

## SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

## INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

## LESSON VI.

Feb. 10 } JEHOSHAPHAT HELPED OF GOD. { 2 Chron. xx.  
1878. } 14-22.

**GOLDEN TEXT:**—"Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."—Verse 20.

## HOME STUDIES.

- M. 2 Chron. xx. 1-13. .... Judah invaded.  
T. Ps. lxxxiii. 1-18. .... God's help invoked.  
W. 2 Chron. xx. 14-25. .... Jehoshaphat helped of God.  
Th. Ps. cxxxvi. 1-26. .... A psalm of praise.  
F. 2 Kings iii. 4-27. .... Alliance with Israel.  
S. 2 Chron. xx. 26-37. .... End of Jehoshaphat's reign.  
S. 2 Chron. xxi. 1-20. .... Jehoram's wicked reign.

## HELPS TO STUDY.

A few years after the events considered in the last lesson, Jehoshaphat was called to meet a great danger which threatened his kingdom. The wild nomad tribes inhabiting the region east of the Dead Sea, consisting chiefly of Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites, combined in a great invasion of the kingdom of Judah. From the amount of property that they carried with them, it is probable that it was their intention, not to make a mere foray, but to make a permanent conquest and settlement of the country. (Note 1.) In other words, it was one of those great migrations which are so common among nomadic people. When tidings of the invasion came to Jehoshaphat, the enemy had already passed around the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, and, following up its western shore for about half its length, had encamped in immense numbers at En-gedi, within about thirty miles of the capital. The tidings of this invasion plunged Jehoshaphat and his kingdom into confusion and fear. There is some reason to think that the confederation of their enemies was even wider and more formidable than the account of it which we have indicated. The call to arms, and with it a proclamation of a solemn fast, was sent hastily through the whole country; and in a very short time a multitude of fighting men had gathered in Jerusalem from all the surrounding region, bringing with them their wives and children for the sake of the safety afforded by the walls of the capital. In this extremity of danger and perplexity, the pious king bethought himself that it was quite as necessary to seek the divine help, as to make human preparations for self-defence; and all the more, that no preparations possible at so short notice seemed at all adequate to the emergency. Accordingly the king assembled the people for public worship in the outer or great court of the temple, where such worship was customarily conducted, and he himself, following the example of Solomon, offered up

I. PRAYER for the people.—His prayer is a most remarkable one: and we may learn from it the pleas we ourselves may urge and which are sure to prevail.

The first plea is that *God is able to help*. He is God in heaven exalted over all. He rules over all the kingdoms of the heathen—over those who do not acknowledge Him and who seek to crush His people. But all their plottings and strife He can control, and make their wrath to praise Him.

The second plea is that *God is their God*. He had their welfare at heart. He had given them the land whose inhabitants He had of old driven out before them, and was driven out before them, and was pledged to the fulfilment of His purpose. So when we ask for victory over sin and for the possession of the heavenly inheritance we know it is His will to give it.

The third plea is *the temple and what it sets forth*. When the temple was dedicated, he besought the Lord that if ever prayer was offered in it for Divine help, it should be granted. That the glory of the Lord immediately filled the temple was the implied pledge that this should be done. Hence the Jew when at a distance from the temple turned his face towards it when supplicating the Divine help. Compare Jonah ii. 4; Dan. vi. 10. The temple was typical of Christ; to Him we turn and on Him we base our pleas for help. " whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you."

The fourth plea is *the greatness of the need*, the straits into which they are brought by no fault of their own, but by the pride and ingratitude of those very nations whom Israel at God's command had spared. Our weakness is a strong plea. God will not despise it.

## II. THE PROMISE: Verses 15-17.

God heard, and His answer came promptly to meet the urgent need. Then, even while they are still supplicating, Isa. lxxv. 24; Dan. ix. 21; Acts x. 4; upon Jehaziel, of the sons of Asaph, one of the sweet singers of the temple, a psalmist and a prophet, (Note 2,) came the Spirit of the Lord, Num. xi. 25, 26; Acts ii. 4; Heb. i.

The message came direct to the enquirers, and with authority. Thus saith the Lord. It was precise. They were told just where to go, (Note 3,) and when, just what to do, and what not to do. When God leads, the way is light. It pledged Divine help. Man does not have to fight his battle alone. It is God working in us which is the secret of victory. It required at once action and trust. They were bidden to go against their enemies, but forbidden to fight against them.

## III. THE RESPONSE: Verses 18-20.

In response to the encouraging assurances of the prophet we see three manifestations of faith. Faith manifested in prayer. The king and people bowed as one man before God, and together mingled their voices in thanksgiving, worshipping the Lord, Ex. iv. 31; Ps. xcv. 6. Faith manifested in praise. The Korhathites, the immediate family of the high priest, and the Korhites, (Note 4,) or sons of Korah, a branch of the Levites especially prominent

in song, together broke forth in psalms of gratitude, not for the accomplished past, but for the promised future. If we receive God's promises with thanks, the things promised will not tarry. Faith manifested in performance. They rose early.... and went forth. True faith does not expend all its energy in rapturous excitement, it enters into action, and shows itself in deeds as well as feelings. Strong, indeed, is that confidence which thus ventures out upon God's word, and marches to meet its foe.

## IV. THE VICTORY: Verses 20-22.

And now they go forth. Their watchword is *Believe*. The battle is set in array, but how strangely—singers are appointed. These, not warriors in mail, led the van. They marched, not like an army going out to battle, but like one returning in triumph. God redeemed His promise. Before they came in sight of the enemy, the battle was won.

The Lord set ambushments, literally "liers-in-wait." The next verse explains this. The confederate tribes fell to quarrelling among themselves. First the Edomites were attacked by the other allies; and then a panic seized the host, and they everyone helped to destroy another. There is no peace or unity among the enemies of the Lord, but mutual distrust and treacherous hostility.

When Judah, with its vanguard of singers, came to the conical hill, which is spoken of as a "watch-tower," and which is supposed to be the hill known as *Jebel Feradis*, or Frank Mountain, they saw a wonderful sight. They looked toward the place where they expected to behold the hosts of the enemy, and, behold, the plain was full of dead bodies, so full that it seemed as if none had escaped! They stood still and beheld the salvation of the Lord. Instead of to a battle, they came to a place of booty. Immense was the spoil they gathered. It took them three days to collect it all. "And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah (*blessing*); for there they blessed the Lord." The valley bears the name, but slightly changed, to this day, it being now known as *Beirakut*.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

1. The eighty-third Psalm was, there can be little doubt, written at this time, and very likely also the forty-seventh and forty-eighth. They throw much light upon the lesson.

In Chronicles only Moab and Ammon are named as attacking Judah: but it is said there were "other beside them," and from the Eighty-third Psalm we learn what a formidable confederacy it was. No less than ten nations had a part in it: "Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagarenes; [see 1 Chron. v.] Gebal, [see Ezek xxvii. 9.] and Ammon and Amalek; the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them; they have holden the children of Lot." These last words show (thus agreeing with Chronicles) that Moab and Ammon were the originators, the rest only helping. Then the fourth verse of this psalm reveals the object of the alliance. It was not even merely to capture and rob the capital, and then withdraw. The design was really to sweep Israel away altogether, and occupy the country: "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation," etc. See also the eleventh verse in Chronicles, where Jehoshaphat complains to God that they had "come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit." And the immense quantity of baggage and wealth (ver. 25) is thus accounted for: they came to settle in the land. To effect such an object as this, allies were secured from all quarters; Ishmaelites and Hagarenes from the east, Amalek and Edom from the south, the Philistines from the west, Tyre and Gebal from the north; even Assyria, that great far-off empire, which is mentioned here for the first time since the days of Nimrod. (Gen. x. 11.)

2. Asaph.—A Levite, one of the leaders of David's choir. He was in after times celebrated as a seer (or prophet), as well as a musical composer. The office appears to have remained hereditary in his family, unless he was the founder of a school of poets and musical composers who were called after him "sons of Asaph."—*Smith's Bible Dictionary*.

3. By the cliff of Ziz.—This seems to have been nothing else than the present pass which leads northward, by an ascent from En-gedi to Jerusalem, issuing a little below Tekoa. The wilderness of Jeruel was probably the large, flat district adjoining the desert of Tekoa, called El Husasah, from a wady on its northern side. End of the Brook. Rather, at the end of the gully or dry torrent-course. It is impossible to tell which of the wadys is intended, since no name like Jeruel has been found, and this is the only place where it is mentioned.—*Cook*.

4. The descendants of Levi had charge of the subordinate services of the sanctuary (Num. i. 50, 51). They were divided into three great families—the Gershomites, the Kohathites, and the Merarites, according to their descent from Gershom, Kohath, and Merari, the three sons of Levi (1 Chron. vi. 1); and each family had, originally, its own special department of the work of the sanctuary (Num. iv. 17-33).

The Korhites were the descendants of Korah, the grandson of Kohath. A number of the Psalms are ascribed to them, either because they wrote them or because they were specially fitted to sing them.

PROVIDENCE made both tears and laughter, and both for kind purposes: for as laughter enables mirth and surprise to breathe freely, so tears enable sorrow to vent itself patiently. Tears hinder sorrow from becoming despair and madness; and laughter is one of the very privileges of reason, being confined to the human species.

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## CHRIST OUR NEED.

The truth is, that we never feel Christ to be a reality, until we feel Him to be a necessity. He tries us here, and He tries us there. He chastises on this side, and He chastises on that side. He probes us by the disclosure of one sin, and another, and a third, which have lain rankling in our deceived hearts. He removes, one after another, the objects in which we have been seeking the repose of idolatrous affection. He afflicts us in ways which we have not anticipated. He sends upon us the chastisements which He knows we shall feel most sensitively. He pursues us when we would fain flee from His hand, and, if need be, He shakes to pieces the whole framework of our plans of life, by which we have been struggling to build together the service of Self; till, at last, He makes us feel that Christ is all that is left of us.

When we discover that, and go to Christ, conscious of our beggary in respect of everything else,—wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,—we go, not expecting much, perhaps not asking much. There may be hours of prostration when we ask only for rest; we pray for the cessation of suffering; we seek repose from conflict with ourselves, and with God's providence. But God gives us more. He gives us joy; He gives us liberty; He gives us victory; He gives us a sense of self-conquest, and of union with Himself in an eternal friendship. On the basis of that single experience of Christ as a reality, because a necessity, there rises an experience of blessedness in communion with God, which prayer expresses like a Revelation. Such devotion is a jubilant Psalm.—*Phelps*.

## MOHAMMEDANISM.

The religion of Mohammed is professed by about one-tenth of all the people on the earth's surface. Dating only twelve centuries back, it numbers as many adherents as Brahminism, whose origin lies far back in a misty antiquity. Coming into the world at a time when Christianity had been seated for some centuries on the Imperial throne, in an incredibly short space of time it overthrew both the Christian empire and its rival, the Persian, and established a sway greater than the Cæsars had ever wielded. Its converts do not number more than a fourth of those of Buddhism; but, unlike that religion, it has not confined its conquests to one quarter of the globe, but counts its adherents in all the four great continents. When the first streak of dawn falls upon the eastern shores of Asia, the Mohammedan Malay turns his face towards Mecca and offers his morning prayer; and as the light steals westward over the continent, it falls upon thousands of minarets in India, Persia, Arabia, and Turkey, from which is heard the muezzin's voice, proclaiming in clear and solemn tones, in the stillness of the dawn, "God is most great. I testify that there is no deity but God. I testify that Mohammed is the apostle of God. Come to prayer. Come to security. Prayer is better than sleep. God is most great. There is no deity but God." From Zanzibar on the south to the banks of the Danube and the steppes of Tartary on the north, the same voice is heard; and westward to the remotest shores of Africa it is repeated, and responded to by pious worshippers. Even in the new world there are not wanting votaries of this religion, which thus five times daily encircles the globe with a continuous stream of prayer.—*Leisure Hour*.

## BOLDNESS OF NATIVE PREACHERS IN JAPAN.

Mr. Forest, one of the missionaries of the American Board, gives the following description of the boldness of the Japanese native preachers:—

"What shall I write you with reference to our Osaka work? There is so much to say, that to choose what to write is the main trouble. Let me call your attention to the boldness of the Christians in preaching anywhere and everywhere, and in making the greatest possible claims for this way over every other. I have just attended three successive meetings, the first of which was a union service of our two Churches. Here the main thoughts presented were that the 'isles afar off, that have not heard my name,' shall glory in the knowledge of the true God; that among those islands stands Japan; that the Japanese, in every city and town, are now feeling the utter insufficiency of the old religions, town officers telling the people not to pay any more attention to the foolish worship of the land. Near Osaka is a huge temple, capable of holding 1,000 or 1,200 hearers, and we are assured that the audience don't average over three or four persons. Poor priests! They will soon have hard picking if they try to live by teaching the people to pray by clapping hands, burning candles, ringing bells, and muttering old Sanscrit words which priests themselves don't understand.

Meeting number two was in a private house, with about twenty hearers. They were told that Osaka now and Osaka a year ago are not the same thing. Then no man could preach openly, outside of the little concession; now there are more open preaching places than men can occupy. Of the eight regular places, one has had to be dropped for lack of force. The governor of Osaka, ten years ago a persecutor of Christians, now cares nothing how fast they multiply right under his eyes; and the reason is, that the Government of Japan—the highest officers—now know that the spread of Christianity will make better men and women than ever lived here.

Meeting number three, was yesterday (Sunday). On going to the chapel, Dr. Gordon found a Christian there from Niigata, who was asked to preach. He stood up and translated from an English Testament, the words 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.' 'Why not?' said he. 'Because it is the only true wisdom on earth—the source of all wisdom; and nobody need be ashamed of this.' Then he made one of the neatest turns I ever heard, challenging all other religions to show their wisdom, if they had any; and if they failed to produce it—by their origin, by their fruits, or by their teachings—then it was for them to be ashamed, not for the Christian.