

from the face of Esau thy brother." Gen. xxxv. 1. The cares of the world and the eager and incessant pursuit of wealth had secularized Jacob's spirit, and deadened the spiritual sensibilities of his soul. In this frame he lingered in the luxuriant plains of Moreh, indulging, like Eli, irregularities in his family, and so delayed the fulfillment of his solemn vow at Bethel. God over-ruled the disastrous event that befell him there to arouse him to a better sense of duty, and bring him to Bethel to perfect his exercise and to comfort his soul. There is no comfort in sin, or out of the path of duty. God first detaches the believer, like David, from sinful indulgences, next draws him towards himself, and then forms his heart for the practice of holy and spiritual duties. The command to repair to Bethel awakened hallowed recollections, and promptly called Jacob to prepare for a solemn meeting with God in the holy place. A work of holy preparation followed,—a season of great revival ensued; and they arrive at Bethel with more correct and awakened apprehensions of God's character, and of the spiritual nature of the worship which he requires. In this way should God's people always repair to Bethel to wait upon Him and worship Him "in the beauties of holiness." Jacob is favoured with a fresh visit from God, accompanied with a repetition of covenant promises and an allusion to the significant change in his name. He builds the altar in accordance with the divine command, and in the holy fervour of his spirit he calls the place El-beth-el, that is, God of Bethel.—The same God who had appeared to him in Bethel long before,—still faithful to his engagements, and unalterably constant in his love.

There is little more said about Bethel until the time of Samuel. A city of some importance, as already mentioned, had now arisen on the spot, and its memory as a scene early and solemnly consecrated to the worship of God, was again revived. The age of Samuel was distinguished for a general revival of religion in Israel. This was mainly due to Samuel's own labours among the people. He went from place to place in circuit, teaching and instructing the people in the true worship of God. And Bethel was selected as one of those places where the prophet made his stated visits—1 Sam. vii. 16. In those days seminaries of learning began to be instituted in the country, where the sons of the prophets and others received instruction, and where people repaired for consulting the oracle and worshipping God; and Bethel was one of these. Thus in 1 Sam. x. 3, we read of men going up to God to Bethel, and that evidently for the purpose of offering sacrifice, and worshipping God in the divinely appointed place. "In all places where I record my name I will meet with you and bless you." Bethel, then, still retained its ancient character as a place consecrated to the public worship of God. The God of the ancient patriarchs still continued to countenance the place, and to manifest His gracious presence to the people, although neither the Ark nor the Tabernacle ever was brought there.

But a period came round in the history of God's covenant people when the glory departed from Bethel as well as from Shiloh. This happened at the commencement of Jeroboam's reign, when that unhappy prince, in selfish and grievously mistaken policy, established his system of idol worship in the kingdom of the ten tribes. To secure the attachment of his subjects, and the integrity of his kingdom, he set up two idols as objects of worship, one in the city of Dan on the north, and the other in Bethel on the south; and furnishing priests of his own making, he commanded the people to worship them, and restrained them from going to Jerusalem. This was a piece of dreadful infatuation, and its consequences were disastrous and most melancholy. God withdrew from His people in anger, and when they refused to listen to the