

for vengeance on the murderer" (see ch. 4 : 11). This, of course, meant for Joseph a more cruel fate than killing him outright would have been, unless some one should rescue him, for the pit was a deep cistern, carved out of rock, with a narrow mouth which prevented escape. *The pit was empty.* "The bottom, however, was doubtless full of slimy and foul-smelling mud." So he was left in the darkness.

Vs. 25, 26. *Sat down to eat bread*; proceeded to hold a feast, for they rejoiced that the one who might foil their ambitions was out of the way. "*With what heart,*" says quaint Thomas Fuller, "could they say grace, either before or after meat?" A *company of Ishmaelites* (Rev. Ver.); a trading company belonging to the people who did most of the trafficking in these regions, in ancient times. (See *Light from the East*.) *Gilead*; a large district on the east side of the Jordan. The plain north and west of Dothan is still crossed by the regular trade route from Gilead, on coastwards and down through the plain of Sharon to Egypt. *Spicery*; Rev. Ver. Margin, "gum tragacanth, or storox," the resinous gum of a tree belonging to the bean family. *Balm*; Rev. Ver. Margin, "mastic." The mastic is a tree yielding a kind of resin. *Myrrh*; Rev. Ver., Margin "ladanum;" a resin from a low-growing shrub of the rock rose order. These gums were highly prized in Egypt for perfumes and medicines and for embalming purposes, and, of course, large quantities were required. *And Judah said,* etc.; repenting of the wicked plan. *What profit.* The appeal is to cupidity. *Conceal his blood*; that is, "even if we are not found out."

Vs. 27, 28. *Sell him.* A traffic in slaves was carried on by all traders in those times, and Egypt offered an excellent market for this business. (See *Light from the East*.) *Let not our hand be upon him*; a shallow attempt at evading responsibility for the wrong done their brother. *Midianites.* Here used as another name for the Ishmaelites, Judg. 8 : 22-24. *Twenty pieces of silver*; about twelve dollars in our money, each piece being probably a shekel, worth about sixty cents. This was the average price for a young slave (see Lev. 27 : 5).

Vs. 29, 30. *And Reuben returned.* He had not been present when Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites. It would appear that he had intended to rescue his brother from the pit. Like Judah, he, too, began to repent of the plot against Joseph. *Rent his clothes*; a common method of expressing grief, Joel 2 : 13. *Whither shall I go?* As Jacob's eldest son (ch. 29 : 32), he probably felt that the responsibility for Joseph's welfare rested in greatest measure upon him.

II. The Brothers' Deceit, 31-33.

Vs. 31-33. *Took Joseph's coat,* etc.; a clever device to win credence for their tale. Evidently their past actions must have been such as to cause fear of the suspicions of Jacob. Note, too, that the deception practised on Jacob was of the same nature as the trick which he had played on his father.

III. Jacob's Grief, 34-36.

Vs. 34-36. *Sackcloth upon his loins.* Sackcloth was a coarse material woven from goats' and camels' hair, and was worn about the waist as a sign of mourning. *Many days.* The ordinary period of mourning was seven days, but Jacob himself was mourned by the Egyptians for seventy days (see ch. 50 : 3). *Refused to be comforted.* "I have grief like that which Jacob felt for Joseph" is still, in the East, an expression for great grief. *Go down into the grave.* The ancients believed that the abode of the dead was under the earth. *Mourning.* "Jacob will wear the mourner's garb till his death, so that in the underworld his son may know how deep his grief had been." *Sold him . . unto Potiphar . . captain of the guard*; literally, "chief of the butchers," who, in some way, had come to form the royal bodyguard.

Light from the East

ISHMAELITES—Were the descendants of Ishmael, one of the sons of Abraham. The term is here used synonymously with Midianites, and the two correspond to our word Arabs. They were an enterprising people, following mainly agricultural pursuits in the valleys of southern Arabia. From an early period some of them carried on a trade with Egypt in spices, cattle and slaves. This company had gathered up their cargo of spicery in Gilead, had crossed the Jordan in the