

EASTER = PASSOVER = JOURNEY FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

"It took one day to get the Israelites out of Egypt. But it took forty years to get Egypt out of the Israelites." (Quote from a Jewish Rabbi)

It takes only three days to walk from Egypt to Israel. Why did it take 40 years to cross the desert into the promised land? Quiet a delay?

The slavery of Israel, from which God wanted to free them, was not merely their subjection as slaves to Pharaoh. But after 400 years, of being forced to work without rest, with no time allowed for worship, by living and accommodating themselves to the culture of Egypt, the people of Israel were losing their identity as God's chosen people, and becoming Egyptian in mind and in heart. Outwardly Jewish, but inwardly thoroughly Egyptian.

In fact this was the plan of Pharaoh, in modern language - to secularise the Jewish people - to destroy their identity as God's people, by suppressing their worship of God, by overworking them, by initiating a genocide of their first born, aborting them, and through intermarriage; by killing the male children, so forcing Jewish women to find husbands among the Egyptians, forcing Jewish women and their offspring to adopt Egyptian ways.

The destruction of Jewish identity, would mean a destruction of their mission to the world, a tragedy for mankind, since the reason God have chosen Israel was to reveal himself to the world which was blind to his presence. God had to act fast to get the people of Israel out of Egypt. They were reaching a level of corruption which would wipe out their identity as Jews, and with it Gods' plan for the salvation of mankind!

The plan of the true Pharaoh, Satan, has not changed much, Sunday as a day of worship has been become a day of sport, shopping and DIY, and with the loss of worship comes a loss of the Catholic identity, of our identity as God's children. The domestic church, where the first seeds of faith are planted, is in full retreat, as marriage is redefined at will. We face the same danger today! Wake up!

Did you know that the ten plagues corresponded to 10 Egyptian God's, who were supposed to be in control of different aspects of the nation's life. The Nile was worshipped as a God, a source of life; the frog represented the god, Heka. Lice would insult Seth, the God of the earth; Flies represent Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, both of these plagues would make the Egyptians

ritually unclean and bring worship to a halt in Egypt; ashes were used to bless people, the 5th plague then turns the blessing into a curse. The 6th plague is aimed at Neit or Typhon; the 7th plague, hail, at Isis or Osiris, gods of fire and water; The god Seraphis was supposed to protect the land from locusts, but failed in the eighth plague. The ninth plague showed that Ra, the sun god, and Seth, the god of evil, had no power before the Lord, the Light of the World. Pharaoh, worshipped as a God, himself was brought down by the tenth plague, which showed that neither he nor his heir had any power over death.'

For Israel's and Egypt's benefit, this contest was proof to everyone that the God of Israel alone, deserved the Name of God, all other gods were useless! Even then the people of Israel were not convinced! 50 days after leaving Egypt, whilst God is making a solemn covenant, with them, Israel would return to the worship of the Egyptian fertility god, Apis. They had only physically left Egypt, Egypt still lived in their hearts. The failure of this first generation who left Egypt to allow God to deal with this 'inner Egypt', the purpose of the 40 year desert experience, even though they had ample proof of God's love and power, meant that out of over 500,000 men, probably over a million people counting women and children, only two, Caleb and Joshua, entered the promised land!

Whilst we no longer worship statues as the Egyptians did, we do revere what they stand for, money, success, possessions, pleasure. The current pandemic has touched all these, and shown up the vacuousness of our modern culture in many ways. It is time for a rethink!

What can we do! '**Know thyself man**' said Socrates. Revisit God's calling. Come to understand the 'inner Egypt', the slavery which lives in my and your our hearts, how it got there, and how God is offering us, as he did for 40 years to the people of Israel, an education in real freedom, in real happiness, a new land flowing with milk and honey, a new intimacy with the Father through his Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Abba Father!



St John of the Cross, Theresa of Avila will be our guides.

Thomas Keating a commentator on John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, helps us to understand the formation of this 'inner Egypt' within ourselves, this false self, which we have constructed. All of us have three basic, instinctual, needs, for **security**, for **love**, and for **control/power** - these needs also correspond to the three temptations which Christ experiences in the desert.

Every person apart from, Jesus and Mary, is born into original sin. What is it? It, says the church, is an absence of a grace, the grace of a mature, divine friendship with the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, which is the sole cause of true human happiness. Adam and Eve had it before they sinned. St Augustine says that there are three consequences of this original sin: that we don't know where to look for happiness; even if we did we could not find it; and if we found it we could not persevere it.

When we were in the womb, our search for happiness already began, not at the level of our reason, which was too undeveloped to engage with the world, but an instinctual search to satisfy these three needs for security, love and power; at the same time that this search was happening we also experienced many emotional traumas, the most common being, rejection which leads to self rejection, related to the frustration of these needs, particularly in our relationship with our parents on whom we looked to meet these needs. The family, the domestic church, is the first world that a child knows and is formed in.

As we grew up and reached the age of reason, what should happen is that reason should kick in and begin to question our understanding of happiness, but this rarely happens. Most commonly is that we then discover a new world, the culture we live in, and the false self then looks around to see how it can satisfy its needs within this new arena. The world then presents to us certain archetypal roles, the successful business man, the homemaker, the victim, the religious person, the independent man, the practical man etc., and the false self latches onto one of these and in the end we take on ourselves a false identity, a mask, a way of being in the world, which is false.

Satan's whole work is to reinforce this false self - until we believe and take it for our true, real identity, then spiritual growth becomes almost impossible, without divine intervention, since we have embraced a fundamental lie, from the Father of lies, and built our identity around the lie. This is a recipe for human misery, since the false self is fundamentally selfish, and its only aim is the fulfilment of its childish needs.

To our rescue God comes with the Good News, with his Son Jesus Christ, telling us that he loves us, that he has power over the false self, and that our false self is not really me, that he knows us by a new name which he can confer, something far more beautiful, satisfying can be formed in us, modelled on his Son, Jesus Christ. But to arrive at this new self we need to be born by water and the spirit, we need to undertake a baptismal journey, through which this new self will be born in us and the false self destroyed. But we need to consent to this divine action. We need to sign up and persevere in the journey. Perseverance in prayer is the key to this journey. The renewal of our baptismal vows at Easter is nothing other than the renunciation of the false self, and a consent to the divine action which will birth a new self, our true self, in us. A new nature, a new creation, a new heart!

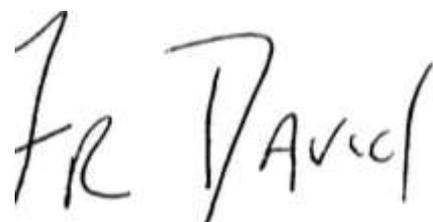
The 40 years of Israel in the desert is a biblical image of this journey; God did not find in the first generation this consent, most died in the desert; they longed for their past life in Egypt, with no hope in God's promise of a new land flowing with milk and honey; but in the desert God waited 40 years for a new generation, fed by his hand and docile to his will, with these he entered, with Joshua, another name for Jesus, at the head of the vanguard. The promise was fulfilled.

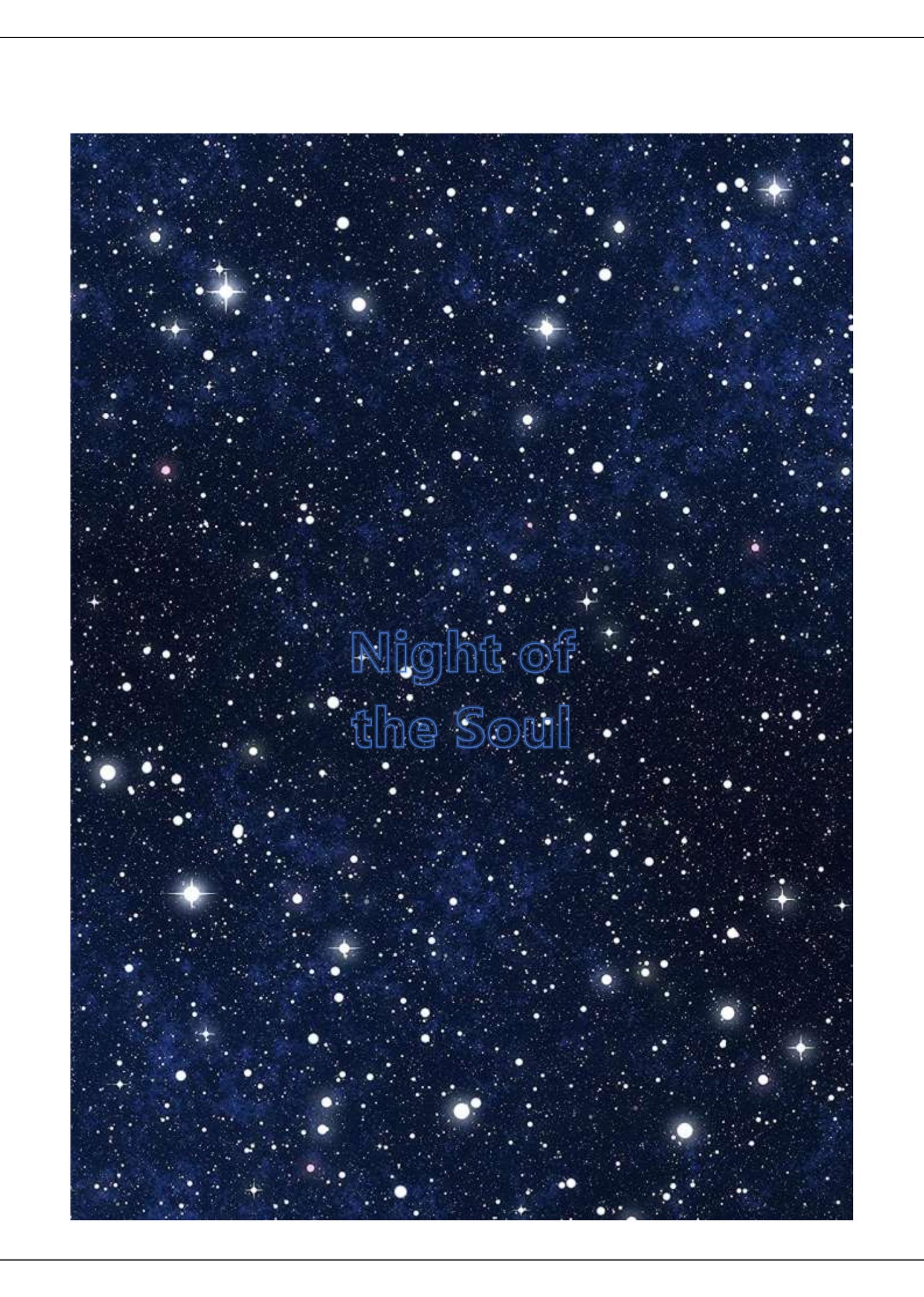
The mark of the new self is disinterested love, gift love. Just as God is service, he gives millions of people every day: food, homes to live in, a life, relations, friends; he keeps the universe running in such a gentle way, that his love is taken for granted, never asking anything back from us, except an occasional thank you. We become like him, free to love, through this journey. This is true happiness! This transformation is also the greatest gift you can give to humanity, to your family, to your relations who long to meet Christ in you! To see Christ formed in you!

Next week we will look at the beginning of this journey, which St John of the Cross, described as a single night which is divided into three phases: the night of sense, the night of the soul, and the nuptial union. We begin with the night of the sense. If you have had a deep experience of God somewhere along the line, are praying, living a Christian life, listening to the word of God, but are in crisis, in a desert, wondering where God is at the moment, it is probably because you are in this night.

To our mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, who has the task of seeing her Son formed in us, we entrust this precious work. We consecrate this work to her. Mary our mother, mum, mama, pray for us!

Suggestion: Each day pray to the Holy Spirit, ask him the question - Who am I? Show me my false self? What foundational events have formed in me my 'inner Egypt', my false self? Ask for faith.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "FR David". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with the "F" and "D" being particularly prominent.



Night of
the Soul