

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON XX.

May 17. THE LORD'S MINISTERS. Numbers 16:1-3.

COMMIT TO MEMORY, v. 6, 7. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Ch. ii. 33; Mal. ii. 4-6; Heb. v. 4.

With vs. 5, 6, read Num. i. 47-53; with vs. 8, 9, 1 Chron. xviii. 82; with v. 10, Heb. viii. 3; with v. 11-18, Luke ii. 28; James i. 18.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—"The Lord's portion is his people."

LEADING TEXT.—"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.—1 Pet. ii. 9.

We now enter on a book entitled to more notice than it receives, for its title suggests that it is a bare list of names and numbers. Really, it gives the history of Israel for 88 years (compare chap. i. 1 with chap. xx. 22 and xxxiii. 38); describes the preparations for breaking up the camp at Sinai, the march towards Canaan, and defeat; scattered notices of events in the dreary years of wandering, and the preparations during the last year, for entering Canaan. How can this be without interest? Exodus and Leviticus give us the law, but it was given on the assumption that the people should speedily enter Canaan. The long delay made some new arrangements necessary. The whole is a surprising record of patience, tenderness and care, on God's side, and of waywardness and unbelief on man's.

The first census being for military service, the Levites are not included, but Ephraim and Manasseh standing for Joseph, twelve tribes are still kept up. Levi is numbered separately, and our Lesson shows us the reason. We shall consider Levi, as a tribe, as he was in himself, to God, to Aaron (himself a Levite), and to Israel.

I. LEVI, AS HE WAS IN HIMSELF.—Grace appears in this choice. Levi was no better than the rest of the tribes. See the account of the head in Gen. xlix. 5-7. The reason of that we have in Gen. xxiv. 25-80. Levi was besides the smallest of the tribes, see v. 39. But it pleased God, since the privileges of the first-born were lost by Reuben and Simeon, to give a part thereof to Levi. "Chosen not for good in me," Levi might say. "I have taken the Levites," says God, v. 12. Nor is he alone in this. Hear Paul, 1 Tim. i. 16. So God has often taken men like Augustine, Newton, Bunyan, and made them eminent servants in his sanctuary.

II. AS HE WAS TO GOD.—He said, v. 6. "Bring the tribes of Levi near." When the Lord slow the first-born of Egypt, so preserving and delivering Israel he took all the first-born of the people and of the cattle as his own. In the room of the first-born, the Levites were taken. ("Opening the matrix" is the same as "first-born.") But the men of Levi, had to be cleansed to be the Lord's, as we see by v. 7, in two ways. Something was done to them. Moses sprinkled the water of purifying. Something was done by them. They shaved all their flesh, and washed their clothes. Something was done with them, v. 11. Aaron offered them as an offering before the Lord, with fitting sacrifices. So they were separated, ch. viii. 11, as the Lord's, in a more intimate sense than the people. See v. 16. "Wholly given to me." "An Israel within Israel."

It is so with true ministers of God always. He calls them, takes them for reasons of his own. He puts his spirit in them, or as it is often expressed, gives them his grace. They stir up the gift that is in them, 2 Tim. i. 6. They cleanse themselves (see 2 Tim. ii. 21, 22). They are offered to God by their parents, themselves, the church, 1 Tim. vi. 12.

Once more; the Levites had to take their stand on God's side, in an awful manner. Read with care Ex. xxxiii. 26-28. This was hard, but it was duty. The tribe whose sword was so fierce against Shechem has other work now for it, "on the Lord's side." (See Luke xiv. 26.) They may not confer with flesh and blood, must renounce much, be men of war, when their course looks hard, cruel, fanatical. See 1 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 10; v. 20; 2 Tim. ii. 8, 4; iv. 2, 3; Titus iii. 10. But this comes from being "wholly on the Lord's side," among his enemies.

III. WHAT HE WAS TO "AARON, the priest" v. 6, the type of Christ. The Levites were to assist Aaron (and his successors), that the objects of his office might be accomplished. All Israel was a family of worshippers. The men were warriors at God's command. The Levites were workers in God's service. They did not make atonement or offer sacrifice. That was the place of Aaron and his successors. They were not types of Christ. They ministered to him, had charge of all the vessels and sacred furniture, as we see in the following chapters, each family in its place and with its fixed duty.

So with all true servants of God. Their Great High Priest is also their Master. They are to carry out the objects of his office, to attend to all that with which he accomplishes his will. He uses the word, sacraments and prayer, in the hands of his servants, for the doing of his will. They are to fulfill their trust. A Levite might complain of the small share given him in the care of the tabernacle, a cord, a curtain, a pin, but he was for that very thing. So a saint may be only doorkeeper, but that is not his concern, only that he be faithful in his place. See "Parable of Talents," Matt. xxv. 14.

IV. WHAT HE WAS TO ISRAEL.—The first-born were saved, and belonged to God. The Levites represented them, and were so offered to God. In them all the Jewish families with first-born sons—from that awful night—were represented before Aaron and before the Lord. This appears from the numbers—22,275 male first-born, and 22,000 Levites. See vs. 28, 48 and 50. For every first-born male there was a Levite, and every Levite had a first-born son.

spiece, made up the 1805 shekels of v. 50.

And as such they were thrown on the care of Israel—had no portion among the tribes, were scattered among the people, and dependent on them. So what had been a judgment in Jacob's prediction, Gen. xlix. 7, through the mercy of God becomes a blessing to the tribes. For their diffusion over the land tended to keep up the knowledge and worship of God. They had no territories. Jehovah was their inheritance (Num. xviii. 20). They had their share in the inheritance (Num. xviii. 20), and of their share they again gave a sixth to the priests (xviii. 23). In times of exceptional supplies they are commended to the kindness of the people (Deut. xii. 19), and when the land was settled instead of being a dependent crowd about the tabernacle, they had forty-eight cities given them, six of them "cities of refuge," so binding the people and them more closely together. They became the teachers of the people.

We learn from this: (1) How much importance the Lord attaches to the decent maintenance of his service.

(2) How methodical the arrangements for keeping the Hebrew people near to God.

(3) How truly they were a "kingdom of priests," (Ex. xix. 6), and how they shadow forth the "royal priesthood" of later times.

(4) How much importance Scripture attaches to the proper maintenance of God's ministers, and to provision for them when they cannot labour. The churches have much to learn on this point.

(5) How great an honour it is to bear any part in God's noble and blessed service.

ILLUSTRATION.

A "WAVE OFFERING."—How could the Levites be waived? This question is answered by Abarbanel (on Num. viii. 11), and by Kurtz, by the description of their being turned this way and that, while they bowed to the four points of the compass, in token that all their powers of body and mind were henceforth to be devoted to that service.

WATCHFULNESS OF MINISTERS.—Ministers should be not simply like dials or mile stones, but like clocks and bells, to alarm sinners. Aaron wore bells as well as pomegranates. The prophets were to lift up their voice like a trumpet.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

Number of the tribes—Levi not reckoned—why—how the number was made up—to whom the Levites presented—by whom—for what purpose—meaning of "ministers"—their duties—when most severe—how employed in the land—nature of the tabernacle—Aaron's duties—his successors—for whom the Levites stood—why—whose the Levites were—their relation to God—how set apart—meaning of washing—how they had consecrated themselves—how provided for—their being scattered in the land—the good that came of it—the lessons to us.

The Philosophy of the Sunday School.

A LECTURE BY DR. VINCENT AT DREV THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

If I were to pick up a little waif at Five points and undertake to make a good man of him, the leading educators of to day would say to me: (1) Take him away from the bad influences of Five points; (2) Impress yourself on him and command his respect; (3) Give him truth—truth new to him. Children delight in knowledge. And there are revolutions wrapped up in ideas. (4) Use the object method of teaching, to arrest the eye and awaken interest. Bring out the blackboard. (5) Be sure to win the boy's heart to every truth which you give to his intellect. The good teacher makes his pupils enthusiasts. (6) Be very patient with him. It is not always the brightest boys that do best afterwards, but those who know how to plod.

Now, how did God teach his waif-boy Israel? (1) He took him away from the bad influences of the Egyptian Five Points. (2) He inspired him with respect. As the teacher calls his school to order, so did God call to order the rabble of Israel. He rapped upon no table and rang no bell, reverently be it said, but he shook the earth, clothed the mountain with darkness, and amid the lightning flashes spoke in thunder. This awful scene inspired Israel with deep reverence for their God. (3) He gave them new truth. He began with the Ten Commandments. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and religious education should come first and secular after. (4) He used the object method of teaching, for, was there ever such an object lesson as the Tabernacle? (5) He taught them to obey and love the truth. (6) And he was very patient with them.

Thus we see that the best methods of the nineteenth century after Christ were used by the Lord in the fifteenth century before Christ. Now let us trace out his plan of teaching by looking at that great object lesson, the Tabernacle.

The religion of the Tabernacle was not designed to be a substitute for the religion of the home tent. Public teaching was not to take the place of private teaching. The religion of the family was but the more enjoined. And so, now, the Sunday-school is not to take the place of home instruction. The present lamentable neglect of family teaching is caused not by the Sunday-school, but by the material, money-making spirit of the age. Men in haste to be rich don't take time from home duties, and then make the Sunday-school a convenient excuse for their sin. But "there's no place like home" for teaching children.

The religious teaching of the Tabernacle was not for adults alone, nor for children alone, but for both. And we want a pulpit for children and a school for adults; and the pulpit for the children is the pulpit for the adults, and the school for the adults is the school for the children. Little children should be trained to attend church. It is the obscure and superficial preaching that the child can't understand. An old woman claimed that her minister was the best in town because he could not understand a word of his sermons; they were so deep!

But the most profound sermons are generally the simplest. All the institutions of the church are one; don't exist the Sunday-school, which should consist of three departments—that for infants, that for intermediates, and the for adults.

The first thing that struck every Israelite on approaching God's public school or religion was the altar, with the sacrifice. So in the Sunday-school we should make Christ, our sacrifice, the first and great object of teaching. We should seek the conversion of the scholar not in the remote future but at once; that then the school may build up the converted children.

Then came the brazen laver, to cleanse the priests and Levites and teach this lesson, that "they should be clean who bear the vessels of the Lord." Unconverted teachers may be allowed when you cannot get any others; but, as a rule, they must have an experimental knowledge of the truth who undertake to teach it.

The golden candlestick set forth Christ as light, and the shew bread as the food of life. And in the school we must give light to the intellect and food of the heart. Our prayer-meetings, class-meetings, pulpits, pews and Sunday-schools need more of the "Bread, that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth," and that the "word of his grace" may lift us up to spiritual things. We need good teachers who will consecrate the best talent to the work. We have enough of people that kindly patronize the Sunday school as a very good thing outside the church, and are willing to help it with 25 cents annually. We want workers who will give their all to it. And some of the plainest people make the best teachers. Lawrence, of Chicago, is a grand example. Without education, he has become one of the most successful of Sunday school men. He takes the lesson, and reads, and thinks, and prays, "until he gets so full of it that he must teach or die." That is the teaching which will enlighten the mind and feed the heart.

The altar of incense reminds us that the idea of real worship should be present in the school, as real as that of the sanctuary.

Into the Holy of Holies all may now enter, and behold the ark with the book of the law, the mercy seat, and the Shekinah. And in the school we need to teach the law, to lead the children to the mercy seat, and to realize God's living presence. Through the teaching of the truth must sweep God's quickening power, like the electricity through the cable, and all the appliances of church and school are valuable only as they are the medium of this spiritual energy.

Some things further were said on the relation of ministers to little children. It is no credit to a minister that when the little boys see his sombre face one should cry to another: "Say, Bill, there comes the minister. Let's run!" Ministers ought to be approachable to children. In a certain home a bishop was visiting, and the little pet of the house, wondering what sort of a man a bishop might be, proceeded on an exploring enterprise. She approached him, but he did not notice her. She walked round him and looked at him from every side, but still he did not raise his eyes. She touched him on the knee to see how a bishop felt, but still he ignored her. And finally the little darling went to the sofa and began to throw things at him! Remember that a child won is a man won. Win the boy, and you hold the man; and if you do it right, you hold him for eternity. And if you hold the children, you hold the family.

We ought to emphasize the philanthropic side of religion. It is a good thing to trust in Christ, and it is a better thing, trusting in Christ, to lead others to trust in him too. We need more of the old-time Methodist love and sympathy for our next-door neighbor. It is glorious to be safe in the life-boat, and still more glorious to reach out the hand and help others in. This is the work of the family, the pulpit and the Sunday-school.

"God Will Take Care of You."

A gentleman walking along one of the streets of Philadelphia was accosted by a boy who pleaded for a penny. The gentleman was at first inclined to send him away; but something in the boy's face forbade that; so he asked,—

"What do you want to do with a penny?"

"Buy bread, sir," was promptly answered.

"Have you had nothing to eat to-day?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Boy, are you telling me the truth?" asked the gentleman, looking him steadily in the face.

"Indeed, I am, sir."

"Have you a father?" questioned the gentleman, now thoroughly interested in the boy.

"No sir; father is dead."

"Where is your mother?"

"She died last night. Come with me and I will show you where my mother is."

Taking the hand of the boy, the gentleman followed his guide down a narrow alley, and stopped before a miserable place which the boy called home. Pushing open a door, he pointed to his dead mother and said, "There is my mother, sir."

"Who was with your mother when she died?" asked the gentleman, deeply moved.

"Nobody but me, sir."

"Did your mother say any thing before she died?"

"Yes, sir; she said, 'God will take care of you, my son.'"

Sooner than his dying mother had dared to hope, God had honored her faith by sending to her one whose heart was touched with tenderest pity for his condition. The gentleman was a Christian, to whom God had intrusted much of the world's goods, and the little orphan was kindly cared for by him.

God in His Word is called the Father of the fatherless. He had said that none of them that trust in Him shall ever be despised, and it is safe to trust in His promises.—Am. Messenger.

Our Young Folks.

Innocents.

BY WILLIAM WHITTAN BAILLY.

Ye bright little innocents,  
Gathered in play,  
Have you been sleeping,  
This many a day?  
Did you year faces  
So gentle and shy,  
When fiercely the tempest  
Was hurrying by?

Did you wear your blue bonnets  
When under the albat?  
Alas! had you nothing  
To cover your feet?  
Did you cluster together  
To keep out the cold?  
Did any rash blossom  
Her petals unfold?

Have you seen the Arbutus  
When taking her nap?  
Or fair Pussy-willow  
In ermine and cap?  
Has Alder her tresses  
Combed out in the breeze?  
Have pretty young Maple-buds  
Blushed from the trees?

I see you all whispering  
And nodding together,  
As other folks do  
In this glorious weather;  
But what are you saying  
I really can't tell;  
So, beautiful blossoms,  
I bid you farewell!

Engineering Spider.

In the house of a scientific gentleman in Newcastle-on-Tyne, England, there is exhibited a glass tumbler inclosing the triumphing of engineering of a little spider, as remarkable in its way as that of Robert Stephenson or Roebbling. A young lady noticing a beautiful little scarlet spider with its bright yellow nest on a sprig of laurestinus, plucked the twig and placed it on the mantle-piece under a glass. In a very short time the ingenious engineer had almost filled the tumbler with its minute and almost invisible threads, and actually raised the sprig with the nest nearly to the top of the glass. The twig weighed several hundred times more than the spider; and yet without peg, beam or nail on which to hang its cords, it had lifted its nest to something like its natural position clear of the ground. The dead body of the spider may be seen hanging from a silken thread attached to the glass, with the nest swinging in the cords by which it was raised.

The Touchy Cows.

"I have learned a lesson when I was a little girl," says a lady. "One frosty morning I was looking out of the window into my father's farmyard, where stood many cows, and oxen, and horses waiting to drink. The cattle all stood very still and meek, till one of the cows, in attempting to turn round happened to hit her next neighbor, whereupon the neighbor kicked and hit another. In five minutes the whole herd were kicking each other with great fury. My mother laughed and said,—

"See what comes of kicking when you are hit." Just so I have seen one cross word set a whole family by the ears on a frosty morning. Afterwards, if my brothers and I were a little irritable, she would say,—

"Take care, my children; remember how the fight in the barn-yard began. Never return a kick for a hit, and you will save yourselves a great deal of trouble."

The Dog Dictator.

"I am none of your mesly-mouthed, compromising fellows that are afraid of saying the truth," said a blustering, ill-tempered dog, that could never let passengers go by in peace without a growl or a bark, intimating that they were in a wrong way; "I always speak my mind, and let people know my opinion."

"That would be very good if they wanted to know it, and your mind were worth speaking," said another dog; "but I rather think such is not considered to be the case, for generally those who don't pass you as if they hadn't noticed you, go by on the other side, to keep out of your noise; now, perhaps, if you kept a little quieter, and didn't attempt to manage the whole street, you would be of some use, and pass for an honest guide instead of a noisy, quarrelsome puppy, full of yourself."

Boys, Read This.

One day a gentleman observed a group of boys, bent on play, strongly urging another boy to join them. He was struck with the very decided "No" which the boy gave to their entreaties. Axious to see the result, he stopped into an entry, where he could hear and see and not be much observed. "That boy has a will to resist the whole band of them," he said to himself. A last effort was made to induce him to come with them. "Now, James, will you not come? you are such a good player." "Yes," he replied; "but on one condition. Give me your hands; that you will not swear and a fig." They did so, and with joy they all ran off to play. We are sure the game lost none of its interest for want of swearing. Noble boy! not ashamed to show that he was on the Lord's side, even in the face of ungodly play-fellows.

It is stated that Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson has consented to be nominated for the office of Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow in succession of Mr. Disraeli.

The late Rev. Thomas Bunney has, it is said, a provision in his will, expressing his wish that no one should write a memoir of his life.

Teach the Children.

If we are ever to be a nation of good gardeners or farmers we must have the education of the thing taught to children. Our common schools must be made more practical and interesting to children, for the sake of every-day life and its surroundings are full of interesting and useful lessons, and these need to be placed foremost, and dry book lessons second or last. A knowledge of how that weed by the school-house door-step grows is of more consequence to the child than the ego of the Egyptian Pyramids or the height of Pompey's Pillar. We were taught when a child to repeat man; a falsehood by the yard, because they were in school books, but never had a teacher who could tell which way a Lima bean stalk turned around a pole, or why it turned at all. Now, while farmers are making war upon those who oppress them, had they not better look into the school-houses and see that their children are being taught that which shall be most useful to them as farmers and farmers' wives?—Cultivator.

Random Reading.

A laugh is worth a hundred groans in any market.—Charles Lamb.

Were it not for persecution, I would not understand the Scripture.—Luther.

He has the largest life who lives in the lives of the largest number of people.

You have not fulfilled every duty, unless you have fulfilled that of being pleasant.—Charles Duxton.

It has been beautifully said that "the veil which covers the face of purity was wove by the hand of mercy."

When we read, we fancy we could be martyrs; when we come to act, we cannot bear a provoking word.—Hannah More.

A pure soul acts in simplicity and without certainty, being persuaded that what is good comes from God, and what is not good from self.

Every nature must have the sub-soil ploughing of sorrow, before it can recognize either its present poverty or its possible wealth.—Macdonald.

They who know the truth, says Confucius, are not equal to those who revere it; and they who revere it are not equal to those who find pleasure in it.

Distrust is the death of the soul; belief is its life. The just shall live by faith. Infidelity is the abandonment of life, a suicide of the spirit.—Prof Swine.

Those born only once die twice—the die temporal and they die an eternal death. But those who are born twice die only once; for over them the second death hath no power.

The man who strives to make himself a different thing from other men by much reading gains this, his chiefest good, that among all fortune he has something to comfort himself with.—Selden.

If thou desire the love of God and man be humble, for the proud heart, as it loves none but itself, so it is beloved of none but itself. The voice of humanity of God's music, and the silence of humanity is God's rhetoric.

A Spanish champion, Gonsalvo, told his soldiers that he would choose to die one foot forward rather than one foot in retreat. Armed with the most invulnerable panoply, and engaged in a conflict the most sublime, the moral hero is equally resolute.

The ruins of old friendships are a more melancholy spectacle to me, than those of desolated places. They exhibit the heart that was once lighted up with joy, all damp and deserted, and haunted by these birds of ill omen that only nestle in ruins.—Campebell.

Cheerfulness is an excellent wearing quality. It has been called the bright wreath of the heart. It gives harmony to the soul, and is a perpetual song without words. It is tantamount to repose. It enables nature to recruit its strength; whereas worry and discontent debilitate it, involving constant wear and tear.

The intellect of man sits visibly enthroned upon his forehead and in his eye, and the heart of man is written upon his countenance. But the soul reveals itself in the voice only, as God revealed Himself to the prophets of old in the still small voice, and in the voice from the burning bush.—Longfellow.

This army of lookers on in the Church would be highly amused or indignant if the men with whom they do business should treat them as they use their brethren. Imagine half a guild of workmen saying to the rest, "You do all the work, and we will share the profits." "You work that may enjoy myself; you preach and let me criticize; you teach in the Sunday school that children may be converted"—that is what the conduct of such Christians says to the Church.

The world almost altogether overlooks the fact that wealth is one of God's great provisions for men. He meant it for a blessing. The Gospel of his Son is calculated to increase its facilities and multiply its benefits. He has put its growth and development under positive law. The true attainment of wealth is not a grab game. It is a grand business process under a great practical law, which, if observed, brings its great general results. Fortune building may be a religious work; more, it should be such. Conservation to God entire, is no drawback to a business man; it may be the means of his more rapid success. The prayer-meeting brings no darter to the business man. The true Christian will find time in the pressure of daily life to honor God, and to help his cause. The Harpers, the Lawrences, the Wolcotts, and the Remingtons, present noble instances of success in Christian men. God is honored in the use of wealth that is wrought up by men who recognize him, and do not sell to identify themselves with his evangelized world.