

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

THIRD QUARTER—STUDIES IN THE PENTATEUCH.

JULY, 1881.

B. C. 1600.

July 3.

LESSON I.—ISRAEL IN EGYPT; or, The Bitter Bondage.

GENERAL STATEMENT.

From the New Testament we turn back to the Old; from the life of the Redeemer, to the early history of the Chosen People. After a brief recapitulation of the Israelite family and their origin, the sacred writer brings us to a period after the death of Jacob, when the family has sprung up into a people. There is considerable uncertainty as to the period of time covered in this lesson, and in general as to the duration of the sojourning of Israel in Egypt. Some expositors, as Bush, Murphy, and others, follow the received chronology of Archbishop Usher, allowing four generations, or 215 years, in Egypt. This agrees with most of the genealogies, but is contradicted by the statement of Exod. 12. 40, that the sojourning in Egypt was 430 years. This is interpreted to include also the "sojourning" in Canaan, from the covenant with Abraham; but requires the difficulty of an enormous growth, in four generations, to account for the number of the Israelites at the Exodus. Canon Cook (in the Speakers' Commentary), Keil, and most recent commentators, are of opinion that the Israelites remained 430 years in Egypt, and that the genealogical lists include a name, not in each generation, but in each century, so that our lesson would embrace a period, not of 100, but of nearly 300 years, from the death of Joseph to the birth of Moses, and the current chronology back of the Exodus must be increased by about two centuries. The people are now no longer an unnoticed clan, but a host, and growing greater with every year. The time has come when they must either commingle with the Egyptians, and thus lose their national existence and their high destiny, or must prepare to sever entirely from the land of their sojourning. Under a divine overruling, the jealousy of the ruling monarch, and the oppressive measures intended to break the Israelitish spirit, only serve to break the bonds of attachment toward their adopted country, to turn their faces more directly Canaan-ward, and to prepare them for the coming deliverer.

Exod. 1. 1-14.

[Memory Verses, 12-14.]

1 Now, these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt; every man and his household came with Jacob.

2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah.

3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin.

4 Dan, and Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

5 And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already.

Deut. 10. 22: Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons.

6 And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation.

Gen. 50. 26: So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. Eccl. 1. 4: One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh.

Explanatory and Practical.

Verse 1. Now. Literally, "and." In the original Hebrew, the five books of Moses were one volume; so that this word is properly used as a connective with the former section. **Names of the children.** According to Hebrew custom, the historian returns to the descent into Egypt as the starting point for the new line of events. **Into Egypt.** Ancient Egypt was divided into two parts. Lower Egypt, embracing the region around the Delta of the Nile, on the eastern side of which the Israelites were settled; and Upper Egypt, the Valley of the Nile, from ten to twelve miles wide, from the Delta southward to the Cataracts. The length of the country was one hundred and twelve miles, and its whole extent was less than that of the States of Rhode Island and Connecticut combined. From its secluded position, easily protected from invasion, its fertile soil, favorable climate, and facilities of intercourse by the Nile, it easily attained to a remarkable population and civilization. **Every man and his household.** The sons of Jacob, their wives, children, and dependents.

2-5. Reuben, Simeon, Levi.....Issachar, Zebulun. These were sons of Jacob by Leah, his first wife. Of these Reuben lost his birthright by an act of crime; Levi was the ancestor of the priestly tribe; and Judah was the founder of all the tribes, the only one which has maintained a separate existence down to the present, and the one through which Christ came. **Benjamin.** The youngest of Jacob's sons, borne by his beloved Rachel. Gen. 35, 16-20. **Dan and Naphtali.** The sons of Bilhah the handmaid of Rachel, and Jacob's concubine or lesser wife. **Gad and Asher.** Sons of Jacob by Zilpah, handmaid of Leah. **Seventy souls.** In this number are included the children of Joseph as well as the rest of the brothers, and by a Hebraistic idiom, Jacob himself. (1) God employs small instrumentalities for accomplishing great results, that his own glory may thereby be greater.

6, 7, Joseph died. After living eighty years as a ruler in