

Sabbath School Lessons.

March 30th.

JOSEPH ENTERTAINS HIS BRETHREN.—GEN. XLII. 1-34.

I. *Jacob urges his sons to go again into Egypt to buy corn.*

"They had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt," v. 2. We should labour for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," Jno. vi. 27. Let us seek above all things to obtain the bread of life; "he that cometh to Jesus shall never hunger; and he that believeth on him shall never thirst," John vi. 35. Jacob as a prudent and affectionate parent took all proper means to provide his household with their daily bread: much more shall not our heavenly Father provide for all our wants.

II. *Judah reasons with his father on the necessity of sending Benjamin with them.*

He does so in a most respectful manner. It is quite right that inferiors should give advice to those that are set over them, if they do so in a proper spirit. Judah argues that it would be useless for them to journey into Egypt for corn, after the solemn protestation of the lord of the land.—"Ye shall not see my face except your brother be with you." It would be worse than useless, for having failed in their engagement, Chap. xlii. v. 19, 20., they could look for nothing but that they together with Simeon would be put to death as spies. To obviate as much as possible Jacob's reluctance to part with Benjamin, Judah undertakes to become surety for him. He was now sincerely penitent for his unnatural conduct towards Joseph, and would endeavour to make amends for it by the only means now in his power, by additional attention to his brother Benjamin. Some persons make great professions of contrition for failures in duty towards those friends who, in the providence of God, have been removed from them, but these professions are very doubtful, if it is seen that they who make them, do not re-double their attentions to the friends still left them.

III. *Jacob yields to the persuasions of Judah.*

So far from betraying a weak mind, to change our opinions when we see good and satisfactory reasons to do so, this course is often our highest wisdom. Infallibility of judgment belongs to God alone. Whilst a constant adherence to the views which we consider right is our duty, an obstinate refusal to listen to reason is sinful as well as contemptible. Jacob saw that if he refused to part with Benjamin, they would all perish, without a miraculous interposition of provi-

dence, which he had no right to expect, but by sending Benjamin with his brethren they might obtain food, and the lives of all be preserved. Jacob sends with them a conciliatory present, in this he manifested his characteristic prudence. We see his justice in that, he restored the money which was returned in their sacks; "peradventure," said he, "it was an oversight," v. 12. Many are glad to conceal the mistakes of others, when they can do so with advantage to themselves, not so with the patriarch, whether the money had been returned by mistake or on purpose in either case he felt himself equally bound to make restitution. His generosity is shown from his directing them to take double money in their hands, v. 12. In addition to all his precautions he commended them all to the mercy of God in prayer, v. 14. In a situation equally distressing, he had before experienced the efficacy of prayer; Chap. xxxii. 28.

IV. *The sons of Jacob obey his directions.*

On the sight of Benjamin, Joseph directed the ruler of his house to prepare a dinner for the men. This kindness of Joseph again excited the apprehensions of his brethren. As the best means of evincing their honesty and integrity they told all their story, how they had found the price they had previously paid for the corn in their sacks, and knew not how it had come there. They explained their circumstances to the steward, as they could converse more familiarly with him than with one in the exalted position of Joseph. The answer of the steward is observable; he calms their minds by answering them that he had their money, and consoles them by the thought that God, the God of their father, had given them the treasure in their sacks. This man then, though in a heathen country, possessed the knowledge of the true God. We thus learn that Joseph had been careful to instruct all the members of his family in the doctrines of true religion.

V. *Joseph's entertainment of his brethren.*

"And when Joseph came home," &c. v. 26. Compare this with the dreams related, ch. xxxvii, he piously prayed for Benjamin. God be gracious unto these my son. High though his position now was, Joseph knew that his favour would be of no importance to his brother without the blessing of God. Love for his brother, thoughts of all he had suffered since he had last seen him, compassion for his brethren, all these feelings caused such a commotion in his breast that he hastily entered his chamber and wept there. Having washed his face, he went out, and restraining his feelings, said 'set on bread,' v. 31. At the entertainment he kindly tolerated the national prejudices of the Egyptians, v. 32. His brethren sat at table before him in the order of their ages. This may have been their