

this was probably the customary form of asseveration at the Egyptian court. It is equivalent to saying—"as sure as he lives," "as thy soul liveth." Joseph was now acting a part towards his brethren, and hence his use of this expression that he might appear to them a thorough Egyptian.

V. 17.—Spies would be punished with death, and it is probable that the brothers expected during these sad days to be put to death.

V. 18.—The Egyptians generally did not "fear God," but worshipped animals and vegetables, rivers, trees, and hills. Deceased kings and other great men also received divine honours. The true God was utterly forgotten.

V. 21.—Here we have signs of true repentance, late indeed, but happily not too late.

V. 23.—The language of the Egyptians was Coptic; that of the sons of Jacob, Hebrew.

V. 27.—The *inn* here mentioned was, no doubt, a mere halting place, beside a stream, well, or fountain, where travellers pitched their tents. *Money* in those days was in the shape of rings, generally of silver, sometimes of gold; and its value was determined by its weight.

#### LESSONS.

The whole of this most touching and exquisitely beautiful history is related so simply that it needs no explanation; and the lessons from it are so manifest that we need indicate only a few.

1. When we are hungry for the Bread of Life let us learn from the example of Jacob and his sons to go to the source of sure supply.

2. The brethren "how down themselves to the earth" before Joseph: how surely the Divine purposes come to pass! At Dothan, Joseph's dreams were derided; now they are being fulfilled.

3. Mark how conscience is at last doing its work. (V. v. 21, 22) The selling of Joseph was the great sin of their lives, and they feel their just liability to punishment. They now recall their brother's tears and prayers and the anguish of his soul. Remorse, long coming, is all the deeper when it comes. Punishment delayed is all the more severe when the stroke falls.

4. Kind words are never lost. Reuben could now appeal to his own conduct many years ago, and his conscience was comparatively at ease. He had tried to prevent the mischief for which they were all now suffering. Let us resist evil, and do good, knowing that as we sow we must reap.

5. Great was the sorrow of Jacob when he heard the story of his sons. All things seemed to be against him. Yet God was all the time preparing for him a most joyful

surprise. So it may be with us. Let us wait patiently for the discoveries of His love which the Lord makes in His Province.—All things work together for good to them that love God.

DOCTRINE:—Sin is the source of trouble. Gen. iii. 16—19; Rom. vi. 21, 23. James i. 15.

#### THIRD SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*Joseph and Benjamin*.—Gen. xliii. 1—34.

The narrative is so charmingly simple as to leave no room for explanation. We note a few points which may be briefly illustrated.

V. 11. The drought did not affect these products of the forest. Jacob was wealthy a few years before this, but the famine had evidently reduced him to great straits.

V. 24. Eastern travellers still wash their feet on such occasions.

V. 28. Here again we have Joseph's Dreams strikingly fulfilled.

V. 32. It was an "abomination" unto the Egyptians to eat with the Hebrews.—The Hebrews would not scruple to eat beef: the Egyptians worshipped the cow and thought it an outrage to kill and eat their object of worship. The Hebrews were shepherds: the Egyptian of this time were probably smarting under the remembrance of the tyranny of the Shepherd Kings that had for some time ruled over them as a conquered people. This was perhaps one ground for the unwillingness of the Egyptians to eat with the Hebrews. But the mere fact of the difference of creeds between the people accounts sufficiently for the separation. Joseph was at a table by himself in virtue of his high office. Egyptian feast commenced at midday. Dinner was generally enlivened with song and music.

V. 33.—They "marvelled" on account of the high honor bestowed on them of dining with the "Governor," when they had expected very harsh treatment.

V. 34.—It was usual to set before the king *twice* as much as before any other man. Benjamin's portion was intended as a mark of the highest distinction. This was no doubt to see if his brethren would be jealous of him.

#### LESSONS.

1. This delightful chapter is full of lessons for our instruction. Observe in the first part of the chapter how loyally his sons obey Jacob, though the youngest of them is of mature years, Benjamin being about the age of 39. They all treat their father, now old and poor and almost broken-hearted, with the utmost deference.

2. Jacob had formed a rash resolution of not allowing Benjamin to go. He wisely does not adhere to it. Let us learn from