

Sabbath School Lessons.

May 11th, 1862.

JACOB IN EGYPT,—GEN. XLV. 1-31.

I. *Joseph intimates to Pharaoh the arrival of his father and brethren.*

He did so through respect for his sovereign, and to announce to him that his commands had been obeyed. Pharaoh had commanded that Joseph's family should settle in the best of the Land of Egypt, chap. xlv. 19. One would suppose that a bare invitation would have been sufficient when what was required of them was so much for their own interest, and yet there are many so infatuated as to neglect an invitation unspcakably more precious, a command infinitely more merciful.

II. *Joseph presents five of his brethren to Pharaoh.*

This presentation to the king would tend to raise them in the estimation of the Egyptians. Observe, Pharaoh enquires, concerning their occupation, v. 3. All should have some employment, either of head or of hand, and it is the duty of magistrates to see that all are occupied in some useful calling, and that there are no useless drones in the social community. If any of them excelled in their business, Pharaoh wished that they should be made his chief herdsmen—rulers over his cattle. In whatever trade or profession we may be engaged, we should endeavour to become proficient; and it is only right that they who have attained the greatest excellence in their pursuits should obtain preferment.

III. *The respect shown by Joseph to his father.*

He next introduced the aged patriarch to Pharaoh, "and Jacob blessed Pharaoh," v. 7. He who was called Israel, who like a prince, had power both with God and man to prevail, prayed to God for him. Pharaoh had shown kindness to Jacob, he had bestowed upon him the best that he had, and now Jacob rewards him with the only recompence that he had in his power to give, he recommends him to the goodness of Him who is the King of kings; and who knows but that Egyptian monarch may be now enjoying, and shall enjoy through all eternity the benefit of the patriarch's blessing: the prayers of God's people are not to be despised. Pharaoh asked Jacob's age, v. 8. The king was struck with his venerable aspect, as Jacob had probably attained to a much greater age than was common amongst the Egyptians.—Jacob's answer is observable. He measures his life by days; for every moment of time we shall have to give an account unto God. He compares his life to a pilgrimage; he confessed that he was a stranger and a pilgrim here, that he sought a better country, that is an heavenly, Heb. xi. 13, 14. He describes

the days of his life as having been few. It is remarkable that even to them who have attained the greatest age, their life appears quite short when they look back upon it; an hundred and thirty years did so to Jacob.—How short then must the period of our lives appear to Him, to whom a thousand years are but as one day. He confesses that they had been evil; not one of them had been passed in a manner in strict conformity with the will of God. Evil was the character of them all. And have we not all to make the same confession? If we think that we have not, we deceive ourselves, and are in a most dangerous condition. But if we have seen the evil of our lives, and have been enabled through grace to lay our sins on the spotless Lamb of God, then are we blessed indeed.—By the grace of our blessed Redeemer, we shall be dying more and more, every day, unto sin, and living unto righteousness.—And though like the patriarch Jacob we ought with sorrow to look back upon the evil of our past lives, yet like him we may be filled, also, with joy and praise at the retrospect, when we consider all that our God has done for us, at the same time that we may look forward with joyful anticipation to the bright future beyond the grave.

IV. *The Egyptians apply to Joseph for bread.*

In their extremity, they parted first with their cattle, and then with their lands and liberty—"Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Observe the wisdom with which Joseph acted in this matter, he sought the interest of his master at the same time that he withheld not the means of subsistence from the people. He took care, too, not to make too hard terms with them regarding their land. When he might have taken all, he was satisfied with a fifth, thus Pharaoh's subjects would ever afterwards be well affected towards the government, from the fact that they had been treated with so much consideration in the time of their necessity.

V. *The prosperity of the Israelites in Egypt.*

Whilst the Egyptians were reduced to so great difficulty to obtain food in their own land, Jacob and his family, though strangers, were in the enjoyment of abundance. Who ever wants, God's people shall not want, Psal. xxxiv. 10. For seventeen years Jacob lived in Egypt, v. 28. Joseph was seventeen years of age when he was sold into Egypt, it is remarkable, therefore, that he nourished his father for just the same length of time that his father had nourished him. Israel makes Joseph promise to bury him in Canaan, and confirm his promise with an oath. He did so for his own satisfaction, and that Joseph might be able to plead his oath in answer to any objections that might afterwards be urged to the removal of the body. Jacob wished so earnestly to be