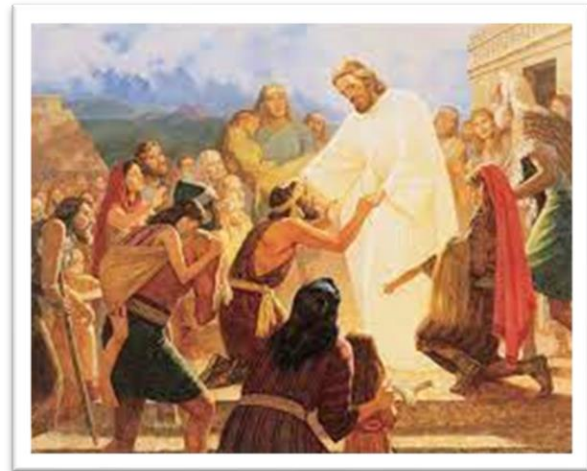


Jesus Visits Certain Inns, The Halting Places of the Holy Family on Their Flight into Egypt

Jesus had spent His nights alone and in prayer. Upon leaving the shepherds He addressed His disciples, telling them that He was now going to make another journey to some people who had hospitably sheltered Him and His parents on their flight, that He would cure their sick and convert a sinner, that no footstep of His holy parents should remain unblessed, and that everyone who had shown them compassion and kindness on their flight, He would now seek out and lead to salvation. The mercy and benevolence of all such persons have been to them a pledge and a furtherance of salvation; their effects will continue forever. As now, He said, He was visiting all that had at that time shown charity to Him and His, so would His Heavenly Father be mindful of all that showed mercy and charity to even the most insignificant of His brethren. Jesus then appointed a place near the city and Mount Ephraim, where His disciples were to await His coming.



He now journeyed alone around Herod's dominions toward the desert near Anim, or Enzanim, a few hours from the Dead Sea. His way lay through a wild, though tolerably fertile region where, hedged in by enclosures, were pastured a great many camels divided into droves of forty. There was an inn for the accommodation of travelers through the desert, and to it Jesus went. Several huts and sheds stood nearby, and the proprietors of the inn owned many camels.

This inn was the last in Herod's dominions met by the Holy Family on their flight into Egypt. The people were a bad set who carried on thievery, but notwithstanding they had received the Holy Family kindly. The neighboring city contained many disorderly characters who had settled there after some war.

Jesus went to the inn and asked hospitality. The proprietor was a man about fifty years old, called Reuben, who had been there at the time of the flight into Egypt. When Jesus glanced at him and addressed him, grace shot like a ray of light into his breast. The words of Jesus and His salutation fell upon him like a blessing, and deeply moved he exclaimed: "Lord, it is as if the Promised Land enters with Thee into my house!" Jesus replied that, if he

would believe in the Promise and would not cast away from him its fulfillment, he would indeed share in the Promised Land. Then He spoke of good works and their consequences, telling him that He had now come to announce salvation to him, because he had kindly entertained His Mother and His foster-father so many years before when on their flight to Egypt. In like manner does every action, the good as well as the bad, bear its own fruit. At these words of Jesus, the man cast himself trembling on the ground before Him, saying: "Lord, whence is this to me, a poor, despised, miserable man, that Thou shouldst enter my house?" Jesus answered that He had come to cleanse sinners from their iniquity and lead them back to God. The man still spoke of his own baseness, and said that all the inhabitants of the place belonged to a miserable, lost generation; he also told Jesus of his poor, sick grandchildren. Jesus replied that if he would believe in Him and be baptized, He would restore his grandchildren to health. He washed Jesus' feet, and gave Him the best he had for His refreshment. When the neighbors came in, he told them who Jesus was and what He had promised. He had a relative among them who was named Issacher.

After that he conducted Jesus to his sick grandchildren who, some from leprosy and some from lameness, had become quite deformed. Jesus commanded the children to rise, and they stood up cured. He visited some women also, who were sick of a bloody flux. Then He ordered a bath to be prepared. They got ready a large vessel of water under a tent. From one of the two flasks that He carried with Him strapped to His side under His outer robe, He poured into it some of the baptismal water from the Jordan, and blessed the whole. The sick were then ordered to bathe in it. They did so, and came forth cleansed and thanking the Lord. Jesus did not baptize them Himself, although this washing was equivalent to Baptism in case of death; but He exhorted them to go seek for the baptism at the Jordan. When the people questioned Jesus, asking if the Jordan really possessed special virtue, He answered that the channel of the Jordan had been hollowed out and its course directed; that all holy places of this land had been allotted to special purposes by His Heavenly Father long before man had existed there, yea, even before the land or the Jordan had sprung forth from nothing. Very wonderful things spoke Jesus on this subject, and He instructed the women on marriage inculcating modesty and continency. He pronounced the degeneracy of the people of this place and the pitiful condition of the children, consequences of the illegitimate connections so common among them. He spoke of the parents' share in the corruption of their children, of arresting the evil by penance and satisfaction, and of the

second birth in baptism.

Then He recounted to them all the kind offices they had performed for the Holy Family at the time of their flight, and gave them some information relative to the places at which they had rested and refreshed themselves. Mary and Joseph had with them on their flight a she-ass, as well as the ass upon which the Blessed Virgin rode. Jesus showed the people all their actions at the time of the flight, that is all the acts of kindness they had shown the Holy Family, as so many types of their present turning from sin to salvation. They prepared for the Lord a repast from the best they had. It consisted of a kind of milk thick like white cheese, honey, rolls baked in the ashes, grapes, and birds.

Accompanied by some of these men, Jesus left Ainon and, returning by another route, arrived toward evening at a city built on both sides of a mountain, through which ran a rugged valley full of deep ravines. Both mountain and city bore the name of Ephraim, or Ephron. The mountain faced straight toward Gaza. Jesus had come through the country of Hebron. At some distance from the road that He travelled could be described a ruined city with a tower still standing, whose name sounded like Malaga.¹ About an hour's distance from this place was the grove Mambre whither the angels bore to Abraham the promise of a son, Isaac; also the double cave that Abraham bought from Ephren, the Hethite, and which afterward formed his tomb. The field that witnessed David's combat with Goliath was not far off. Jesus, His escort having taken leave, wended His way around one side of the double city and met His disciples in the rugged valley road which had been designated by Him as the place of meeting. He conducted them out of the winding ravine into a very spacious cave in the wildest part of the mountain, to which no path led. It had afforded a resting place, the sixth in order, to the Holy Family on their flight into Egypt, and here Jesus and His disciples passed the night.

Jesus told this circumstance to the disciples, impressing upon them the sacred character of the place, while they were busying themselves making a fire. They struck a light by revolving one piece of wood inside another. One of the Prophets had frequently spent some time in this cave, in order to give himself more unreservedly to prayer. I think it was Samuel. David, too, while guarding his father's flocks around here, had made the cave a place of prayer and there received commands of God through the ministry of angels. It was while thus engaged that he was admonished to slay Goliath.

When the Holy Family reached this cave, they were dejected and exhausted. The Blessed Virgin wept sadly. They were in want of all things, because they

had fled by unfrequented ways, shunning the great cities and customary inns. They spent a whole day here recruiting their strength, and several wonders were vouchsafed them for their refreshment—a fountain sprang up in the cave, and a wild goat bounded in and allowed itself to be milked.

Jesus spoke to the disciples of the great tribulations in store for Him and all His followers, of the hardships here endured by Himself and His Blessed Mother, of the mercy of His Heavenly Father, and of the holiness of the place. He added that at some future day there would be a church built on the spot, and He blessed the cave as if consecrating it. The disciples had brought with them some fruit and rolls, and of them all partook.