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Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY.

Third Quarter.

Lesson I. July 7. 1 Samuel 3: 1-14.

SAMUEL CALLED TO GOD.

GOLDEN TEXT. "Thou Samuel answered, Speak for thy servant heareth."—1 Sam. 3: 10.

TIME.—Samuel was born about 1146 B. C.; and the date of this lesson is therefore 12 years later, 1134 B. C. (The exact dates of this period are all of them somewhat uncertain.)

PLACE.—Shiloh, the religious capital of Israel, 17 miles north of Jerusalem, and half-way between Bethel and Shechem, 9 or 10 miles from each.

PERSONS.—Samuel, twelve years old; Eli, about 78 years old, high priest and judge.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE CONDITION OF ISRAEL WHEN SAMUEL WAS BORN. OCCUPATIONS OF THE PEOPLE. The Jews were not only farmers, and each farmer the proprietor of his own farm, averaging at first from 2 to 50 acres. The houses were built, not on the farms, as with us, but for the sake of security, in villages and cities.

GOVERNMENT. The government closely resembled that of the United States; the tribes corresponding to the States, each having a government of its own. But there was this great difference between Israel and all other nations—its government was theocratic; i. e., God Himself was the chief ruler, and there was no visible central supreme power, either in king, president, or congress.

RELIGION AND EDUCATION. There was a central place of religious worship at Shiloh for the whole nation. Here were the tabernacle, the ark, the altar for daily sacrifices; and hence at this place the tribes were to assemble three times a year for the great feasts. The Levites were intended to be scattered through the nation, as its religious teachers.

MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE. "The ceremonial law of Moses was probably in full operation during the periods of religious faithfulness. As a just farming people, they were under constant temptation from the more warlike and mercantile Philistines, their neighbors on the south-west. Degenerate as some of the people undoubtedly were, there is no doubt that a much higher state of morals and religion prevailed among them than among the other nations."

II. THE CHILD SAMUEL.—Samuel was the fifteenth and last of the judges; the first in the regular succession of prophets.

III. EARLY INFLUENCES. First, Samuel was the child of pious parents. "It takes both parents to make the complete perfect human influences around a child."

SECOND, Samuel was reared in his early life in a religious home.

THIRD, next to his home he spent his youth in the temple service, with the good old high priest Eli.

FOURTH, he was not without great temptations. The active sons of Eli were ever setting him a bad example.

IV. THE CALL OF GOD. 1. And the child Samuel. Josephus (Antiq. v. x. 4) says that Samuel's call to the prophetic office happened when he had just completed his twelfth year. Ministered unto the Lord (Jehovah); in such services as a child could perform, such as lighting the lamps (ver. 3), and opening the doors of the tabernacle. Before Eli. In his presence and under his direction. And the word of the Lord. Not the written word, which would include the Pentateuch and Joshua, and perhaps the annals of the judges, but messages from God through prophets. Was precious in those days. Rather, was rare. In the general decay of religion, prophetic communications from God had almost entirely ceased (comp. Amos 8: 11; Ps. 74: 9). There was no open vision. Rather, there was no vision published abroad.

2. And it came to pass at that time. The Hebrew literally means on that day. When Eli was laid down (to sleep). The words from "when Eli" to close of the third verse, form a parenthesis, describing the circumstances under which Samuel's call took place. And his eyes were dim that he could not see. This is a statement of the condition of Eli at this time, and serves to explain why Samuel ran to Eli when he heard the voice. He would naturally suppose that the infirm and half-blind old man required some assistance.

3. And he saw the lamp of God. The seven-branched golden candlestick. It was lighted every evening (Ex. 27: 21; 30: 7, 8), and was extinguished in the morning. Went out. This marks the time of night as shortly before daybreak. Where the ark of God was. The ark is expressly mentioned because it was the visible symbol of the presence of Him from whom the voice proceeded.

4. That the Lord called Samuel. By an audible voice, pronouncing his name. And he answered, Here am I. The regular answer to one calling; literally, behold me.

5. And he ran unto Eli. Not Samuel's alacrity to serve the aged priest, his spiritual father; Unacquainted with the visions of the Almighty, he took that to be only Eli's call, which was really the call of God. Such mistakes we make oftener than we think. He ran and lay down. Thinking probably that he had been dreaming.

7. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord. He did not recognize his call; he did not know how God communicated His will to His prophets. His was his first experience as is kept in the last part of the verse.

8. The third time. God kept repeating His call. For He knew it was not from unwillingness to hear and obey that Samuel did not answer Him, but from inexperience. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. (1) Because there was no other explanation of the repeated calls. (2) Eliot suggests that Eli's chamber was between the sanctuary with its ark, and Samuel's chamber, so that a voice from the Holy of holies would come upon Samuel in the same direction as if it came from Eli. Eli at last recognizes this, and suggests that the voice came from beyond him.

10. And the Lord came, and stood. The Hebrew is emphatic; presented Himself. A personal presence, not a mere voice or impulsion upon Samuel's mind; the same distinctly indicated (comp. Gen. 18: 17,

20, 21, 33; Judg. 6: 14; Rev. 1: 1, 22: 16. Speak for thy servant heareth. This implies his entire readiness to obey the commands of God.

GOD CALLS THE YOUNG. God is calling every child as he comes Samuel. It is an individual call, by name, for "He calleth his own sheep by name." God calls (1) by His Word; (2) by His loving, attractive character; (3) by what He has done for us in Jesus Christ; (4) by the influences of the Holy Spirit; (5) by various providences; (6) by conscience; (7) by Sabbaths and religious services; (8) by the invitation and influence of friends; (9) by the living water which satisfies every thirst of the soul; (10) by the attractions of good and of love; (11) by warning; and the fruit of a life of sin. EARLY PIETY. Like Samuel, we should answer God's call by, "Here am I." (1) It is easier to be a Christian in youth. (2) Then it gives us a much longer time in which to serve God. (3) We may not live to be old, and thus by putting off our duty we may fall altogether. (4) We escape many evils and dangers.

V. GOD'S MESSAGE THROUGH SAMUEL. 11. And the Lord said to Samuel. Through Samuel, whom Eli loved, God sent a terrible message. At which both the ears shall tingle. With horror and alarm. As a loud, sharp, direful, and thrilling one's ears with pain, so the bitter tidings of Israel's woe in the judgment about to follow Eli's house would shock all Israel.

12. All things which I have spoken. By the mouth of the Lord, as recorded in chap. 2: 27-36. When I begin, I will also make an end. I will perform thoroughly, I will go through with the performance from first to last.

13. For I have told him. I gave him warning and an opportunity to change. For the inquiry which he knoweth. Let Ver. kneed. The record is given in 1 Sam. 2: 12-16. Eli's guilt becomes so much the greater from the fact that it was known to him how shamefully his sons behaved, and he did nothing to remove this abomination from his house and from his sanctuary. Made them selve: better rendered, have cursed themselves, i. e., brought curses upon themselves. He restrained them not. But contented himself with gentle exhortation (chap. 2: 23-25), instead of trusting them out of the sacred office they had so grossly abused.

14. Shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. Literally, shall not cover itself; shall not make atonement for itself. The sons of Eli had sinned "with a high hand" against light and with a sanctified spirit. Made them selve: better rendered, have cursed themselves, i. e., brought curses upon themselves. He restrained them not. But contented himself with gentle exhortation (chap. 2: 23-25), instead of trusting them out of the sacred office they had so grossly abused.

A HARD DUTY. It was a very hard thing for Samuel to make known to the aged Eli the message God had delivered to him.

God often lays hard duties upon us at the very threshold of the new life. They are needful as a test, a revelation and a defence; a test to God and man whether we really have given ourselves wholly to God; a revelation of our true condition to ourselves; and a defence against temptation.

Her Own Way.

As child or woman, Sarah Herder has always been reckoned one of the most fortunate of human beings. She had beauty, a quick wit, and plenty of hard common sense.

She belonged to a large influential family, who were proud of her. She married a man who loved her heartily. She had children who were good and clever. She was a sincere Christian, a loyal friend, and a generous helper of the poor.

Yet, with all these claims to love and popularity, should Sarah Herder die to-morrow, there would probably be a secret sense of relief in the hearts of all who knew her. They would shed sincere tears for the woman who had loved them, but they would draw long breaths, as if a weight had been lifted from their lives.

When Sarah was a child of five, she began managing the nursery; Bob must spin his top, and baby drink her milk, as she wished.

It was her way, and not theirs, to be sure. But could not every one see that her way was best? That thought was clear to her, even then.

When she was a girl of twelve, she headed all the committees and societies in the school. The girls who did not agree with her grumbled together, but under their breath. At home, at sixteen, she took control of the house out of her mother's hands, ordered the maids, and scolded Bob; and actually gave her father advice in his business.

When she married a physician, she insisted on hearing frequent reports of the patients under his care, and gave her opinion as to their proper treatment. Sometimes she visited the patient, and interfered with the nurse, the diet, and even her husband's orders.

In the church she became a terror to the good as well as the will-doers. She was president of one or two societies, led the mothers' meetings, and took charge of the infant class. She lectured all alike as from a height of superiority. The meek little minister was uncomfortable when her firm, decisive step came to his study door.

Her husband, as time passed, grew to be a silent, jaded looking man. Her boys, who had naturally strong, individual traits of character, were so compressed and molded by their mother's indomitable will and theories, that they became weak, affected imitations of herself.

As she grew older, she felt that her husband and children and friends had gradually turned away from her. They paid respect and obedience to her, but each other they gave confidence and affection. These things hurt her, for she was, at heart, a warm, loving woman.

Wherein had she failed? she asked herself, anxiously. Her way was not their way, but was it not dictated by common sense and religion? She knew that she was absolutely right. Why not, therefore, lead others in the right way.

Notwithstanding all her good qualities, she has a vague consciousness that she has somewhere made an error; and that, because of it, her life has been, in one sense, a failure.—Youth's Companion.

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Talks with Boys.

A learned Jewswriter in The Sunday School Times tells us that it was the custom among his people for the mothers to send all their boys early to the synagogue, that they might rise and salute the aged fathers when they arrived. I have been told that in the old times mentioned in our first talk, the young folks always stood at one side for the minister to pass, and made their bow, or dropped their courtesy, as their case might be, in honor of his sacred calling. I know not the young man who never passes a sleep-ground where any friend of his is sleeping, without lifting his hat. Do not call this superstition; it seems to me rather a genetic act of reverence.

I am sure, boys, you will not consider it unfair if I judge that many of you are lacking in this trait. Sometimes I think the trouble lies in the very desire for independence we talked about last week. This is such a free country, and you so delight in being free, that you grow jealous of any person or thing which seems to demand your homage; you are very much afraid you will not be esteemed quite so highly as somebody else unless you constantly assert yourselves, and this leads unconsciously to a sad lack of the desirable quality; for I maintain that a spirit of reverence marks a fine nature—a nature which discerns what is true, and pure, and lofty, and loves it with a love near to worship.

Now you ought to start with the truth that reverence is due to whatever is worthy the respect of God, and to all sacred places, things and persons.

Suppose you ask yourselves how nearly you reach such a standard as this. How do you treat older people? I can hardly believe one boy to whom I talk would say "the old man" or "the old woman," when speaking of his father or mother, though I am told some boys do use such epithets. I know there is a great deal of careless, playful speech used about parents and teachers and college professors. Perhaps it is only exuberant youth, but do be careful lest it becomes a habit. And do remember that the very fact that a person is old brings a certain claim to your deference independent of relationship or authority, or even of character. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head" was the precept the Jewish scribes kept in mind for their children.

How do you behave in church, or in any place where the Bible is read or prayer offered? I actually once saw a boy reading a novel during the Scripture lesson at morning prayers. He was away from his name, and the only reason home (if he had a home) had any restraint, and he had the grace to put himself and his book behind a large piece of furniture where he thought he was unseen. I do not think many would offend in that way, but I should hardly feel free to ask how many of you show proper reverence by your attitude in prayer time, or how many sit bolt upright staring about with open eyes. How many of you employ the moments of the benediction in giving for your caps and getting in good graces, or in making out the instant the "Amen" is spoken. Some boys are unwilling to be thought religious, as unwilling as if religion was a disgrace, that they will omit common courtesies in these things. There is such power in habit and association that I venture to say one who enters a place of worship with a reverent mind will not keep that mind long if he allows himself to assume a careless posture.

Then there are those who use words of Scripture to point a joke. I am sorry to be obliged to confess that this is not confined to young men or to boys. Let us not do it. Not only is it irreverent, but it brings such bad results. There are precious passages which we cannot recall without the thought also of some would-be witty turn, and by so much their sacred influence is marred. You would not like to have expressions taken from your father's letter, turned and twisted and made light of, to suit the purpose of some fun-loving friend; you would resent it. The Bible is our Heavenly Father's letter to us, his children, and shall we treat it with less respect?

So we mount up in our thought of reverence due, to that which we owe to the Divine. Never be ashamed of such reverence my lads. The highest honor here is to do homage, the noblest place is at his feet. H. A. H.

Symptoms of Catarrh.

Dull, heavy headache, obstruction of the nasal passages, discharges falling from the head into the throat, sometimes profuse, watery and acid, and others thick, tenacious, mucous, purulent, bloody and purged; the eyes are weak, watery and inflamed; there is ringing in the ears, deafness, hacking or coughing to clear the throat, expectoration of offensive matter, together with scald from alcohol; the voice is changed and has a nasal twang; the breath is offensive; smell and taste are impaired; there is a sensation of dizziness, with mental depression, a hacking cough and general debility. If you have all, or any considerable number of these symptoms you are suffering from Nasal Catarrh. The more complicated your disease has become, the greater the number and diversity of symptoms. Thousands of cases annually, without manifesting half of the above symptoms, result in consumption and in the grave. No disease is so common, more deceptive, and dangerous, or less understood, or more unsuccessfully treated by physicians. Five hundred dollars reward is offered by the manufacturers of Dr. King's Catarrh Remedy, for a case of Catarrh which they cannot cure. Remedy sold by druggists, at 50 cents.

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