

## INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSONS.

September 22. Joshua xxiv: 14-25.

The discrepancies of the narrative from an historical point of view may be seen by comparing Exodus ii: 23-25; iv: 29-31, and in the fifth chapter of Exodus in which it is nowhere made to appear that the Israelites followed the Egyptian forms of worship. Moses was certainly rather coldly received by his compatriots, but not apparently on religious grounds so much as from the seemingly hopeless character of his mission politically. In any case Joshua's exhortation to worship the Lord was merely the adoption of the real religion of the Egyptians as indicated by Prof. Rawlinson in the extract printed in another column. Esoterically the gods who rule beyond the River stand for the psychic and astral powers and intelligences whose personification as aspects of the Supreme is the foundation of all polytheism. There is apt to be as much superstition in their non-recognition as in their worship. It must be remembered, however, that scholars say that Jehovah was only one of the highest of these lesser gods, and not the One Absolute as understood by modern Christians, the God of whom Jesus taught that no man hath seen Him at any time; while we are told in Exodus xxiv: 9-11 that Moses and Aaron, and all the elders saw the god of Israel.

September 29. Review.

The Golden Text selected from 1 Kings viii: 56, "There hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant," if taken literally would place a limitation upon prophecy which church authorities will not admit. The Messianic prophecies which we are told Moses incorporated in the Pentateuch were not fulfilled until centuries after Solomon's time. The literal meaning is not therefore tenable. Esoterically, Moses, who was "drawn out" of the water, symbolises the astral plane or plan of form, and he is the designer of these things which are to be. The promises are promised "by his hand." Solomon, who is the builder of the temple, the creative agent, who executes the plan, very fitly testifies upon its completion that not one word has failed

or "fallen" as the marginal reading gives it. The building of the temple, a temple not made with hands, is the great work of the Word.

October 6. Judges II: 1-12, 16.

The literal meaning of Baal is Master or Possessor, and the Baalim, a name which, like the Elohim, has the peculiarity of being used in the plural, and of always having the definite article prefixed, was the chief male aspect of the Deity recognised by the Phœnicians and Canaanites. So Ashtoreth was the chief female aspect of the Deity, corresponding with Jupiter and Venus of the Romans, and the Father and the Spirit of later forms, or again, the Spirit and the Bride. It is not remarkable that the uncultured tribes of the Exodus should have fallen into disputes over the names of the Divine attributes when our modern scholarship and devout research still disagrees about its own conclusions. There was really less difference among the beliefs of these several nationalities than among Greek, Roman and Anglican forms of Christianity. The Angel of Jehovah who came to the children of Israel is paralleled by other Angels who appeared to the children of Moab, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Phœnicians, and others equally devout in their worship, and quite as moral and generally less blood-thirsty than Israel. Baal who is the God of Fire, is, of course, the same Fire God who appeared to Moses in the Bush, and who was a pillar of fire to the Hebrews on their journey. The same Fire God also supplied Elijah with fire from heaven to consume his altars, proving, not that Baal was a false god, but that his priests were false priests, Elijah being the true priest of Baal under His name Jehovah. The confounding of names for things seems to be a notable source of error among students. The idea that there were a number of Gods, one called Baal and another Moloch and another Jehovah, and so on, and that they were engaged in a perpetual struggle for supremacy which could only be attained through the recognition of certain half-civilized nations, is one not calculated to dignify the idea of religion, or to ennoble one's conceptions of theology. It is easier to understand that these nations quar-