

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSON.—  
Sunday, Dec. 5.

LAST DAYS OF JACOB.—Gen. 48:8-22.  
GOLDEN TEXT.—V. 21. *Commit*—15:16.  
Time—*not far from 1689, B. C.*

INTRODUCTION AND CONNECTION.

The events that transpired between our last lesson and this, are briefly summarized in the latter part of ch. 47 and the first seven verses of ch. 48. The only circumstances of special importance given in connection with the family of Israel, are the promises Jacob exacted from Joseph of carrying his remains to Canaan, and burying them in the burial place of his fathers. The account, commencing with our present chapter, of Jacob's sickness; of Joseph's visit; of Jacob's solemnly reminding him of the promise made to his fathers, and in which he was personally so deeply interested; and of Jacob's formal adoption, as his own, of Joseph's two sons.

LESSON NOTES.

(8). *And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said—who are these?* Jacob's sight was dim through age, (v. 10.) so that, while it is here said *he beheld*, we are to understand that he saw only in "dim" line—not sufficiently well to identify the individuals near him.

(9, 10). *And Joseph said—they are my sons whom God hath given me in this place. Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.*—bestow upon them the prophetic blessing which was to be significant of God's purpose in regard to the families, or tribes, of which they were to be the heads. *And he brought them, . . . and he (Jacob) kissed them, and embraced them.*

(11). *I had not thought to see thy face; and lo, God hath showed me thy sons!* This is an outburst of warm, grateful feeling, alikely interesting and affecting, and exhibiting in one brief sentence the extremes of anguish and of joy that had marked the patriarch's old age.

(12). *And Joseph brought them out from between his (father's) knees, in order that before the blessing was given to his sons, he might himself draw near, and do reverence to his father. He bowed himself with his face to the earth.* This act had in it no element of worship, but was, at once, a mark of profound filial reverence, and an acknowledgment of his fathers superiority in every important particular to himself.

(13). This act thus reverently and piously performed, Joseph took them both—Ephraim (the younger) in his right hand towards Israel's left, and Manasseh (the elder) in his left hand towards Israel's right, and brought them near unto him. The object of this arrangement was, that his father's right hand might rest upon the head of the elder, and his left hand upon that of the younger while pronouncing the blessing. Such were human ideas and human usage; but God's choice very often sets both aside, proceeding upon grounds we do not understand, and having in view ends we have never contemplated.

(14). *Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, . . . and his left hand upon Manasseh's head.*

This movement was both unexpected and unsatisfactory to Joseph (v. 17). He was not pleased that the right of the first-born should even seem to be turned away from his eldest son; but *Jacob guided his hands wittingly*—(by wise intent). He was making no mistake either through ignorance or imperfect vision, as Joseph supposed.

(17, 18). [We have transposed these verses for the sake of preserving the connection unbroken. The advantage of doing so will be obvious.] *And when Joseph saw, &c., it displeased him*—"was evil in his eyes." He regarded it as a mistake, attributable to his father's infirmity, and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head; saying as he so—*not so, my father, for this is the first-born.*

(19). *And his father refused, and said—I know it, my son, I know it!* There was no deception in this matter, no mistake was being made. His father's act was performed with a prophetic insight that even Joseph might not question, and he wisely forebore.

*He also shall become a people, (a distinct and separate tribe, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude (the fulness) of nations.* During the period of the "Kingdom of Israel," Ephraim became the leading tribe; and such was his power and influence, that his name came to be regarded as a synonym for all Israel. (Is. 7:2, 8, 9, 17).

(16). *And he blessed Joseph, and said, &c.* It is quite consistent that this blessing should be spoken of as given to Joseph, for it was he whom Ephraim and Manasseh were to represent.

They were to be the Joseph of the associated tribes;—this was to be Joseph's peculiar honor, that he, among all the sons of Israel, was to enjoy a two-fold representation. Joseph's own personal blessing was to be received at another time, when he and all his brethren should pass before his father, and each receive his own. *God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk.* This is a solemn invocation, and is addressed to God in grateful remembrance of what He had been to his fathers—the great God before whom they had walked humbly and reverently to the end of their days; *which fed me (or provided for my bodily wants) all my life-long unto this day.* Jacob had had many reverses, but God had never permitted him to want.

(10). THE ANGEL.—(Messenger). The word ANGEL is here appositional with God in the preceding verse; and means THE LORD—(ch. 28:13), or, as Jacob himself declared, (v. 3), GOD ALMIGHTY. *Bless the lads, and let my name be named upon them.*—that is, let them be heads of tribes in the nation called by my name—(Num. 1:10, 32-35; Rev. 7:8, 9), and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac. As Israelites by true adoption, they should be heirs with the other tribes to the promises made to Abraham and to Isaac. *And let them grow (as fishes do, increase) into a multitude in the midst of the earth.* (See again note to v. 19).

(20). *And he blessed them that day—saying in thee shall Israel bless, saying, &c.*—that is, their names should be a sort of proverb for blessing—should pass into a form of words expressive of the best wishes for others. Thus, the two sons of Joseph became the adopted sons of Israel, and heirs with the others to the promised inheritance in Canaan. Henceforth the tribal genealogies of Ephraim and Manasseh descended with those of the other children of Israel; while the other children of Joseph, if any, are never heard of in the sacred record; (v. v. 5, 6).

(21). *Behold I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you into the land of your fathers.* It was needful that this prophetic assurance should be given, in order that the faith of the people might be kept alive through the long period that would intervene between Jacob's death and the time of the departure of his posterity from Egypt.

(22). *Moreover I have given thee one portion above thy brethren*—generally supposed to be "the parcel of ground" alluded to, John 4:5. This was really bestowing upon Joseph the privilege of birth-right, and as such it was afterwards understood and recognized—(see Josh. 17:14, 17, 18; 1 Chron. 15:2). Thus Joseph attained to the three great privileges of birth-right, namely, a double portion among his brethren; rule, or supremacy, over them; and, after his father's death, the position of patriarch and perhaps priest.

SUGGESTED THOUGHTS.

Israel's blessing the sons of Joseph is the one act of faith which the Apostle (Heb. 11:21) mentions out of the many by which he was distinguished. Possibly this, if understood in all its prophetic bearings, would be found to be one of the most significant of all.

Israel, together with the other pious patriarchs, saw the promises afar off; but they were persuaded of them, and embraced them. They looked beyond the earthly, to the heavenly inheritance, and lived as though it were already theirs—(Heb. 11:10, 16). Such is the privilege of faith to-day.

LESSON SUMMARY.

(FOR THE CHILDREN.)

(8, 9). Who came to visit Jacob when sick? Did he recognize Joseph's sons? Why not? (v. 10). What did he tell Joseph to do, after he learned who they were? Why bring them near? (10). How did he receive them? (11). What did he say to Joseph? Had God been better to him than he had expected? (12). Why did Joseph prostrate himself before his father? To show him extraordinary reverence. (13). Why did Joseph lead his sons to his father in that way? Whose head did he want his father to put his right hand upon? (14). Did Jacob do as Joseph had expected he would? (17). Was Joseph pleased at what his father did? What did Joseph do? (18). What did he say to his father? Did he think his father had made a mis-

take? Had he made a mistake? (19). What did Jacob say? What did he say the eldest should be? And what about the younger? (15). Why is it said that Jacob blessed Joseph? Because a good father is blessed when his sons are blessed. How did Jacob address God in the first place? In the second place? (16). In the third place? Does he mean the same Being each time? What is it to be *redeemed*? What does Christ redeem His people from? Are you one of Christ's redeemed ones? Whom did he ask God to do for the lads? Whose names were to be named upon them? What does that mean? That they should be heads of tribes of Israelites, and heirs of the promises made to Abraham and Isaac—that is, they should belong to their family. (20). What additional honor were Ephraim and Manasseh to receive? Their names were to be used by people in blessing others. What were people to say? What was the meaning of such a blessing? It meant that the one who said it, wished for the other great prosperity and numerous children. Can you tell now what Jacob had done? He had adopted Ephraim and Manasseh to be his own sons, and to be heads of separate tribes when they came into the land of Canaan. (21). What did Israel say God would do after he was dead? What did he say he had given Joseph more than any other of his sons? What does that imply? That he had given to Joseph the privilege of the birthright. This had once belonged to Reuben, Joseph's eldest brother, but he lost it by being very wicked; so Jacob gave it to Joseph. What did that give Joseph a right to have and to be? To have a double portion of the inheritance and to be a ruler and a priest. Had Joseph the best right of all the brothers to these honors? Why?

THE WORLD OF MISSIONS.

HENRY R. CARROLL, in a lecture on "The World of Missions" recently delivered at Chautauque, presented this concise summary of the world's effort towards the conversion of the heathen. There is a steady increase in the number of societies and in the aggregate of contributions. There are now not less than 85 societies here there were only ninety ten eighty years ago. Of these societies 35 are American, 25 British, and 25 Continental. More than fifty of them have been organized in the last fifty years. Their aggregate income is nearly if not quite \$7,000,000 a year, as against \$250,000 eight years ago. This vast sum represents not the receipts of an exceptionally good year, but the income which the societies expect and receive yearly, with little variation. The managers of the societies make their appropriations in advance, and lay upon the churches the obligation to furnish the funds. These obligations are never disowned or dishonored. The British societies raise more than half of the whole amount, or something less than four million dollars. Five of them raised last year more than three million, of which the two Anglican societies (the Church and the Propagation) received \$1,900,000. The American societies expend about \$2,000,000 yearly, and the Continental societies nearly \$1,000,000. These figures represent only the receipts of foreign missionary societies. They do not include the vast sums raised for home missions, Bible and tract societies, and other similar enterprises. The grand total of all missionary expenditure, at home and abroad, would assuredly not fall below \$15,000,000.

BE SOMETHING

A young girl had been trying to do something very good, and had not succeeded very well. Her friends hearing her complain, said: "God gives us many things to do, but don't you think He gives us something to be just as well?" "O dear! tell me about being." Marion looked up with penitent eyes, "I will think about being, if you will help me." "God says: 'Be kindly affectionate one to another.'"  
"Be ye also patient."  
"Be ye thankful."  
"Be not conformed to this world."  
"Become little children."  
"Be ye therefore perfect."  
"Be courteous."  
"Be not wise in your own conceits."  
"Be not overcome of evil."  
Marion listened, made no reply.  
Twilight grew into darkness. The tea bell sounded, bringing Marion to her feet. In the twilight Elizabeth could see that she was very serious.  
"I'll have a better day to-morrow. I see that doing grows out of being."  
"We cannot be what God loves without doing all that he commands. It is easier to do with a rush than to be patient, or unselfish or humble, or just, or watchful."  
"I think it is," returned Marion.

WHERE IS YOUR LANTERN

Young Harry was sent on an errand one evening in early winter. After giving him his message his mother said, "Be sure you take the lantern!" answered the boy, gruffly and disrespectfully; and he started, muttering to himself, "What do I want with a lantern? I guess I know the way well enough."

Very soon Master Harry, in crossing the street, stumbled into a hole which had been made by a recent rain. By his fall he knocked the flesh from his shin bone and covered his clothing with mud. On his way back he forgot the fence running along at the edge of the ravine. As he groped his way along the bank he fell over the brink and went sprawling to the bottom of the ravine. With much ado and after many bruises he got into the road once more, but when he finally reached his mother's door he looked more like a scare-crow than a living boy. The lantern would have saved him all this. Was not he a foolish fellow not to take it? But what shall be said of those boys and girls who know the Bible to be the only lamp which can guide their feet safely through the paths of life to their home in heaven, and yet refuse to carry it? Are they not likely to suffer even more than the boy? You know they are.

HELPING A FELLOW UP

Tommy is tugging away at another urchin who is pitifully crying on the ground. "What are you doing Tommy?" "O! only helping a fellow up!" That is right, Tommy. Now take that as your motto through life, to help a fellow up.

There is that drunkard who is down through drink, and there is the man that is poor, or sick, or tempted. Give each a hand, and help a fellow up.

What would have become of Martin Luther, when he was a young man singing in the streets for his bread, if some one who had an eye to oblige him and a heart to feel for him, had not put out a hand and helped a fellow up? There are thousands to-day who never could have stood where they now are if friendly souls had not extended aid and helped a fellow up.

SECRET OF A TRUE LIFE.—Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, gives in one of his letters an account of a saintly sister. For twenty years, through some disease, she was confined to a kind of crib; never once could she change her posture for all that time. "And yet," says Dr. Arnold, and I think his words are very beautiful, "I never saw a more perfect instance of the spirit of power and love and of a sound mind. Intense love almost to the annihilation of selfishness; a daily martyrdom for twenty years, during which she adhered to her early-formed resolution of never talking about herself; thoughtful about the very pins and ribbons of my wife's dress, about the making of a doll's cap for a child, but of herself—save as regarded her improving in all goodness—wholly thoughtless, enjoying everything lovely, graceful, beautiful, high-minded, whether in God's works or man's, with the keenest relish, inheriting the earth to the very fullness of the promise, and preserved through the very valley of the shadow of death from all fear and impatience, or from every cloud of impaired reason which might mar the beauty of Christ's glorious work. May God grant that I might come but within one hundred degrees of her place in glory!"

A NATIVE CLERGYMAN in Ceylon, in a recent letter to an American friend, gives him some wholesome advice, to which those ecclesiastical Athenians who are ever on the look out for some new thing to hear or tell, would do well to take heed. He had received a number of tracts on the sleep of the soul, and speculations on the second advent, teachings which, he says, do not appear to be warranted by Holy Scripture; and he asks whether it is not better to spend all our strength in preaching the great doctrines of man's salvation through the death of Jesus Christ, and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit? There is nothing more distressing in all the troubles and difficulties which hinder the work of the Church, than the folly with which Christians waste the most precious opportunities of advancing the Kingdom of Christ, and occupy themselves with idle and curious speculations which do not minister to godliness, and with the petty church decorations and ecclesiastical gewgaws which in some quarters pass under the imposing title of "church work."

MARRIAGE TO PRIESTS.—The marriage of Rev. Auguste Leine, a priest of the Church of Rome, with Madame Lochez in Paris, has afforded M. Loysen (Pere Hyacinthe), who officiated, an opportunity of commenting on the marriage of priests. He remarked that this union marked a great advance as compared with his own marriage in 1870, when he had to obtain abroad the bare legal sanction denied him at home. He denounced the celibacy of the priesthood, and maintained that marriage no more degraded the priest or rendered him unfit to discharge his religious functions than it unfitted other professional men. He had never known any priest so holy to contract marriage, but had found many that were unworthy to do so.