

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON XXII.

June 1, 1878.

ISRAEL IN EGYPT.

Gen. xli. 1-4, 29-32.

COMMIT TO MEMORY VERSES 2, 8.

PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Acts xxvii. 24; Rev. i. 17.

With v. 1, read Gen. xxviii. 18; with v. 2, Gen. xxvi. 25-25; with v. 8, Ex. i. 7; with v. 4, Ex. iii. 8; with v. 29, 30, Luke ii. 28, 29; with v. 81, 92, ch. xlvii. 6.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—The steps of a good man ordered of the Lord (Ps. xxxvii. 23).

INTERNATIONAL TEXT.—Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.—Ps. lxxiii. 23.

There being no recorded events between our last lesson and the present, we can proceed at once with Israel (mark the name), and by attention to him as he goes on his way we learn something to help us on ours.

I. Here is ISRAEL JOURNEYING.—v. 1. Not a single family, but a group of households, with servants and cattle, making a caravan; camping at night where water could be had, and at length reaching Beersheba. Here Abraham had lived, and settled a dispute about a well; here also Isaac had come to an understanding with Abimelech. Wells were of the greatest importance to these shepherd chiefs. See Gen. xxi. 25 and 32. And for Abraham's case, Gen. xxi. 30. Both had also worshipped there. Gen. xxi. 33, and xxvi. 25.

If any of the pupils visit Palestine, going from the South, they will find upon this spot—about which there is no doubt—two large and five smaller wells, the large ones a hundred yards apart and in sight of each other. The largest is over twelve feet across, and in Dr. Robinson's time it was forty-four feet and a half to the water, and twenty-eight feet to the bottom of the casing of masonry. Troughs lie around on the rich grass, through which lines and crouches spring; and the curbstones of the well's mouth are worn into many hollows by the ropes used in drawing, "as if frilled or fluted all round." Well they may be when men have been drawing out of them for thousands of years. Even the name is not changed. It is a witness to Bible truth.

II. ISRAEL WORSHIPPING.—"Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey." This place was favorable. Abraham's tree (likely the hardy tamarisk) would be standing still. Perhaps Isaac's altar also. To be where one's fathers have lived and worshipped touches any heart that is not singularly callous, and Israel's was not. From this spot he set out for Laban's dwelling after the breach with Esau, and he could recall many a providence since then, for which to bless God. "He offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac."

Note two things. (a) Times of great interest in our lives should be times of great religious earnestness. Going to a new school—even into a higher class, making a holiday visit from home, going into an office, any move of this kind should be "begun, continued and ended" in prayer. There would be fewer failures on this plan than we have now.

Sacrificing was the common, solemn way of worshipping God at that time. The offerer gave God of his means, thus acknowledging that all came from him. He shed the blood of the beast, as if owning that he deserved to die, and God accepted a victim. He burned the slain beast with fire, as if acknowledging that God's wrath might well consume him—the best part of him, the living soul, and he placed himself under God's care as one reconciled and consecrated so him. In the case the sacrifice would include, like a solemn family worship, all his household.

(b) The real help to one's piety in godly parents: "the God of his father Isaac." If you were going as a stranger into a new place with only one letter of introduction, it would make a great difference that it was to your father's oldest and best friend. So children of good parents can go to God and say, "God of my fathers!" And for them to be godless is specially guilty. See Abijah's speech in 2 Chron. xiv. 12; "O children of Israel, fight not." &c.

III. See ISRAEL FEARING; not with a guilty fear, such as his sons had when they were going down; nor with doubt, as if, perhaps, he should not do it; but with that tremulous sense of the importance of the step which the best men will feel, and are all the better for feeling. The light-minded who rush on without it, rarely come to much. See Prov. xxviii. 14. That is the best sense of "Life is real, life is earnest."

How do we know he felt so? From the word God says to him; which met the thoughts of a heart that God well knew. Ps. cxxxix. 1. (So the divine Redeemer in John ii. 24.)

See how God removes his fear. After the sacrifices (v. 2) in the night visions, he calls him by name, (John x. 3, John xx. 16), twice, "Jacob, Jacob," (see xxii. 11); "not Israel," observe. See John xxi. 17.

He assures him of his standing. "I am God, the God of thy father." It is the same as "I am thy God." This is real strength. When we respond in our hearts, and can say, "I am thy child," we have the "spirit of adoption," Gal. iv. 6. Christians are feeble in all service when they want this; when they do not at heart really know whether they are believers or not. Without this there may be noise and bustle, and "work" so called, but there is no power.

He assures him of his being in the right way, "fear not." Jacob was turning his back on Canaan: true, God had said this step should be taken, Gen. xv. 18, but obscurely; and Isaac had once come so far on his way to Egypt, and been forbidden to go (see Gen. xxvi. 2). No wonder if Jacob—with his whole family—made this change with some deep concern of mind. He gives the reason of the "fear not." "I will there make of thee a great nation;"

may, more: "I will go down with thee into Egypt." That is enough. It is very different from Lot's going into Sodom.

He tenderly considers his heart-yearning after Canaan, "I will bring thee up again," thy body to a grave in the promised land, as a pledge that thy children shall have it in due time; and after Joseph. "Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes," i. e. to close them in death, the common craving of all human hearts, for love around the dying bed.

Now let him go on his way: we shall soon see him.

IV. REJOICING.—As they journey a procession meets them; one leaps from his chariot, stands before Jacob; let us leave them weeping on each other's necks, and hear the glad old man, satisfied at heart, say v. 30. By-and-by Joseph arranges for the announcement and presentation of his brothers to Pharaoh, like a good brother, and a wise, capable man that forgets nothing, vs. 31, 32, concerning which our next lesson will show us something.

See (1) how faithful the Lord is. Joseph is restored, all things are not against Jacob.

(2) So parents who have to part with godly children, and godly children who have to lose such parents, will be reunited never again to part, and the joy of meeting will swallow up the pain of parting.

(3) When God clearly bids us do anything, let us do it without fear.

There was much against this move; Egypt heathen; Abraham had troubles there; Jacob was old; bondage threatened; Isaac forbidden; but God's word makes way plain. When he speaks, we may dismiss the fear natural to men before they are enlightened and assured, when it is not the "Israel," but the "Jacob" in them that is timid (see v. 2).

LESSON XXIII.

June 8, 1878.

JACOB AND PHARAOH.

Gen. xlvii. 5-10.

COMMIT TO MEMORY VERSES 8, 9.

PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Acts vii. 14, 15; Heb. xi. 13.

With v. 5, read Deut. xxvi. 5; with v. 6, Prov. xiv. 35, and xxii. 29; with v. 7, Gen. xiv. 1; with v. 8, Prov. xxvii. 6; with v. 9, Heb. xiii. 14, Ps. xxxix. 13; and with v. 10, Heb. vii. 7.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—"Days should speak." Job xxxiii. 7.

INTERNATIONAL TEXT.—For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.—Heb. xiii. 14.

INTRODUCTION.—Two points deserve notice before we study the interview between the "Prince with God" and the Egyptian king.

(1) It was best for Jacob and his family to be removed from Canaan. They were not improving, and Canaan was becoming so bad as to render extirpation of the people proper. The Israelites would have sunk with them, through the alliances and marriages which they would have been led to make.

(2) Egypt was a good place for the people. While much could be learned of the arts of life, Israel was kept separate by calling, as shepherds; by the land which was only in name a part of Egypt; and by the subsequent course of Pharaoh in enslaving them.

God's hand appears through all this history.

We can gather all that needs to be dwelt upon in this lesson under the following heads. The cor' y king; the honored prime minister; and the aged saint.

I. THE COURTY KING.—He is duly informed by Joseph of the arrival of the party. Five of the brothers are presented to him. This was fitting respect to him and to all. The number was enough to represent them, not too many; suited Egyptian ideas (Gen. xliii. 34). The taste of the king is obvious. He inquires of the active men, "What is your occupation?" The question would have been less fit to Jacob, to whom he puts another question. They answer discreetly; state their position and avow—namely, to dwell in the land of Goshen. Pharaoh reserves his decision and gives it in the proper manner. This matter of business having been settled, a courteous introduction of Jacob takes place (v. 7). To him the king puts just such a question as was suitable, and as most old men answer with pleasure, "How old art thou?" The Egyptians were not long-lived. Pharaoh never probably saw a man so aged as Jacob. From him we may learn

(a) There is some fact required for the proper asking of questions. We may be like the flies in summer that alight on the one sore spot of the horse's skin. We may lead in conversation in the direction that will give only pain, or in that which will give pleasure. One has no right to ask rude, impertinent or painful questions. Many a tongue is an unwholesome in this direction.

(b) Something is due to both rank and years. There is no merit in despising either. Reverence is worth cultivating. Joseph has due deference paid to Pharaoh as king, and Pharaoh pays due deference to the aged patriarch. If we push our notions of independence so far that we shall lose this gentle regard to the fitness of things which is the mark of refinement all the world over, it will not raise, but degrade us.

(c) The question "How old art thou?" may suggest much. One's natural birth is one beginning of life; one's new and spiritual birth is another. Some men are fifty years old as men, and only a few years old as Christians. "How old art thou?" "How many of the days of thy life (as it is in the Hebrew, in this question) have passed?"

II. THE HONORED PRIME MINISTER.—He understands the best way of putting the case before Pharaoh. His brothers avow their calling—not soldiers, but shepherds—and their preference for Goshen. The king

is thus free to oblige them, without appearing to be influenced by Joseph. At the same time the king puts all honor on Joseph, does not give the concession to them, but directs Joseph (v. 6), "In the land of Goshen let them dwell." It was fitted for pasture, on the borders of the land nearest Canaan.

At the same time the king gives a discretionary power to Joseph to appoint any active men among his brothers to office, as masters over his cattle, v. 6. Then as now, probably, public employment was deemed highly desirable. And now Joseph's dreams are fully carried out. He is the civil superior of his father and his brethren. His authority extends over them. He fixes their residence and takes care of them. The "sheaves" and the heavenly bodies are here in the sustenance he yields them, and the authority he has over them. Unconsciously, even Pharaoh fulfils his dreams. For Joseph's sake Jacob and his sons enjoy the honor and advantage conferred on them.

III. THE AGED SAINT.—The picture is as beautiful as it is suggestive. We can picture the old man, white-haired, leaning on his staff with one hand, with the other on the handsome (Gen. xxxix. 6) and dignified son in his prime, in the interview with Pharaoh. He is of the past to Pharaoh, like one of another time. He is impressive and full of interest. It is most natural for Jacob to bless Pharaoh. His years, his numerous family, his rank, his very trials, give him weight, and as he is afterwards a prophet, he seems to be, for the time a priest. So he prayed for a blessing upon Pharaoh. He feels his right to do it. Pharaoh, if he did not ask it, yet no doubt received it reverently. Now mark his reply to the question (v. 8): "The days of the years," &c. He dwells—as an old man will—on the words that express the long-drawn years. He shows

(a) He did not expect to live much longer. But God spared him seventeen years, of great happiness, we may well believe. We do not know what God has in store for us.

(b) His life was shorter than his father's. Abraham's age (Gen. xxv. 7), and Isaac's (Gen. xxxv. 28). He mentions this in modest estimate of himself, length of days being to him evidence of divine favor.

(c) With them all it was a "pilgrimage," not only in having no settled home, but in relation to all the world, and all their days. They were going to a home; even the grave is but a step on the way (Gen. xxxvii. 35). They are all the time waiting for God's salvation" (Gen. xliii. 18). See Heb. xi. 14, as the statement of their feeling.

(d) His life has been peculiarly trying. He thinks it important enough to mention this; but he does not go into particulars which Pharaoh could not understand. We can look back over it, and see how much trial had been in it. We may specify his early want of harmony with Esau; his forced flight to Padanaram; the wrong done him by Laban (retribution upon him for deceiving Esau and Israel); his changed wages; his anxiety about the meeting with Esau; the early death of Rachel; the disgrace of Dinah; the wild revenge of his sons; the quarrel this bred with neighboring chiefs; the loss of Joseph the suspense as to Simon and Benjamin, and the bad conduct of Reuben; and yet how much of all this was due to his own errors and impatience!

(e) Let us be courteous (1 Peter iii. 8) to all.

(f) Let us revere the aged. 1 Tim. v. 1; Prov. xxiii. 22. Natural, even heathen men, like the Greeks and Athenians, could see the beauty of this feeling. The want of it in the young is exceedingly offensive.

(g) Let us live lives that will bear to be looked back upon. Eph. v. 15.

(h) Let us have good will to all. "Jacob blessed Pharaoh." Gal. vi. 10.

(i) Let us be thankful for Him who is as Joseph to us—bringing us before the king of kings, giving us our place, sustaining us, and protecting us, with all the authority of a prince, and all the love of a brother.

Random Readings.

Father Hyacintho recently celebrated mass at Geneva, where he preached a "magnificent" sermon. He declared that confession was a formidable mortality unless it was voluntary, and that it would be the first and most urgent reform to be considered at the next synod of the Old Catholics.

It is rumored that some very excellent, but over-zealous people in New Jersey intend to shut off the dwellers at the watering-places in that State from their Sunday papers and mails. They do not approve of desecrating the Sabbath by reading secular newspapers. Can they enforce piety by legislation?

The Christian Union thinks that some of the public journals of the day, in reporting and "working up" crimes, do a vast amount of mischief. Such familiar dealing with horrible themes blunts sensibility and induces an appetite for startling and dreadful accounts. Such "freedom of the press" ought earnestly to be opposed as detrimental to the public morality.

I will hasten to any one's convictions, but pray keep your doubts to yourself. I have plenty of my own.—Goethe.

Every step of progress which the world has made has been from scaffold to scaffold and from stake to stake.—Wendell Phillips.

"If I wanted to punish an enemy," said Hannah More, "it should be by fastening on him the trouble of constantly hating somebody."

Not nations, not armies have advanced the race; but here and there, in the course of ages, an individual has stood up and cast his shadow over the world.—Chapman.

They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more.

Our Young Folks.

ERNEST AND LUTHER.

A PERVERSION OF SCIENCE.

BY JACOB ABBOTT.

One morning when Luther came down into the breakfast room he found the windows covered with frost, in a peculiarly smooth and uniform manner. He took out a nail, which he happened to have in his pocket, and began to write his name on the frost and to make some drawings. He did it partly to amuse Johnny, who stood by watching him. Johnny seemed much amused, especially by an outline picture of a pig, which Luther was making.

It was very good in Luther to try to amuse Johnny.

Presently his mother, who was sitting by the fire, with a book in her hand, waiting for the breakfast to be brought in, looked up, and, seeing what he was doing, said to him:

"I would not do so, Luther. You might scratch the glass."

"Oh! no, mother," said Luther, "iron won't scratch glass. It is not hard enough."

"It might scratch it," said his mother. "And, at any rate, I would rather you would not do it."

"I don't believe it could," said Luther, speaking half to himself, "and I mean to go and ask Ernest."

So he went into Ernest's room, where he found Ernest just putting away his books and papers, so as to be in readiness to go when the breakfast bell should ring.

"Ernest," said he, "will iron scratch glass?"

"No," said Ernest.

"Will anything scratch glass except a diamond?"

"Yes," said Ernest. "A great many things."

"What things?" asked Luther.

"Very hard steel," said Ernest, "and sharp edges of silex or flint, and of several other minerals. A diamond does something more than scratch it, however. It seems to crack it, as it were, in some mysterious way; that is, it forms a fissure along the line over which it is drawn—a fissure which extends deep into the substance of the glass—sometimes almost entirely through it, which makes it break along that line very easily."

This action of the diamond which Ernest thus described to Luther is really a very curious one; but Ernest observed that Luther seemed not to be particularly interested in it. The reason was that his mind was just at that time occupied with something else, as very soon appeared; for Luther said:

"I was marking with a nail on the frost upon the window, and Mother said I must not do so, for it might scratch the glass; and I told her it could not scratch the glass."

So it appeared that Luther's real object in the enquiry which he had made of Ernest was not to obtain scientific information for his own improvement, but only to obtain Ernest's authority on his side in an argument he had had with his mother.

There are various uses to which scientific knowledge may be put, some good and some bad; but perhaps the worst use that can be made of it, on a small scale, is for a boy to seek it for the purpose of gaining a victory over his mother.

By this time the breakfast-bell had rung, and they all took their places around the table. As soon as they were all seated Ernest resumed the subject.

"Mother was perfectly right," said he, "in telling you that writing with a nail in the frost on the window might scratch the glass."

"But you said that iron would not scratch glass," rejoined Luther, "and nails are made of iron."

"That is true, in a scientific sense," said Ernest—"that is, in speaking of perfectly pure iron and ordinary glass. But the iron of nails is never pure. There are often foreign substances in it, which harden certain portions of it. It may even in certain points be converted into steel by some accident or imperfection in the manufacture of it. Then, besides, particles of dust, some of which may consist of microscopic fragments of flint or other hard grit from the road, may adhere to the glass or to the nail, and they may be drawn along by the flat surface which forms the end of the nail, and so make a very fine scratch. Even a cloth rubbed over the surface of a looking-glass may scratch it, by means of gritty dust, if there is any, lodged among the fibers of the cloth. You will find that almost every looking-glass which has been in use for some time is so scratched, if you examine the surface closely and in a proper light."

"I mean to look at our glasses after breakfast and see," said Luther.

Thus he did. Ernest helped him to make the examination. When he looked a little sideways at the glass, in a proper light, he saw a great many exceedingly fine scratches, which had been made by wipings of the glass in the course of years—the cloths which had been used having not always been perfectly free from particles of dust adhering to them, for dust almost always consists in a certain degree of gritty particles from the sand or gravel of the road.

Luther also went to Ernest's room, and Ernest, by means of a glazier's diamond which he had there, showed him a cut which he made with it upon the glass; and he (Luther) could plainly perceive by means of a magnifying glass, and even by the naked eye, that the cut was not a mere scratch upon the surface, but was a delicate fissure, which extended to quite a little depth into the substance of the glass. Luther was very curious to learn by what means the drawing of the diamond along the surface could make such a crack; but Ernest said he did not know how the effect was produced.

It is not generous in a boy to try to obtain evidence, either of a scientific or any other character, to prove his mother to be in the wrong. In most cases, indeed, he will find that she is not in the wrong at all, though certain statements of a scientific character, and especially if they are expressed in precise scientific language, may seem to be inconsistent with what she has said when expressing herself in the ordinary language of life. And even when a boy knows or thinks he knows that his mother is wrong it is much more noble to let the error pass than to try to gain a victory over her by proving her to be in the wrong. A boy of high and manly sentiments will never attempt to prove his mother to be in the wrong.

HIS WORD IS AT STAKE.

Grandly did the old Scottish believer, of whom Dr. Brown tells us in his "Hearts Subseque," respond to the challenge of her pastor regarding the ground of her confidence.

"Janet," said the minister, "What would you say, if after all He has done for you, God should let you drop into hell?"

"E'en's (even as) He likes," answered Janet. "If He does, He'll lose mair than I'll do."

At first sight Janet's reply looks irrevocable, if not something worse. As we contemplate it, however, its sublimity grows upon us. Like the Psalmist, she could say, "I on thy word rely," (Psalm cix. 114, metrical version.) If His word were broken, if His faithfulness should fail, if He would lose more than I's trusting child. But that could never be. "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations." Well, then, might Janet encourage herself in the Lord her God, and say, "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice."

All the promises of God are absolutely sure and certain in Christ Jesus, who has freely offered to all in the Gospel. Embracing Christ in the promises, or the promises in Christ, we hold the Almighty by an indissoluble bond. The two immutable things, God's oath confirming God's promise, are pledged to us; and if God has thus spoken, should not believers rejoice? How confidently men can rely on the word of each other! And if sinful men can be thus trusted, O, how much more should we firmly embrace, and hopefully expect the fulfillment of the promises of God's loving kindness!

"He has power, and can fulfil; He is truth, and therefore will."

"NOT MANY WISE."

Religion is life, rather than science, and there is a danger peculiar to the intellectual man of turning into speculation what was given to live by. The intellect busy with ideas about God, may not only fail to bring a man nearer the divine life, but may actually tend to withdraw him from it. For the intellect takes in but the image of the truth, and leaves the vital impressions, the full power of it, unappropriated. And hence it comes that those truths which, if felt by the unlearned at all, go straight to the heart and are taken in by the whole man, are apt in the case of the philosopher and the theologian to stop at the vestibule of the understanding, and never to get farther. This is a danger peculiar to the learned, or to those who think themselves such. The trained intellect is apt to eat out a child's heart, and yet the "except you become as little children," stands unrepented.—Principal Sharp.

A DEFINITE AIM.

Do not sow the world broadcast, but, as the Scotch would say, "Dibble it in!" Make a hole in the ground with your arpened stick, and push the seed into the earth with your heel. Let every sentence tell. Shoot with an aim. Take your arrow from your quiver, and put it on the bow with your eye on the seal and the thimble, then let it go home. Do not pull it out. Let it be a distinct and felt impression. Do not talk to human beings who are asleep. I have no faith in sonambulism in the Church. Let every eye be engaged as though he would look you through. Give the children something worth receiving, and send the truth home.—Dr. Ormiston.

INTO COVENANT.

What a grand word that word "covenant" is to the man who understands it. God has entered into covenant with his Son who represents us, his people. He has said, "As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed." Truly, we may say with good old Samuel, "Although my house be not with God; yet hath he made me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." When everything else gives way, cling in the power of the Holy Spirit to covenant mercies and covenant engagements, and your spirit shall be at peace.—Spurgeon.

THE WHOLE TRUTH.

It is said of the late John Duncan, L.L.D., Professor of the Hebrew and Oriental Languages, New College, Edinburgh, that any six page statement of the gospel had a great attraction for him—and the simpler it was he enjoyed it the more—if it was not controversial but the genuine utterance of the lips of an African woman, a slave, impressed him deeply: he liked to repeat it in conversation; and on one occasion at a meeting of prayer, he stood up and said, without further remark of his own, "I have never heard the gospel better stated than it was put by a poor negroess." "Me die, or He die; He die, me no die."