

Jacob's Brexilling Prayer.

OCT. 24.

GENESIS XXXII : 9-12, 22-30.

TWENTY years had passed since Jacob's memorable dream. In the meantime he had married two of his cousins in Mesopotamia, had a large family of children, and acquired a vast amount of property. The Lord had commanded him to return to Canaan, ch. 31 : 3 ; he is now on his way thither, with all his belongings. Though Edom is a long way off, thoughts about Esau began to haunt him. Should he have heard of his coming, he may seize the opportunity to avenge his wrongs. How should he proceed? To begin with, he resolved to place himself under the protection of God. Vs. 9, 10. This is the first recorded prayer in the Bible, short, earnest, and bearing directly on the occasion. (1) He addresses Jehovah as a covenant-keeping God. (2) He pleads the promise made to himself. (3) He confesses his unworthiness, and God's goodness to him. (4) He entreats deliverance from the dangers that lie before him. *With my staff*—a poor, lone pilgrim he was ; now, *two bands*—two wives, eleven children and countless flocks and herds. So large a retinue that it must be divided. Vs. 11, 12. *Deliver me from Esau!* He thought of his treatment of Esau : his father's prediction : of Esau's threat, ch. 27 : 40, 41, and of the promise to himself, ch. 27 : 29. He appeals therefore to God to intervene for the accomplishment of his own word. Vs. 22, 23. In the meantime he had sent messengers to his brother ; but no word of reconciliation. On the contrary, they reported that Esau was even now advancing at the head of 400 men. That boded no good. *He rose up that night—ill at ease in his conscience*, he could not sleep, *passed over the ford*—waded the *Jabbok*, a brook in Gilead that flows into the Jordan, about half-way between the sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. V. 23. After seeing all his family safely across the stream, he stays behind to spend the night in earnest prayer for guidance and protection. He also took the shrewd precaution to send a magnificent present to Esau, vs. 13-15. V. 24. *There wrestled a man*—This mysterious person is called an angel by Hosea, ch. 12 : 4, and "God," in vs. 28, 30. The inference is that it was none other but "the Angel of the Covenant," the Son of God appearing in the nature which he afterwards assumed. The conflict appears to have been a real one, not a dream as at Bethel, designed to revive his sinking spirits, to lessen his self-confidence, and to inspire him with stronger faith. V. 25. *When he saw*—i. e. when the angel saw. He touched the *hollow of his thigh*—this touch rendered him powerless. All he could now do was to hold on to the angel in the firm belief that he was commissioned to do him good. Jacob prevailed, not by his strength, but by importunity and self-surrender, Luke 11 : 8-10. Vs. 28, 29. No longer the supplanter and intriguer, he has become an altered man, his name shall be ISRAEL—"the prevailer." *Peniel*—this name shall commemorate God's grace.

LEARN—that usually more is to be gained by yielding than by striving. In every time of difficulty we are to go to the Lord in prayer.

Joseph sold into Egypt.

OCT. 31.

GEN. XXXVII : 1-5 ; 23-36

TEN years had elapsed since Jacob left Padanaram. Vs. 1, 2. *Jacob dwelt*—prompted by the same motives as Abraham and Isaac, Heb. 11 : 13. *The generations*—the leading occurrences in his domestic history. *Joseph*—the elder of his two sons by Rachel, was not brought up to idleness ; at *seventeen* he was associated with the other sons as shepherd, or overseer, and shewed himself a faithful steward by reporting to his father the misconduct of his seniors. V. 3. *Israel loved Joseph*—the son of his old age, born when his father was 91, and because he early gave promise of the piety which distinguished him from the rest of the sons, and conspicuously marked his subsequent career. *Coat of many colours*—a long flowing tunic made of pieces of coloured cloth sewed together, and considered a badge of distinction, see Judges 5 : 30. Their father's partiality for Joseph naturally excited his brethren's jealousy. *Could not speak peaceably*—could not address him with the usual salutation amongst friends and acquaintances—"peace be to thee." His dreams, vs. 6-11, increased their hatred, and also disconcerted Jacob, who took note of them. Vs. 23, 24. *Dotan*, where Joseph found his brethren, was 17 miles north of Shechem and nearly 70 miles from Hebron. The readiness with which he set out, v. 13, shewed his obedience and reminds us of Samuel, 1 S. 3 : 4, and of Isaiah, ch. 6 : 8. *They stripped him of his robe*—the only garment he had on except a cloth round his loins. *Cast him into a pit*—a water cistern hewn out of the rock, now providentially empty. V. 25. *Sat down to eat*—as to a feast of rejoicing. *Ishmaelites*—a singular coincidence, for they belonged originally to the same stock, Ishmael, "the outcast," being the son of Abraham by Hagar, ch. 21 : 10. *Bearing spices*—these articles in which they traded were in great demand in Egypt, being used for embalming. Vs. 26, 28. *Judah*—the fourth son of Jacob by Leah, took the lead among the eleven, and was their spokesman in Egypt, Gen. 44 : 14-18. *What profit*—knowing the mercenary spirit of the rest he suggested a plan by which Joseph's life might be saved. The Ishmaelites traded in slaves also. "Let's sell him." *20 pieces of silver*—20 "shekels," equal to \$15, was the price of a male slave under 20 years, Lev. 27 : 5. Vs. 29-33. *Ruben returned*—He had remonstrated in vain, ch. 42 : 22, left the gang, and came back when he saw the caravan approaching. Being the oldest, he felt that he would be chiefly blamed for this transaction. Vs. 34, 35. *Jacob rent his clothes, &c.*—The common signs of oriental mourning. *Sackcloth*—rough camel's hair cloth worn next the skin. *His daughters*—daughters-in-law—for he had but one daughter—Dinah. *Refused to be comforted*—his grief was excessive for so good a man. *The grave*—"Sheol"—the place of departed spirits, see 2 Sam. 12 : 23. V. 36. *Midianites*—Ishmaelites, sold him probably in the public market. *Potiphar*—captain of the king's body guard which consisted of 1000 soldiers, consequently a man of honour and influence.