his trust and optimism of a fruitful ministry.

The Disciple in Action

The text of Dt.34:9 invites our attention upon the effect of the installation: Joshua was filled with the Spirit of wisdom, and noticing it the people were willing to listen to his instructions and to put them into practice. Joshua at once took the role of the leader.

Preparing the People for the March

He gave orders to the people through officers to get ready to enter the Promised Land (Jos.1:10-11). Joshua then asked the tribes of Reuban, Gad and Manasseh to cross over in battle array before others, and they accepted his request (1:12-18).

Reconnoitring Canaan

Next he sent two men as spies to Jericho (2:1-24). They returned and assured him that Yahweh has surely given the whole land into the hands of Israel.

Crossing the Jordan

Joshua then asked the people to make themselves ritually ready for crossing Jordan River the next day according to the instruction given by Yahweh (3:1-16). The crossing of the river had a cultic overtone (3:17-4:1-13). First the priests carrying the Ark of Covenant went to the river. At the touch of their feet, the waters were cut off. The priests took their stand in the middle of the Jordan. There followed Joshua's exhortation to the people to cross the river as if it were a dry land. Thereby they could know that the living God is in their midst, who can work wonders. The ritual procession of the Ark of the Covenant can be seen as a re-enactment of the "history of redemption" of the Exodus-conquest theme.

Reflection XI

Two facts draw our special attention. Every act of consecrated person should bear a sacred aureole. Joshua sets before us a model. He asked the people to sanctify themselves as a preparation to witness the mighty act of God (3:5). Also before entering the river he made a spiritual exhortation in order to make Israel to experience the presence of the Holy God in their midst (3:10). The role of the divine Formator demands special mention. He wanted to magnify his disciple in the eyes of all Israel (3:7, 14), which will induce them to revere Joshua as they had done towards Moses. Engendering such an attitude in the people was a necessity in order to win their allegiance and wholehearted cooperation. Human formators should cultivate such a percipient attitude.

Erecting a National Memorial

According to the instruction of the divine Pedagogue the obedient disciple asked each man from the twelve tribes to take one stone across the river and deposit it in the campsite, which may serve as an everlasting sign for the future generations (4:1-18, 19-24). What is taking place now must be beneficial for the coming generations. They should also personally experience the salvific act of Yahweh in favour of them and grow in reverential loyalty and love towards the saviour. Blessed are those human masters who show such sagacious insight in their formative undertakings! Yahweh had a further design in making

Israel cross Jordan in a miraculous way. The news reached in the ears of the Canaanite kings and they got terribly frightened about Israel.

Renewal of Covenant Commitment

Before settling in the Promised Land Yahweh wanted Israel to renew their covenant commitment by undergoing circumcision, the sign of covenant as prescribed to Abraham (Gen.17:10-14). The Lord gave Joshua precise instructions how to perform it (5:2-9). Nothing is profane in the life of the people of God, and their religious leaders should be fully aware of this truth. Joshua the faithful minister always kept this in his mind and executed every minute detail of the divine command. Besides, under his leadership the spiritually renewed people celebrated the Passover (5:10-11). The first celebration of the Passover in the land marked a point of transition in the life of the covenant people.

A Strange Encounter

Vv.13:15 refer to Joshua's unexpected meeting with a commander of heavenly army. While he was walking alone during the night he lifted up his eyes. Behold a man standing before him with a drawn sword! At seeing this commander of Yahweh's army Joshua fell face down on the ground, doing homage. He was then asked to take the sandal off his foot, since he was standing in holy place. By this appearance the Lord wanted to imprint in the mind of his disciple that only with the involvement of the heavenly army could the warfare begin and be won. The formee as well as the people should never forget that the Promised Land was conquered not by their fighting skills and strength, but by the might of the Lord. The called ones should never forget that whatever success they may achieve in their future ministry is granted to them by the mere grace and generosity of their Divine Master. They have nothing to be proud of it. They are only the instruments in the divine hands; what is expected from them is to raise their minds to the Lord in gratitude, love and praise.

The Conquest of Palestine

The Fall of Jericho

When Joshua executed Yahweh's instruction word by word Israel could take the city of Jericho (6:1-27). The Lord's speech began thus: "See! I have given into your hand Jericho..." These words summarise the cause of every success of Christian undertakings. The candidates need to imprint in their minds this truth, so that they can make the words of Paul their own: "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Cor.1:31; Jer.9: 24). The capturing of the city had cultic overtones. First they marched

around the city for six days, seven priests carrying seven ram's horn trumpets ahead of the Ark of the Covenant. At the seventh day, the priests blasted the horn trumpets and the people gave a tremendous shout. At that sound the city wall collapsed and the people took the city. The account thus concludes: "Yahweh was with Joshua, and his fame was country-wide". The Lord will be with all the called ones, if they faithfully adhere to his word. Then their fame will become God's fame, or the divine fame will become human fame.

A Crisis and Lamentation

Against the command of Yahweh Achan took some of the devoted goods for himself (7:1-26). The Lord considered this treacherous violation of the ban by an individual as a transgression committed by the whole covenant community. Hence the next attempt to attack the town of Ai miserably failed and many Israelites were struck down. At this defeat the courage of the people sank to their boots. Joshua and the elders rent their clothes and fell face down on the ground before the Ark of Yahweh and stayed that way until evening, with dust thrown on their heads. Then the formee gave vent to his bitter feelings before his Master (vv.6-9), asking him why He had caused this calamity. There was a trace of accusation in his words. Why did Yahweh bring the people over the Jordan? Is it to give them into the power of the enemies and to destroy them? Also he reminded the Lord of the reaction of the enemies at hearing this news which will embolden them to cut off Israel's name from the earth. Will it not be a disgrace for Him?

Reflection XII

The incident sheds light into the communitarian aspect of a sin of one of its members. The whole community has the responsibility for the unfaithfulness of a single individual. Here underlies a theological truth. Also the new Israel is called to stand before God as a community. They form the mystical body of Christ. One can make the Church holy or sinful. The called ones should always keep in their mind this ecclesial aspect.

Reflection XIII

The reaction of the formee at the route of Israel invites our attention. First he with the elders humiliated himself with severe penitential acts. Then he, with the freedom of a true devotee poured out his soul to the Lord (cf.1 Sam.1:15). There is accusation as well as reminding Yahweh of the eventual disgrace to his name. This is a true portrait of an authentic disciple. He/she could fully expose the feelings of the heart, without

any trace of fear. Human formators should train the candidates to grow into such a freedom of the children of God.

Bitter Lesson

The divine Formator did not encounter the bewailing disciple with soothing words. He asked Joshua to cease from crying like babies and asked him "get yourself upright; why is this: you have fallen on your face?" The community has sinned by violating the divine order. The one who has transgressed has to be exterminated from their midst. Otherwise "I shall not continue to be with you." These words are put in a negative way in order to make Joshua conscious of the seriousness of the situation. After repeatedly admonishing that the people should not take anything devoted to Yahweh one of them had coveted and took the banned things! This is indeed a grave disobedience which cannot be tolerated. Mere bewailing and complaining of the leaders are not enough. Israel will not be granted the divine presence and his continual help, unless the guilty person is extirpated (vv.10-12).

Reflection XIV

There was not a tinge of mercy or mildness in the words of the divine Formator. Soothing approach will not help at that juncture. Human formators should learn to deal with harshness, when it is the only remedy to bring a radical change in the mentality of their subjects. This strident reaction will be ever imprinted in the minds of the candidates so that no one will ever dare to commit such an offence.

A Helping Hand

After giving a shock treatment the divine Formator changed his tone. He gave precise instructions for finding out the culprit and to remove him from the midst of the community (7:13-26). Joshua minutely followed the divine orders, and found out the guilty person. The way how he dealt with the delicate situation is a lesson for the future leaders. When Achan was brought before him Joshua said: "My son, glorify Yahweh, God of Israel, and give praise to him" (v.19). No emotional outburst of anger! The culprit is addressed, "my son" - a tender term in the mouth of an affectionate father. Then he requested the culprit to glorify the Lord and give praise to him. Even a grave offender is encouraged to render praise and glory to God. After this he indulgently helped Achan to open up his heart. Such a gracious and kind approach prompted the guilty one to confess his sin and to disclose the place where he had hidden the taken items. Joshua sent some to discover the stolen things. Then Joshua spread them out before Yahweh (v.23 b). This action

needs our commendation. Let God see and give his assent, only then Joshua, together with all Israel, proceeded to execute the punishment. Before stoning Achan the leader pronounced the verdict: "Why have you devastated us? Yahweh will devastate you this very day" (v.25). These words will help Achan to get convinced of his sacrilegious action and of the justice of punishment. Here Joshua appears as true envoy of God. He treated the guilty party humanly, and at the same time without forgetting the divine instruction. This is indeed a model which the church leaders could follow. They should never put on the shoes of God. In cases to have recourse to take unavoidable punitive measures, they should never forget that they themselves are helpless human beings who are compelled to follow the divine instructions. If all the persons in authority would have followed such a humble and prayerful attitude!

An Obedient Subject and a Beneficent Superior - I

After making Joshua drink the bitter medicine the divine Formator changed his pedagogy. He injected courage and confidence in the disciple: "be not afraid or dismayed... See! I have given into your power the king... and his land" (8:1). Then Yahweh give precise instruction and Joshua faithfully followed it (8:18, 26, 27). Thus Israel could capture Ai (vv.21-29).

A Grateful Response

As an act of gratitude the disciple took initiative to renew the covenant commitment of Israel at Mount Ebal (8:30-35). First he built an altar for Yahweh as Moses had prescribed. Then he offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings. Afterwards Joshua wrote on stones the covenant clauses. Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, according to the instructions given by Moses. There followed the ceremony of reading the stipulations of the covenant, both the blessings and curses. Thus Joshua proved himself as the faithful follower of Moses, who had lived a life of utter submission and subservience to Yahweh.

Dealing with the Swindled Strangers

The behaviour of Joshua to the Gibeonites who tricked him into making an alliance with them in order to save their lives (9:1-27), deserves special mention. Only after making the covenant with them did Joshua know the ruse. Although the congregation grumbled, Joshua did not want to kill the Gibeonites. He summoned them and rebuked them, and reduced them into inferior status, to work as woodcutters and water

carriers for the community. Here we find Joshua's loyal attitude, as he had sworn an oath in the name of Yahweh to spare the life of these strangers. At any cost he wanted to stick to the oath taken in the Lord's name; otherwise it would have brought disgrace to his mentor. This should be the attitude of an authentic follower of the Lord.

An Obedient Subject and a Beneficent Superior - II

Yahweh always came to the help of his loyal disciple. Here we cite only the pertinent words of appeal and execution of the divine will by the disciple and the encouraging and conquering acts of Yahweh:

- "Do not fear them; indeed I have given them into your power, and not a man of them will stand before you" (10:8).
- Yahweh confounded them (enemies) before Israel! Yahweh defeated them decisively (9:10)
- Then Joshua appealed to Yahweh (for an extraordinary grace), which was granted to him: "God's heeding of a human voice! Surely Yahweh fought for Israel!" (10:12-14)
- The confidence of the divine Formator's intervention of his behalf, encouraged the disciple to tell the people "do not be afraid of them (enemies) and do not be dismayed! Be strong, be bold! For thus Yahweh will do to all the enemies whom you fight!" (10:25)
- Yahweh gave it (Maqqedah) too into the hand of Israel (10:30).
- Yahweh gave Lachish into the hand of the Israel (10:32, 35).
- Joshua conquered the entire land... Everything alive he put to the ban, as Yahweh God of Israel commanded... All these kings and their land Joshua seized in a single stroke, because Yahweh God of Israel fought for Israel (10:40-42).
- "Do not be afraid of them. By this time tomorrow I will hand them all to Israel on a sword. Their horses you shall hamstring, their chariots you shall burn (11:6).
- Yahweh put them into the hand of Israel (11:8).
- Joshua did to them as Yahweh had told him (11:9).
- Joshua felt nothing undone of all that Yahweh had commanded Moses (11:15).
- Joshua devoted them to destruction (11:21).
- When Joshua had taken all the land, as Yahweh had instructed Moses, then Joshua gave it over to Israel (11:23).

Reflection XV

The above cited texts draw the portrait of a genuine disciple and his ever-aiding Master. At every need the called one turns to the Lord and the Formator responds positively as if it were his own affair. The devout subject was willing to execute even whatever the Lord had commanded his former human *Guruji*. Here we find an enviable model of a committed disciple and his loving master. The called one never hesitates to approach his protector at every difficult situation. He enjoys the certitude of a positive hearing. Fortified with such confidence he could inject in the people intrepidity and gallantry.

Distribution of the Land

Chapters 13-19 narrate the distribution of the land undertaken by Joshua according to the command of Yahweh. Here also he appears as a loyal and obedient disciple, who meticulously executed the divine instructions. Some texts are cited below:

- “Simply allot it (land) to Israel in fief, exactly as I have commanded you” (13:6).
- Joshua heard the request of the loyal Caleb and blessed him and gave him the requested allotment (14:6-15).
- To Caleb he gave a tract in the midst of the tribe of Judah, according to the oracle of Yahweh to Joshua (15:13).
- Joshua cast the lot for them before Yahweh at Shiloh. There Joshua parcelled out the land to the Israelites – according to their divisions (18:10).
- These are the fiefs which Eleazar the priest and Joshua ben Nun and the patriarchal chiefs assigned by lot to the tribes of Israel at Shiloh, before Yahweh at the opening of the Tent of Meeting. They completed the apportionment of the land. (19:51).

Reflection XVI

Two points deserve our attention. First Joshua made the priest and the chiefs participate in the allotment of the land. Such an action to seek the cooperation and involvement of both religious and political leaders serves as a model for the modern leaders. It will help to create a communitarian spirit, and to make the congregation a single entity, that unitedly takes important decisions and wholeheartedly executes them. Second, the distribution of land was undertaken at the opening of the Tent of Meeting in the presence of Yahweh. This fact teaches the called ones to have recourse to the divine presence at all the important undertakings.

Towns for Refugees and the Levites

Yahweh gave precise instructions to Joshua to set aside six towns for the refugees, who might become the innocent target of private vengeance (20:1-9). Also He provided the Levites towns (21:1-42) so that they could devote themselves to teach the people the divine ethics. Vv.43-45 provides the summary of Yahweh fulfilling his promise given to the ancestors of Israel.

Exhortation of Joshua

Joshua's exhortation to the Transjordan Tribes is the theme of 22:1-5. Here we find an ideal leader. First he commends those tribes for obeying his instructions and keeping the divine commandment. Before sending them to their land he blessed them and at the same time reminded them to continue to be loyal to the covenant stipulations, by loving Yahweh, by walking in all his ways, by clinging to him and by serving him with all their heart and all their soul. Acts of congratulation and blessing are joined with words of premonition. This is indeed a psychological approach, which the modern formators could follow.

Words of Farewell

As Joshua had reached a ripe old age, he summoned the whole Israel and gave his final exhortation to them (23:1-16). First he recited the mighty acts of Yahweh, who had kept his promises. Likewise the people should continue to be loyal to their Lord. He makes twice the following assertions: "Yahweh is truly our God! He is the One who fights for us" (vv.3, 10). Then the leader reminds them of the devastatingly negative consequence in case they fail to be loyal to their covenant Overlord (vv.11-13, 15-16). In between he claims that he was ever faithful to his divine Master by executing his orders and requests (v.14). Joshua's words serve as a testament of an affectionate father for his beloved children.

Reflection XVII

It would be an effective pedagogy to make the candidates conscious of the graces which the merciful Lord had showered upon them from the time of their birth. This will help an ordinary person to thank and praise God for such favours and motivate him/her to lead a life of faithfulness. Also the ejaculatory proclamation, "Yahweh is truly our God! He is the one who fights for us," will be a cogent method to imprint in their minds the sovereignty and superiority of their God, whose call they had followed. He will be with them and help them to fight the spiritual battles and subjugate the powers of evil. Reminding the professed ones

of the evils which may befall them for their eventual acts of infidelities will be fruitful methodology in formation.

The Shechem Covenant

The final act of Joshua before his death was to animate the people to solemnly declare their commitment to Yahweh and renew the covenant with Him (24:1-27). The periscope has a dialogical structure:

- 7 occurrences of ‘*mr* (say) in the converted imperfect, vv.2, 16, 19, 21, 22 (twice), 24
- 7 occurrences of the name Joshua, vv.1, 2, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25
- 7 references to the people, vv.2, 16, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25
- 7 imperatives, vv.14 (four times), 15, 23 (twice)

Joshua played the role of the covenant mediator, like Moses at the Mount Sinai. The narration is analogous to a covenant document. It has the following structure:

- preamble v.2a: Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel
- narration of the past saving acts of the Lord, in which Yahweh is speaking in first person singular, using **I** 19 times vv.2b-13
- galvanizing the people into leading a faithful life, vv.14-15
 - fear Yahweh
 - serve him
 - challenging to choose either Yahweh or other gods, v.15 ab
 - assertion of Joshua’s decision to serve Yahweh , v.15 c
- positive response of the people, vv. 16-18
 - assertion under imprecation
 - avowal of Yahweh’s saving acts
 - re-assertion of allegiance
- provoking the people, vv.19-20
- re-avowal of the people, v.21
- call to act as witness, v.22ab
- positive response of the people, v.22c

- demand to repudiate the idols and to accept Yahweh, v.23
- re-avowal of the people, v.24
- covenant making rites, vv.25-27
 - making statute and ordinance
 - recording the stipulations on a large stone
 - setting it up in a sacred place
 - explaining the role of stone as a counter-witness in case of violation
- dismissal of the congregation, v.28

Reflection XVIII

As we have already mentioned, the best way to instil zeal and fidelity in the candidates is to impress again and again upon their minds the working of the Spirit in their life from the days of conception. The divine Formator through the mouth of Joshua uses 19 times the first person singular. One can say, this was a brain-washing technique. The narrative sheds light on the role of human formator. He/she has to act as a mediator between God and the candidates. The act of galvanizing the called ones into leading a committed life will be very useful. Flinging challenges may prompt the candidates to respond to the whisperings of the Spirit. Dialogical approach will help them to rise to the challenges of the call. As the formees begin to respond positively to the counsel the formators at the apt times could strongly demand to repudiate the idols which they were worshipping in their hearts. The masters should teach their subjects how to record the day today happenings with the discernment of the spirit and insist on reading at least every month, preferably on the day of the monthly recollection the things noted down. This will serve to create self-awareness of the lapses and failures, in which they could take up more practical resolutions.