

For the Sabbath School.

International S. S. Lessor.

LESSON IX.—MARCH 4.—GEN. XXV : 27-34.

Selling the Birthright.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The life is more than meat and the body is more than raiment."—Luke 12 : 23.

ABRAHAM. Abraham lived to the good old age of one hundred and seventy-five, quiet and restful in his later years, growing in faith and guiding with his counsels, and his son his example and his grandsons, Jacob and Esau, with whom he lived till they were fifteen years old, showing them "that best portion of a good man's life, his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love."

"An old sage, serene and bright,
And lovely as a Lapland night."

He was buried in the cave of Machpelah at Hebron with his beloved wife Sarah. "In this cave of Machpelah lie the treasured remains of Abraham and Sarah, of Isaac and Rebekah, of Leah also, and the embalmed bodies of Jacob and perhaps Joseph. No other spot in the Holy Land holds so much precious dust as this. The site over the cave itself is covered by a Mahomedan sanctuary. Since the Moslem rule, it has not been accessible to either Christian or Jew."

ISAAC was a man of faith, but in many respects a great contrast to his father. He was patient, but not enterprising and powerful. He was devout and submissive, but not active and organizing in God's service. "Isaac was dwarfed and weakened by growing up under the shadow of Abraham." "But all this tends, as in Isaac's case, to the stunting of the man himself. Life is made too easy for him." Many a son of a rich man or of a strong man conducting a large business, has been greatly injured by not having responsibilities thrown upon him.

THE TWIN BROTHERS.—Vs. 27, 28. Twenty years after the marriage of Isaac, two sons, twins, were born.

ESAU, the elder, was a cunning hunter, betokening his wild, restless, self-indulgent character, and leading him probably to society with the heathen Canaanites round about. A man of the field. This is antithetic to what follows, "a dweller in tents." Instead of spending his life in the society of his family, returning to his tent after the day's labour at night, he roved over the country, like the uncivilized hunters in half savage lands. He had strong animal propensities. He was good-natured, jovial, open-hearted, healthy, energetic, reckless, bold, not intellectual, nor inclined to meditative and devotional forms of religion. Jacob was a plain man. This is an inadequate rendering of the word, translated "perfect" in Job 1 : 1, 8, meaning *upright*, a man of general integrity. Dwelling in tents. A man of steady, domestic, moral habits, staying at home, attending to the pasturing of the flocks and the business of the family, instead of wandering abroad in search of pleasure and amusement.

WINNING THE BIRTHRIGHT.—About twenty-five years (or as some think forty-five) pass away. Very probably Esau had forgotten his bargain, or at any rate had no intention of carrying it out. But Isaac, feeling the in-

firmities of age, though he lived many years after this wished to devote the care of his family upon his eldest son, and proposed at a feast to bestow upon him the birthright blessing, which would have made Esau the head of the family. Jacob remembered his purchase, and Rebekah, the prophecy. Jacob was her favorite son. The two were afraid that the desired boon was slipping away from them. They did not trust God but took the matter into their own hands and conspired together to palm Jacob off upon his blind and aged father as Esau, the eldest son. Thus by fraud he obtained the birthright. Esau returned too late, and wept bitter tears over his loss, but the decree was irrevocable, and his repentance was vain. On this transaction.

1. We must judge of it, not by our light, but by theirs. For deceit was not looked upon then as a great evil, especially with a good motive and in a good cause. 2. The birthright had been designated by God as belonging to Jacob. 3. Esau had sold his right and Jacob had acquired it. 4. Esau had practically renounced his privilege, not only by the sale, but by marrying heathen wives from the great Hittite nation. 5. By character and marriage Esau was wholly unfitted to be the father of the faithful and inheritor of the promises. 6. We must unqualifiedly condemn this deceitful transaction, as God condemned it by the many sorrows which flowed from it.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.—Quiet uneventful lives like Isaac's, may yet be lives of faith and links in the chain of divine providence through which great blessings come to men.

Men are born with different tendencies, talents, and temperaments; and yet for each there is some kind of usefulness and blessing possible. The apple cannot become a peach but it can become a first-class apple.

"The weakness and exhaustion of the body is a time of temptation. Jesus was tempted when he was 'an hungered,' so was Esau. Jesus kept his birthright; Esau sold it away."

Every one has a birthright from God, to happiness, goodness, and heaven.

Many a man sells his birthright for a mess of pottage,—for pride, for worldly gain, for honour for pleasure.

"We barter life for pottage; sell true bliss
For wealth or power, for pleasure or renown;
Thus Esau-like our Father's blessing miss
Then wash with fruitless tears our faded crown."

Those who sell their spiritual birthright, of character, conscience, heaven, are certain to lose with it the blessings of happiness, peace, and this world.

Those who obtain right things in a wrong way always gain curses with the blessing.

It is a sad thing when mothers help their children to sin instead of keeping them from it.

There is a too late, when men cannot, or will not, change, and the chance for goodness and heaven is gone forever.

Esau's is an example of false repentance that leaves one unfit for true salvation.

God uses imperfect influences for carrying on his kingdoms as electricity for lighting or for power passes through wires that are imperfect conductors.

INTERNATIONAL SCHEME OF SABBATH-SCHOOL LESSONS

ADOPTED BY THE SABBATH-SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

1894.		BIBLE LESSON		PROVE THAT		COMMIT TO MEMORY		
						PROOF.	GOLDEN TEXT.	CATECHISM.
						Question.		
Jan.	7	The First Adam	Gen. 1 : 26-31; 2 : 1-3	Man was created truly noble.....	Pa.	8 : 5	Gen. 1 : 27	82
"	14	Adam's Sin and God's Grace	Gen. 3 : 1-15	Our hearts are deceitful.....	Jer.	17 : 9	1 Cor. 15 : 22	83, 84
"	21	Cain and Abel.....	Gen. 4 : 3-13	God accepts only heart worship.....	John	4 : 24	Heb. 11 : 4	85
"	28	God's Covenant with Noah	Gen. 9 : 8-17	God fulfils His promises.....	Heb.	10 : 23	Gen. 9 : 13	86
Feb.	4	Beginning of the Hebrew Nation.....	Gen. 12 : 1-9	Great benefits reward obedience.....	Isa.	1 : 10	Gen. 12 : 8	87
"	11	God's Covenant with Abram	Gen. 17 : 1-9	The pious family is blessed.....	Pro.	3 : 33	Gen. 15 : 6	88
"	18	God's Judgment on Sodom	Gen. 18 : 22-33	We should pray for all men.....	1 Tim.	2 : 1	Gen. 18 : 25	89
"	25	Trial of Abraham's Faith	Gen. 22 : 1-13	Faith subdues difficulties.....	Matt.	21 : 21	Heb. 11 : 17	90
Mar.	4	Selling the Birthright	Gen. 27 : 27-34	Godless people make bad bargains	Isa.	58 : 3	Luke 12 : 23	91
"	11	Jacob at Bethel	Gen. 28 : 10-22	Angels help the righteous.....	Heb.	1 : 14	Gen. 28 : 15	92, 93
"	18	A Blessing to all Nations	Gen. 28 : 17-21	Good men are great blessings.....	Matt.	5 : 16	Gen. 18 : 18	94
"	25	REVIEW		God is a Father to his people.....	1 Cor.	6 : 12	Matt. 22 : 32	REVIEW.

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