Biography: Lydia Prince

Lydia Christensen was born in 1890 in Northern Denmark.

Lydia became a teacher in the state school system of Denmark and was a pioneer in the field of home economics. By 1925, she had obtained a post as director of home economics in a large new school in the town of Korsor. While seeking more meaning for her life, she started reading the Bible and developed a personal faith in God.

In her late thirties and still single, she was searching for a greater purpose in life. Not yet a Christian, she was seeking more. Although offered the prospect of marriage, she could not accept. Soon after, she found real Christianity, was baptised and understood what the longing in her heart had been. Her new found faith in Jesus was very different to the type of nominal Christianity she had grown up with, which had no personal relationship with Jesus.

She was financially secure from the income from teaching, and as well, had been given a sum of money as an inheritance from the death of her father. While attending a church service, a guest speaker told of the urgent needs in an African country. Lydia decided to give the sum from her inheritance to the African mission.

Soon after, Lydia began having a recurrent dream of a woman in middle-eastern dress. She prayed a lot about that and became convinced that God was asking her to give up her position as a teacher and go to Jerusalem in the tumultuous days before Israel became a nation. In October 1928, at the age of thirty-eight, she set out for Jerusalem with $200, no one to support her, and no idea of what she was to do when she arrived.

Lydia found a place to rent, and kept praying about her purpose. One day, a Jewish man knocked on her door, pleading with Lydia to come and take their sick baby. The parents had no means of supporting the baby and no money for medical expenses. Unsure, Lydia went with the man to his house, where the baby lay deathly white and sick with fever. Lydia took the baby girl called Tikva, and cared for her in her humble home. It was a day-to-day struggle, through prayer and care, to save the baby's life. God miraculously provided the money she needed, and gradually the baby regained health.

Tikva regarded Lydia as her mother and it seemed that Lydia's only purpose was to look after Tikva. One day there was a knock on the door. It was Tikva's father. He had come to take Tikva back. His wife wanted to leave him. He believed that taking Tikva back would give his wife a reason not to leave him.

With heavy heart, Lydia gave Tikva to the Lord, and allowed the father to take her. However, after a few months, there was a knock on the door again. It was Tikva's mother, pleading with Lydia to take Tikva back. Her husband had treated her badly and she needed to leave him. She could not look after Tikva, and either could the father. Joyfully Lydia took Tikva

back. Tikva was sick and covered with sores, but gradually Lydia nursed her to health once again.

Before Israelis were given their own state, there was much conflict between Jews and Arabs. Arabs were becoming frustrated about the increase in the Jewish population, and violence erupted in 1936. The intensity of the Palestinian revolt at a time when Britain was preparing for the possibility of another world war led the British to reorient their policy in Palestine. As war with Germany became imminent, Britain's depended on Middle Eastern oil. Therefore, Britain believed there was the need to establish good relations with the Arabs, and Britain's commitment to a Jewish homeland in Palestine dissipated. However, in 1937, the revolt had caused much loss of life on both sides and Britain decided to step in to quell the revolt.

When fighting broke out Lydia was taken by surprise. She returned to her house that day to find all the houses in the village barricaded. Gun shots were firing and there was no one on the streets. She quickly went inside, closed her windows and door and pushed furniture against the door. She then realised that she had only about 1 litre of water in the house. About 1 am she crept out into the courtyard with her jug, to collect water from the village cistern, but only to find that the Arabs had turned off the water supply. She crept back to her house. Now unable to get out of her house because of the danger, and with no water, she knew she had to do something. She decided to make a run for it, to a missionary's house in a safer part of the town. With Tikva on her shoulders, she ran, only to find barricades all along the road. Climbing over the barricades with Tikva demanded all her strength and she finally could not carry on. At that moment, a tall young man came from behind, put Tikva on his shoulders and continued running to the missionary's house, with Lydia running behind. He stopped outside the house, put Tikva down and carried on.

Once inside safely, the missionary was astounded. She and the other missionaries had been worried about Lydia and had been praying that God would send an angel. That is the only way she and Tikva could have possibly made it.

Lydia thought about her special purpose. Had she come to Jerusalem just to care for one child? As Lydia established herself in Israel, she founded a children's home, becoming the cherished "mother" to dozens of orphans—mainly girls, eight of whom became her own children.

Lydia remained a faith missionary, and taught all the children to trust and pray. As her children grew in number, The Lord moved her on to larger premises, and in 1946 at the age of 56 she met and married a British soldier called Derek Prince who had recently become a Christian.

Jerusalem had been in great unrest for years, and came to a climax in 1948 when the State of Israel was born. Twice Lydia and Derek had fled their homes with their children in the middle of the night, and so reluctantly they left Jerusalem with their eight daughters to start a new chapter of their lives in England.

God led them continually through different seasons, from pastoring a church in London for six years, teaching in a training college in Kenya for four years (where they adopted their ninth daughter,) to travelling the world with a teaching ministry.

Lydia passed away in 1975, but her legacy continues through her children and the ministry she founded. You can read the remarkable story in the famous book, “Appointment in Jerusalem.”