

stition and idolatry which had crept in amongst them. At Bethel Deborah, his mother's nurse, on whose breast in infancy he had slumbered, died, and the depth of his grief may be seen in the name he gave to the oak under which she was buried. Then at Bethlehem, or near it, the greatest sorrow of his life befel him—Rachel died. For four years he had made his home at Hebron, among the friendly Hittites, near the grave of Abraham and Isaac. His older sons, who grew up in Padanaram, amid the worldly surroundings of his uncle's home, and in the days of his own unfaith, now caused him grief by their lawless excesses. The society of his two younger sons was therefore the more grateful. They were the children of his beloved Rachel. The noble qualities of Joseph, already beginning to shew themselves, would fill him with hopes of a worthy successor in the covenant line, for as he himself had supplanted an older brother, why should not Joseph supplant those who preceded him? Most unwisely, he shews the wish of his heart and the result is discord in the home. The three causes of this unhappiness furnishes us with our

LESSON PLAN. I Wickedness Reported vs 1, 2. II. Partiality Displayed, vs. 3, 4. III. Greatness Predicted. vs 5-11.

I. WICKEDNESS REPORTED. 1. The land of his father's sojournings. (R. V.) —Esau on the other hand made a permanent home for himself in Mount Seir (ch. 36: 6-8), thus giving up all claim to the blessings attached to the possession of the "promised land." The fact that the patriarchs were only sojourners is frequently referred to: Gen. 17: 8; 23: 4; 28: 4; 36: 7; Ps. 105: 11, 12. All life is but a "pilgrimage" during which the Christian lives in expectancy, waiting for the home of which Canaan was a type. See Gen. 47: 9; 1 Chr. 29: 15; Ps. 39: 12; 119: 9; 1 Pet. 1: 17; 2: 11; Heb. 11: 9, 13. 2. The generations—This phrase closes the narrative of Jacob as the similar expression, in ch. 25; 19, did that of Isaac, and introduces the history of the next central character, Joseph, Seventeen years old—i. e. in his seventeenth year. He was born in B. C. 1745, and was seven years of age when Jacob returned to Canaan, where he had now resided for ten years. In ch. 41: 6 he was 30 when he stood before Pharaoh, so he had thirteen years of suffering. Was feeding—"as was his custom" is implied. With his brethren—lit. "was tending his brethren in the flock (Bib. Mus.)" "Oversight or superintendence is evidently implied. This post of chief shepherd in the party might be assigned to him either from his being the son of a principal wife, or from his own superior qualities of character," (Jamieson). The lad—"and a mere lad, as he was, was with, &c." (Dods). The sons of Bilhah—Dan and Naphtali. The sons of Zilpah—Gad and Asher. Their mothers were probably Syrians and of an idolatrous and less civilized race. The evil report of them—(R. V.) Their fierce natures would lead them into excesses, and their inferior birth would deprive them of the restraint of self-respect and regard for the honor of the family name. They could never rival Joseph in authority and so would tolerate his overbearing, yet, being so much younger, he was unable to exercise much influence over them. His only course, if he would be faithful to his trust, was to report them.

II. PARTIALITY DISPLAYED. The first reason why the brothers hated Joseph was that he was of a higher moral character. The second was his father's unwise fondness for him. The third was his dreams, which uncomfortably harmonized with his manifest superiority to themselves. The son of his old age—This title is given to Benjamin ch. 44: 20, but Benjamin was at this time only about four years of age, and Joseph would occupy most of his father's attention. He was also the son of his beloved Rachel. The expression "a son of old age" may mean "a wise son," and refer to Joseph's winning disposition and intelligence. Goat of many colors—R. V. marg., "a long garment with sleeves." The word is obscure. It may mean (1) "a motley coat," embroidered in colors or of colored stripes sewed together; or (2) a robe with sleeves; or (3) a fringed garment. Possibly it had all three characteristics. Such festive attire is found on Egyptian mummies of Joseph's time. Its meaning made it offensive. It was a badge of superiority and implied chieftainship in the future. Similar costly apparel is referred to in Judges 5: 30; 2 Sam. 2: 19; Ps. 45: 14. compare also Hannah and Samuel, 1 Sam. 2: 19. 4. Could not speak peaceably—The ordinary salutation was "shalom" i. e. "peace be unto thee." The brothers could not even bid him "good day," or speak to him, without showing their resentment. The conduct of the brothers towards Joseph was just what might have been expected. It was the natural result of the father's sin in showing so decided a preference for Joseph and in giving a continual proof of it in the coat of many colors. One sin leads to another. Jacob's sin causes Joseph's brothers to sin.

III. GREATNESS PREDICTED. They hate him yet the more—"The third cause of envy was that Joseph dreamed and told his brothers how he saw their sheaves making obeisance to his sheaf, and their stars making obeisance to him. These dreams derived not