

Sabbath School Lessons.

March 16th.

THE FIRST JOURNEY TO BUY CORN.—GEN. XLIII. 1-29.

1. *Jacob sends his sons into Egypt to buy corn.*

It is remarkable that the patriarchs had to encounter famine even in Canaan, the land of promise. This was designed by their covenant God to wean their affections from the things of this earth, and to direct them to the things of heaven. They therefore desired a better country, that is, an heavenly; Heb. xi. 16.

The sons of Jacob, prostrated by the greatness of their calamity, sat looking one upon another in inactive despondency. Jacob had heard that there was corn in Egypt, he had probably seen it conveyed thence by his neighbours, he therefore, as head of the tribe, stirred up his sons to action. We should not only pray for our daily bread, but we should use every lawful means in our power to obtain it; 2 Thes. iii. 10. And shall others obtain food for their souls, and shall we despair?—Nay, rather, let us have immediate recourse to the throne of grace, that we also may live and not die. Jacob sent his ten sons into Egypt, but would not send Benjamin with them; for, he said, "Lest peradventure mischief befall him." The loss of the other son of his beloved Rachel had rendered him cautious. "And Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him, with their faces to the earth;" v. 6. This was the accomplishment of Joseph's dream, Chap. xxxvii. 7, now did the sheaves of his brethren bow themselves to his sheaf.

2. *Joseph's harsh treatment of his brethren*

He knew them though they knew not him, v. 8. He probably expected that they would be compelled by the famine to come to Egypt to purchase corn, but they had no idea that he whom they sold as a slave, was the governor of Egypt, before whom they now presented themselves. Joseph remembered his dreams; he naturally associated them with their evident fulfilment. Twenty long years had elapsed since God had pre-signified to Joseph his future designs, and though many times it seemed most unlikely that these designs would ever be realized, yet now, in God's time, and Joseph's vision completely verified; Hab. ii. 3. Joseph spoke roughly unto his brethren, and signified even to regard them as spies; v. 9. Similar to this is Christ's treatment of sinners. He first calls up their sins to their remembrance, speaks roughly unto them and seems to hide himself from them, and then reveals himself unto them as a Saviour of infinite love;

see Matt. xv. 21-28. Joseph's brethren answered him truthfully and respectfully. They had formerly nicknamed Joseph "the dreamer" they now addressed him "my lord;" v. 10.—In Egypt where they were strangers, where they were even an abhorrence, Chap. xliii. 32, no witnesses could be called to substantiate their words. Apparently to prove the truth of their statements, Joseph demanded that their youngest brother should be brought before him, declaring that till this was done he should keep them in confinement; v. 16.—From long communion with the ungodly, Joseph seems to have learned somewhat of their language—he swore 'by the life of Pharaoh.' Truly "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not;" Ec. vii. 20. After three days imprisonment they agreed to fetch their youngest brother and to leave one of their number as hostage. In their calamity they saw the hand of a righteous God. Their sin had found them out and conscience now began to do its office; v. 21. Only Reuben who was innocent in the matter experienced no self-upbraidings, and now blamed them for their folly in not having attended to his admonitions; v. 22. The conversation of his brethren was overheard by Joseph who, they thought, did not understand them, as he spoke unto them through an interpreter; v. 23. When Joseph heard them mourning their sin concerning him, it was too much for his feeling heart to bear, he turned himself about from them and wept; v. 24. In all this painful process, which was necessary to bring his brethren to repentance, Joseph resembled the kind-hearted operator who, while he grieves for the pain of his patient, unflinchingly amputates his limb to save his life. How fearful does a guilty conscience make us! From the restoration of the money, paid for the corn, which each one found in the mouth of his sack, they augured further evil; "their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?" v. 28.

Learn—1st. That it is in vain for man to attempt to thwart the purposes of God, Dan. iv. 35; Acts v. 39.

2nd. That God whenever he pleases can awaken the slumbering conscience of the sinner, Dan. v. 6; Matt. xxvii. 3. 4.

3rd. That everything is a cause of terror to the wicked; Prov. xxviii. 1.

March 23rd.

WE WOULD SEE A SIGN.

MATT. XII 38-45.

1. *The insolent demand of the Pharisees.* They professed great respect for the Lord Jesus—they called him Master, but they flattered him with their lips, while their