

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON IX.

March 1, 1874. THE RED SEA. {Exodus xiv. 16-21.}

COMMIT TO MEMORY, v. 30, 31.

PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Neh. ix. 11; Ps. lxxvi. 6.

With v. 19, 20, read 2 Cor. iv. 8; with 21, 22, Ps. cxi. 9; with v. 23-26, Ps. lxxviii. 16-18; with v. 27, 28, Matt. vii. 2; with v. 29, 30, Deut. xi. 4; and with v. 31, Ps. cxi. 12.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—The Lord shows mercy and judgment.

LEADING TEXT.—By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by land; which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.—Heb. xi. 29.

CONNECTION.—Our last lesson left the Hebrews at Etham or Pithom (Jud. 20), from which they were commanded to turn southward, which led them to a point at which the Red Sea, then (it is proved) extending farther north than it is now, and the "bitter lakes," as they are now called, stopped their way further. In a district of water and sand three thousand years have made such changes that for the present the exact place of encampment can only be known as probable; but on the information now had the Hebrews had the hills on the west and south and the sea on the east. Pharaoh, coming from the north, saw nothing possible for them but their falling into his hands.

The dead in Egypt were now buried; the people had had time to think. It seemed as if the Hebrews had feared to face the wilderness, and the land was still keeping them. Opportunity is a strong temptation. "We can compel them to return," thought Pharaoh and his advisers (v. 5).

Horses (we know from the monuments) were then used in Egypt, and his own and the national chariots were called out (v. 7) in pursuit (v. 9), coming up with the Hebrews by the sea (v. 10), terrifying them (v. 10) exceedingly. Moses had assurances of safety with which he quoted the people (v. 13), after which the Lord gave directions befitting the occasion. The object is the same as in the plague, (v. 18).

I. EXAMINE WHAT IS NATURAL in this transaction. In the open wilderness an army like Pharaoh's would have every advantage against the Hebrews. If they could get the sea between him and them, they would have a real barrier against his attack. But how to do that?

But the bottom of the arm of the sea being left dry (how, we see afterwards, the people could have, say from nine in the evening till four or five in the morning for crossing. If the army of the Israelites is carried over in this way (which may have been, for anything that appears, the flocks, &c., being scattered over the country), a still shorter time would be required.

The bottom of "the sea," with stones and inequalities, might be traversed by men on foot, moving in the light, very easily; while it would be difficult and slow to chariots and horses in the dark (v. 20).

God wastes no power. He takes things as they are, and builds the miracle upon them. To feed the multitude Jesus took the loaves and fishes, though he could, disregarding them, have created all out of nothing. So here God avails himself of existing natural facts. The result is that men like the Hebrews, who were willing to see God's hand, would see it. But the rationalists of that time, School of the Magicians, wishing to evade the force of the miracle, might set it down with some colour of reason to a remarkably high wind and low tide, and rule God out. His word and works seem to be so arranged that, in the same parts, "the meek" are taught his way (see Ps. xxv. 9) and the proud are humbled (v. 23).

II. THE SUPERNATURAL. (1) The pillar of cloud and fire, itself supernatural, changed its look, the side to the Hebrews being light; to their pursuers, darkness (v. 20). The two bodies of men were parted in this way.

(2) The drying up of the water was timed so as to suit the Hebrews, and the return so as to drown their enemies. If the one or the other knew of this, the Hebrews would not have despaired (v. 12), nor the Egyptians ventured (v. 23). Both movements were at the stretching out of Moses' rod by God's command (v. 21, and v. 27 comp. with v. 16).

(3) An ebb-tide even aided by a strong wind would not have been as a wall on both sides ("the water split itself"), nor would its return have been so rapid, unlooked for, and terrible in its effects.

(4) Nor would any action of the tide account for the facts of v. 24—"The Lord looking upon the hosts" so as to trouble them, perhaps recalling to them the thunder and lightning, nor the taking off of the chariot wheels (v. 25), forcing them to see God's hand against them; nor the completion of the overthrow, as in v. 28. In a word, if the language had been not descriptive of an act of the Almighty out of the common course of nature, it is impossible to find language for such an event; and the Scripture references to the fact are stronger surely than would be made to a happy escape through a natural event.

III. THE SPIRITUAL in this miracle: for God is always looking to moral and spiritual results. (a) Pharaoh and the gods that were supposed to sustain him are completely overthrown (v. 17), and the supremacy of Jehovah established.

(b) The Israelites feared the Lord. They obtained a just impression of the power and greatness of Jehovah, of which all their history showed their need (v. 81). Such fear is "the beginning of wisdom."

(c) They believed in God as able to protect and deliver them, and in Moses as employed and guided by him (1 Cor. x. 1, 2),—believed for the time, for alas! how soon they changed their minds! According to Josephus they obtained armour from the bodies washed upon the shore, and Moses regarded this also as of God. However this may have been, they would have been "strong for war" if they had only carried with them the impressions of this mighty act.

(d) They must have learned, as we also should, that God's guidance is always safe. To turn toward the sea at Etham might have seemed sheer folly, but it was real wisdom. Their place was perilous; but he put them there. So the end he effects always vindicates the steps by which it is reached (James v. 11). "God moves in a mysterious way," &c. We ask "why," in vain, till he in his own time interprets. So faith and patience are exercised.

(e) In the greatest dangers, saints see most clearly the Lord's wonders. The disciples in the storm—the Hebrew confessors in the furnace—Daniel in the lions' den—Noah in the deluge, &c.

(f) They must have seen that God never gives a command, without giving the power to obey. If he says "go forward," we are to go, and even the sea will open a way for us!

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

Change in plan of journey—from what place—to what—by whose command—Egyptian feeling—effect of appearance on Hebrews—God's command—the change in the pillar of cloud—effect of it—change in the sea—natural fitness—supernatural power—evidence of time of passing—look of the waters—feeling of the Egyptians—how dismayed—their fear—their flight—their overthrow—their bodies—the effect on Israel—a to God—as to Moses—the lessons we ought to learn concerning divine guidance—lack of providences—and the "end of the Lord."

LESSON X.

March 1, 1874. BITTER WATERS SWEETENED. {Exodus xv. 22-27.}

COMMIT TO MEMORY, v. 26.

PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Ps. lxxvi. 10; Deut. vii. 12, 15.

With v. 22, read Gen. xxi. 18; with v. 23, 24, Ex. xviii. 9; with v. 25, Ps. l. 16; with v. 26, Judges ii. 22; with v. 27, Ps. cxlviii. 3.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Tribulation worketh patience.

LEADING TEXT.—And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.—Rev. xxii. 2.

This is a compact and easy lesson; but its simplicity must not tempt any teacher to forego thorough preparation. Where the facts are obvious and memorable, the strength of the teacher should be laid out in showing and applying the practical points.

We shall make out the historical connection, and see the bearing of this incident by looking at

I. THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY.—The Red Sea, whose waters looked so terrible to Israel, as barring the way of escape, has become the means of deliverance (Jud. xiv. 9). The people sang their song (which we shall study hereafter) at the spot (probably) now called in books of travel *Ajzen Musa* (the springs of Moses), on the way to it. They were setting out for Sinai to be formally consecrated to God, and placed under his law.

The district through which they pass I have been carefully examined by Burckhardt, Robinson and the Palmers. Though sandy soils change, great rocks and lime stone beds remain; and these determine where water will spring up, and the fixed springs fix the places. The wilderness, a region with scanty herbage, but unfit for tillage, has been long and widely known as *Sinai*, sometimes called the desert of Etham (Num. xxxiii. 8), because that town was on its border (Jud. xiv. 20).

The people were also beginning their education. They have to find out what is in themselves, as they have been shown what God is, in contrast with heathen deities. They have to be "proved." They have to learn dependence on the Lord for all good; that even liberty without him is not happiness. In making the best kinds of steel, it is not only necessary to have iron free from dross and compact (the furnace of Egypt did that for Israel), but to have it "tempered." They needed to be tempered, trained to bear exercise, as healthy bodies have to learn to endure heat and cold. At the Red Sea it was "too much water;" now they go three days without. In Egypt they did eat to the full (Ex. xvi. 3); the face of the wilderness shall prepare them to value Canaan. This is the moral use of such incidents as we study at

II. THE BATTERED WATERS.—It was now the third day from *Ajzen Musa*, through a dry and dusty land; their supply of water, carried along, would be exhausted, when, at the end of thirty-three miles, they came to a fountain. There grew around some stunted palm trees and the thorny shrub known as *gharab*, with a small acid berry, that ripened two months later than this visit.

"Mara," said Wollstead to himself, as he tasted the water. "You speak the word of truth," said the Bedouin attendant, "they are indeed mara," i. e., deadly or bitter (Ruth i. 20), words of the same import in Arabic and Hebrew. The Arabs pronounce this water the worst in the district. There is a basin six or eight feet in diameter, in which Robinson reports two feet of water. It varies with the season. The place is now called *Hunara*, and the evidence for its identity satisfies the best-informed writers. How did the people feel? Let us next examine

III. THE UNHAPPY RESULT TO THE PEOPLE. They "murmured against Moses." How unreasonable! He gave up good prospects for them. He shared their hardships. He did not lead them but as God's officer. The pillar-cloud led them. But this is the way of men (see Ps. xi. 2, 4). "It is the hard condition of authority that when the multitude face well they applaud themselves; when it they repine against their leaders." All former help from him is forgotten. They treat him as if he had contracted for supplies for them and failed. Egyptian taskmasters were not more unreasonable with them (ch. v. 11) than they with him. (See John v. 35). See how the Redeemer was treated (Matt. xi. 10). Let us see how wisdom is justified of her children.

IV. MOSES' CRY AND THE ANSWER.—They cry to him; he cries to the Lord (v. 25); as

parents must do for wayward children, or children in want; as teachers must do for their classes; as ministers must do for the people to whom they call in vain (Rom. x. 21). See Ps. cix. 4.

God showed a healing tree. The Apocrypha (not inspired) seems to say that this tree had "virtue" in it for this purpose; but no one in the East knows of such a tree. The work was supernatural—one more proof God gave men that their life must come from something outside themselves. There is no evidence that it was of a tree growing in the neighborhood that the "wood" came. It was the word and will of God that gave the healing property to it. Sweet Egyptian water was made undrinkable in anger—bitter wilderness water was made sweet in mercy—both for Israel's good, which leads us to look at the

V. MORAL USES TO ISRAEL AND TO US.—God is physician as well as deliverer to Israel. He uses what means he will—meal (2 Kings iv. 42), a burning pyre (Isa. xxxviii. 21), salt (2 Kings iii. 22, 24), or as with Christ, clay, &c. (John ix. 6).

He had a design in leading the people to the bitter water that they could not drink, and then sweetening the water. This was to be an "ordinance," a *used principle* with the people, that he would sweeten any bitterness that came to them in following him, and that his grace gave them a right to expect this at his hand. And in teaching this lesson—for God teaches by deeds as well as words—he "proved" the people showing their natural heart to themselves. This is the bearing of the words in v. 26, in which there is no difficulty requiring explanation. It is as if God said: "I punished them for disobedience; you shall have health and safety in obeying." There may be an allusion in the mode of deliverance to the tree of life, of which delightful trees occur throughout the Scriptures (see Gen. ii. 9, iii. 22; Ez. xlviii. 12; Zech. iv. 1; Prov. iii. 18; Rev. ii. 7, and xxi. 2).

This lesson was surely made yet clearer to them at their next stopping place, *Eim*, six miles south, with its delights, with palms for shade and wells for water (Ps. cxviii. 1, 2). This is still the principal station for travellers between Suez and Sinai, is called *Wady Gharab*, containing, says Palmer, "a considerable amount of vegetation, palm trees in great numbers among the rest, and a perennial stream."

Let us learn from this—

(1) God puts the bitter at the beginning of our journey—the devil puts the sweet (Luke xvi. 25). God teaches us through such experiences.

(2) When he leads us all bitterness will be taken away, if we will only look to him. He has a "balm for every wound."

(3) Our hearts are all too like this bitter water, "O blessed Saviour, the wood of thy Cross, that is the application of thy sufferings, is enough to sweeten a whole sea of bitterness."

ILLUSTRATION.

MARA.—"The identification of Mara with the fountain of Hunara, first proposed by Burckhardt, is now generally accepted. The fountain rises from a large mound, a whitish putrefaction, deposited by the water. At present no water flows, but there are traces of a running stream, and in the time of Moses when the road was kept by the Egyptians, and vegetation was more abundant, the source was probably far more copious."—*Speaker's Commentary*.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

The starting place for Mara—the distance—the wilderness—its name—aspect—the distance—whether the journey was to lead—the discouragement to the people—their conduct—unreasonable—why—what Moses had been to them—his plan—the result—character of this act—why believed supernatural—the lesson to Israel—what God is to them—their need of learning—how the people proved—to ordinance and statute—the promise—the next place of halting—its character—the lesson to the people—and to us.

Scandal.

The story is told of a woman who freely used her tongue to the scandal of others, and made a confession to the priest of what she had done. He gave her a ripe thistle top, and told her to go out in various directions, and scatter the seeds one by one. Wondering at the penance, she obeyed, and then returned and told her confessor. To her amazement, he bade her go back and gather the scattered seeds; and when she objected, that it would be impossible, he replied that it would be still more difficult to gather up and destroy all the evil reports which she had circulated about others. Any thoughtless, careless child can scatter a handful of thistle seed before the wind in a moment, but the strongest and wisest man cannot gather them again.

Tongueless Speech.

The reported miracle wrought in the case of the African Bishops and certain other Christian martyrs, who retained the power of speech after having their tongues cut out, has lately been the subject of a somewhat heated controversy. The fact of their being able to speak after they had lost their tongues was not questioned; it was only claimed that there was no miracle in the matter, or anything to warrant the Divine interposition. They may have been most worthy characters, but their tongueless speech was no proof of such a fact, since the same phenomenon had been observed where there could be no claim to saintliness.

An interesting illustration of the truth of the latter position has just occurred in the Royal Free Hospital in London, the case being reported in the *Lancet* for November 8. To remove a cancerous ulcer, a patient's tongue was wholly cut out, leaving the floor of the mouth entire. Recovery was rapid, and within a week the patient could speak with sufficient distinctness of articulation to make himself understood, saying: "I feel easy," and "I should like some more beef tea."

Our Young Folks.

Ready Obedience.

If you're told to do a thing,
And mean to do it really,
Never let it be by halves;
Do it fully, freely!

Do not make a poor excuse,
Whining, weak, unsteady,
All obedience worth the name
Must be prompt and ready.

When father calls, though pleasant 'tis
To play you are pursuing,
Do not say, "I'll
Have finished what I'm doing."

A Crooked Path.

One day Archie—his father sent him on an errand, and as the place to which he was to go was some miles off, he was allowed to have the horse. It was a fine sunny morning, and Archie enjoyed his ride, as you may well suppose. He made the good old horse go fast or slow, just as he liked; and the spring birds were singing on every tree he passed. His father told him not to stop by the way. So he went and did what he was told to do, and was trotting home with a merry heart, when he caught sight of some boys in a farmyard. He knew them, and what should he do but ride into the yard, just to say "Good morning" to them. The boys were playing at marbles. Archie watched them from the horse's back, until he got so interested that he slipped off the saddle, took his turn in the game, and played, and played again, until two whole hours were gone.

He was quite frightened when he found how much time had passed. He jumped on "Charlie's" back, and away he went. But nothing looked so pleasant as before. The fields were as green, and the sky as blue, and the sun as bright, and the birds as gay; but Archie—he was not as happy. He had stopped by the way, all the while knowing his father was waiting for him.

"O, dear, what excuse can I make?" thought he. "Excuse?" it might have been replied, "why, none. There is no excuse to make. Speak the truth like an honest fellow." Soon Archie spied father coming down the road to meet him, afraid some accident had happened. "I am glad you have reached home safely, my son. What has detained you?" asked his father.

"I lost my way," said Archie, "and it took me some time to get right again." His father, of course, believed him: he had never detected Archie in a lie. The culprit went home and said the same thing to his mother. Do you think he now felt happy? No, no. He was in a crooked path, and could not find peace in it. He tried to appear easy and cheerful; but he was uneasy and miserable, and did not really like to look his parents in the face.

He did not sleep well that night: no one sleeps well on a lie. He did not wake up bright: no one wakes up bright on a lie. He was not comfortable all day; no one is comfortable with a lie for a long time.

So it went on several weeks, and Archie was almost forgetting the sin he had committed; almost, I said, for there was still a sore spot whenever he thought of it, one that his memory would never get rid of. By-and-by the gentleman at whose house he had stopped came to see his father. As soon as Archie set eyes on him his heart beat violently, and he turned pale.

In a few minutes the gentleman looked at Archie, and asked, "How did you get home the other day, my boy? Our boys had a very pleasant visit from you." How do you think Archie felt? Mr.—M then turned to his father and said, "You must let your son come again. When he was there a few weeks ago, he only stayed about two hours. We hoped he had come to spend the whole day."

There, Archie's guilt was a' out. His father and mother had found him out in a direct falsehood. He felt both ashamed and sorry; and yet it was a relief that his parents knew it, and to ask their forgiveness. Nor was that all. He knew that he had grieved his Heavenly Parent. He knew that "lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." An "abomination!" Think how God must hate liars. He was troubled and humbled, and prayed God to forgive him this great sin for Jesus' sake.

Not long after his mother sent him to buy her something at the shop. Archie did so, but did not bring home as much change as she had expected.

"Is this all the money, Archie?" asked his mother, looking him full in the face.

"Yes mother."

"I hope, my dear son, you are not deceiving me again," she said.

Archie was honest this time, and it almost broke his heart to be thus suspected; yet he felt it was just, and went away sorrowful. These are the consequences of falsehood; it is a crooked path, and hard to get out of. A boy who has been a liar cannot be immediately believed. It takes time to restore confidence in his word, even when he speaks the truth.—*Early Days*.

Parish and Preacher.

The Congregationalist thinks that even for the feeblest of ministers parishes have a responsibility:

If your minister, then, does not seem to be quite perfect, consider whether you are perfect yourself; whether you have done what you might easily have done to make him less imperfect; whether, under all the circumstances, he is not quite as good a man, as faithful a minister, as you yourself would apt to be if you were to take his place and try your hand at his duties; and whether, on the whole, instead of going to your neighbours and getting up a cause of disaffection against him, wouldn't it be much better to go to him, speak to him frankly and kindly of the things which grieve you—and considering yourself lest you also shall be tempted—thus seek to help him and to help himself, and to help you all, up and on toward heaven.

Dr. Cairn's on the Revival in Berwick.

The following interesting letter on the religious movement in Berwick-on-Tweed, from the Rev. Dr. Cairn, appeared lately in the *Daily Review*.—

SIR,—May I ask you to insert a few lines as to the progress of the religious awakening in this place, in which I know that many are interested? Since the visit of Messrs. Moody and Sankey, on Tuesday (January 14), which was followed by so profound and universal an impression, there have been in the large room day prayer-meeting, meetings for addresses and prayer every night (with the exception of Saturday) in the Corn Exchange, which has been filled. On Sabbath evening it was filled notwithstanding the storm to a degree only short of the meetings of Tuesday, whilst last night it was again full; and at every one of these meetings there have been many inquirers who wanted to be converted with, and of whom many profess to have found peace in the Saviour. The meetings have been of the most grave, solemn, and unadorned character, and with the exception of the acceptance of testimonies of the speakers and hearers, and the intermingling of requests for prayer and thanksgiving (many of the most affecting character), and greater fervour in singing, with musical accompaniment, could hardly be distinguished from ordinary Sabbath worship. There is not the slightest trace of physical excitement, except what is inseparable from the realization of the awful and joyful truths of the gospel of Christ. A marked feature is the crowd of young persons of both sexes who are in attendance, and many of whom profess to have experienced a saving change, with every indication, as far as can be judged, of sincerity. Last night, thanks were returned for seventeen young men who, besides others, had waited to be converted with after the meeting on the Lord's day evening. From conversation with many inquirers—most of them young men and women—I can attest the intelligence and visible deep earnestness of these who come forward. The movement has extended to our Sabbath schools, in one of which a brother minister told me he had conversed separately with sixteen scholars, who desired to find salvation on that Lord's day. In my own congregation, besides the largest number of applicants ever publicly received for the first time during the day—giving token of an earlier revival movement—there was an evening meeting of the Bible class, which produced on those who attended it an impression of mingled solemnity and gladness such as I have never witnessed in the whole course of my ministry, or in any exercise of worship before. I cannot describe it further in a public journal. This is but a sample of the experiences of other ministers at this remarkable time. We greatly need the sympathies and prayers of our fellow-Christians, while they rejoice in our joys and give thanks with us to God for His abounding mercies. Let me add that the movement is assisted by ministers from a distance—the Rev. H. J. Pope, of Newcastle, in addition to the Rev. R. Leitch and D. Lowe, of that town—having visited us; while Messrs. Morgan and Wilson, of Edinburgh, are expected this week.—I am, &c.

JOHN CAIRN.

Berwick, Jan. 23, 1874.

The Persistence of a Name.

A curious illustration of the living force of a name is to be seen in the title given to the Virgin Mary by the people of the Basque Provinces. In the most ancient records of Chinese history (the annals of the *Bamboo Books*, lately translated by Dr. Legge), the name *Ishtar* appears as one of the titles of the Queen of the Stars. Among the ancient Assyrians, *Ishtar* was their chief female divinity, the celestial virgin mother. In Solomon's time, the Syrian equivalent of the name was *Astarte*; and in H. Kugel, the wise man himself is charged with having set up an altar to this fascinating goddess. In the Hebrew record, the spelling is *Ashoreth*. By Milton the name is given as

"... *Ashoreth*, whom the Phœnicians called *Astarte*, Queen of Heaven."

Whether Phœnician voyagers left the name in Spain, or whether the Basques brought it with them in their original migration westward, it is impossible to say, nor does it matter. It is there inconceivable use to this day, a living name with a history of at least five thousand years.

Ruskin on Perversion.

No man has better appreciated church art—even pre-Raphaelite art—than Ruskin. No man has written more eloquently about it; yet no man has written more stingingly of conversions to Romanism through its sensible attractions. All who run to Roman Catholic churches and surrender their religious conscientiousness and manliness to these seductions, should ponder the following indignant words from this greatest of our art writers. He says that "of all fatalities, the basest is the being lured into the Romanist Church by the glitter of it, like larks into a trap by broken glass; to be blown into a change of religion by the whine of an organ pipe; stitched into a creed by gold threads on priest's petticoats; jangled into a change of conscience by the chimes of a bell. I know nothing in the form of error so dark as this, no imbecility so absolute, no treachery so contemptible." He adds that the longer he lives the less he trusts "the sentiments excited by painted glass and coloured tiles."

The conduct of a hero is Christianity in action; and so far, one is Messianic in influence and aim. To write the history of civilization without regard to the Cross, is as if an astronomer should compose a planetary system without regard to the sun, by whose light alone the planets can be seen, and by whose attractions they are held in their course. True religion is the master inspiration of true greatness, being overmastering both constructive and enabling. It builds the beautiful gate of knowledge, the entrance to the supreme temple, wherein it kindles the glory of divine adoration.