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THE Teachers' Preparation Leaflet

LESSON 1.

APRIL 1st, 1894.

2nd QUARTER.

Jacob's Prevailing Prayer. Gen. 32: 9-12, 24-30.

GOLDEN TEXT: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Gen. 32: 26.

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 28-30. CHILDREN'S HYMNAL, 45, 150, 161, 103.

PROVE THAT—Earnest prayer prevails with God. Jas. 5: 16.

SHORTER CATECHISM—Quest. 95. To whom is baptism to be administered?

DAILY PORTIONS.

(The Selections of the International Bible Reading Association.)

MONDAY.	TUESDAY.	WEDNESDAY.	THURSDAY.	FRIDAY.	SATURDAY.	SABBATH.
Gen. 32: 9-12, 24-30	Gen. 32: 1-8	Gen. 32: 13-23	Gen. 33: 1-11	2 Kings 19: 14-20, 32-35	Luke 18: 1-8	Ps. 34: 15-23

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—After leaving Bethel Jacob continued his journey until he reached Haran. Here he remained for 21 years. Having no wealth with which to commend himself to Laban, he served him for seven years for his daughter Rachel, "and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." Deceived by Laban, who foisted her sister Leah upon him, he served yet other seven years. Then he entered into an agreement to remain in charge of the flocks and herds on terms which, however changed by the jealousy or cupidity of Laban, always proved profitable to Jacob, for God blessed him, as he had promised. His success provoked the envy and hatred of Laban's sons, so that Jacob deemed it wisest to return to Canaan. He was also directed in a vision to do so. To avoid any unpleasantness with Laban he departed without saying farewell, a proceeding that made him appear in the wrong, and gave Laban a pretext for doing him harm. He pursued him with the intention no doubt of punishing Jacob in a way to enrich himself. God however warned him to desist from any such intention. Jacob's cleverness again came near doing him mischief. Again he was taught that God does not need the help of man's guile, and can protect those who try to obey him. After parting with Laban "the Angels of God met him." The place where this occurred was called Mahanaim, or, "the two hosts." Compare Ps. 91: 11; Heb. 1: 14; Ps. 34: 7; 2 Kings 6: 17. Sending a friendly message to his brother Esau he receives no reply, but his messengers inform him that Esau is coming to meet him and 400 armed men with him. Whether his intentions were hostile or not, we are not told, but there was good ground for the alarm felt by Jacob and his clan. Disposing his company in the wisest manner for their safety, he commends himself to God in the prayer with which our lesson opens. Date B. C. 1739. Jacob's age 98. The places named are not known with any degree of certainty. They were East of the sea of Galilee.

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I. JACOB'S PRAYER. 9. See God's promises to such as Jacob. Ps. 50: 15. **God of my father**—This was the title by which God made himself known to Jacob at Bethel, ch. 28: 13. **Which said unto me**—see ch. 31: 3, 13. (Notice the reference in v. 13). This is the first recorded example of prayer in the Bible, note its structure. Appeal to God as standing in a covenant relationship; the present situation of danger comes in the path of obedience to his command; confession of unworthiness and thanksgiving for past mercies; direct and simple petition for just what he wanted, and this based upon the divine promises. 10. **I am not worthy of**—lit. "I am less than all." These are the best prepared for the greatest mercies that see themselves unworthy of the least (Matthew Henry). God's mercy and truth are linked together, Gen. 24: 27; Ps. 25: 10; 57: 3; 61: 7; 85: 10; 89: 14, and many other passages. His gracious promises cannot fail. **With my staff**—Jacob proved the truth of Job 8: 6, 7, and could say Ps. 18: 35. The extent of Jacob's wealth may be surmised from the fact that his present to Esau consisted of 580 different animals. 11. Compare the similar prayer of David Ps. 59: 1, 2. Jacob felt the truth of Pro. 18: 19. **The mother with**—lit. "upon." "The mother upon the children," stands in apposition with "me," there is no conjunction "and" in the original. "I am as a mother bending over to protect her children. If I am slain, all these around me, the whole clan, must perish." So a fortress and its defenders are represented as a mother and her children, Hos. 10: 14. Read 22: 26. 12. **Thou saidst**—ch. 28: 13, 15, at Bethel. References to the immutability of God's word, Num. 13: 19; Matt. 24: 35; Titus 1: 2; Heb. 6: 17. **I will surely do thee good**—This is Jacob's version of "I am with thee and will keep thee."

Having thus sought the divine protection, Jacob took measures to conciliate Esau. He prepared a present for him worthy of a great sheik, and so arranged it that it should impress his brother with the generosity and wealth of the giver. He then caused all to pass over the Jabbok and himself remained behind, doubtless that he might be alone in prayer once more, for he felt that the crisis of his life was come. For him, as for Caesar at the Rubicon, the "die was cast" when he crossed the Jabbok. He advances, not to gratify a lust for power, but to claim the land as the home of the true faith and the future birth place of the world's Redeemer.

II. JACOB'S PERSISTENCE. 24. **Jacob was left alone**—At such a moment the God-fearing man desires to lean hard on God. He had taken all the precautions that a prudent man could take, and the issue was now in higher hands. **There wrestled a man with him**—What is the meaning of this mysterious encounter? In the first place it was objectively real. It was no mere dream or vision. It is part of a narrative of plain facts, and the crippled thigh bore indubitable testimony to the reality of the angel's touch. Notice secondly, that the "Man" and not Jacob is the aggressor. Jacob does not assault him, but he seizes hold of Jacob. Jacob is on the defensive and pits his strength against his foe until he discovers he is wrestling with Omnipotence, then, and not till then, he betakes himself to supplication. In this the patriarch's attitude towards God is set forth. "His practical self-reliance was not duly subordinated to that absolute reliance which ought to be placed in the Author of our being and salvation. Hence he had been betrayed into intrusive, dubious, and even sinister courses, which in the retributive providence of God had brought, and were yet to bring, him into many troubles and perplexities. The hazard of his present situation arose chiefly from his former unjustifiable practices towards his brother. He is now to learn a lesson of unreserved reliance upon God." (Murphy). "He was going forward to meet Esau under the impression that there was no other reason why he should not inherit the land but only his wrath, and pretty confident that by his superior talent, his mother-wit, he could make a tool of this stupid, generous brother of his. And the danger was that if Jacob's device had succeeded, he would have been confirmed in these impressions, and have believed that he had won the land from Esau, with God's help certainly, but still by his own indomitable pertinacity of purpose and skill in dealing with men. If Jacob is to get the land he must take it as a gift, which he is not prepared to do." (Dods). "All along, Jacob's life had been the struggle of a clever and strong, a pertinacious and enduring, a self-confident and self-sufficient person, who was sure of the result only when he helped himself—a contest with God, who wished to break his strength and wisdom, in order to bestow upon him real strength in divine weakness, and real wisdom in divine folly." (Kurtz). **A man**—In Hos. 12: 4, 5 he is called the "angel," in vs. 28 and 30 he is called "God." He was no doubt the "Angel of the covenant," afterwards God manifest in the flesh—Christ Jesus. **The breaking of the day**—It was a protracted struggle. Jacob's tenacity of purpose and endurance were unconquerable. 25. While life lasts, Jacob will not yield. Just when he thinks his own strength is going to give him the victory, he is made to feel how really helpless he is in God's hands. The touch of omnipotence wins a moral as well as a physical triumph. His will is conquered. His own power gone he clings to God's power. "This is the turning point of the strange drama. Henceforth Jacob feels himself strong, not in himself, but in the Lord and in the power of his might." (Murphy). Touched the

hollow of his thigh—The sciatic nerve was paralyzed. This became to Jacob a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12: 7), a perpetual and painful reminder of his old obstinacy and self-sufficiency and of God's wholesome lesson whereby his pride was forever humbled. **26. Let me go**—He was not detained by Jacob's physical resistance, but by his importunate prayer for a blessing (Hos. 12: 4). God seems to be indifferent only in order to test faith and make the blessing more valued when it comes. Compare Matt. 15: 22-28; Luke 24: 28 and Col. 4: 12, "laboring fervently," lit. "agonizing," "wrestling," and Rom. 15: 30, "wrestle together." **The day breaketh**—Reference here to the heathen superstition that spirits dread the daylight are out of place. He means "This conference must close, and the active duties of life be resumed." The soul's secret experience is meant to fit for the better discharge of daily responsibilities. The breaking of the day was the symbol of the new life arising upon Jacob, **I will not let thee go**—Jacob's sense of his total debility and utter defeat is now the secret of his power with his friendly vanquisher. He can overthrow all the prowess of the self-reliant, but he cannot resist the earnest entreaty of the helpless." (Murphy). Compare 2 Cor. 12: 9, 10.

III. JACOB'S PRINCELY NAME. 27. Jacob—"Supplanter," (ch. 25: 26; 27; 36). The Angel asks the question in order to direct attention to its meaning as expressing his past character. Hitherto he had sought to gain his ends by craft, depending upon his shrewdness and ability to outwit others. In the dawning light of his new spiritual day he would feel the utter meanness of such a life. **28. Israel**—"A prince of God." A soldier prince is implied. A leader in battle. R. V. marg. "He who striveth with God" (Hos. 12: 3, 4). "From this time forth Jacob was a supplanter no more. His old, mean, crafty, bargaining nature disappeared; and though the old timidity and prudence manifested themselves in his subsequent history, with its fears and its mistrust, the old meanness and cupidity are gone, and he is henceforth royal in his character; a true prince of God." (L. Abbott). The name was confirmed to him at Bethel (ch. 35: 10), and the Messianic promises are connected with the new name. Compare 2 Cor. 5: 17. **Power with God and with men**—R. V. "Thou hast striven with God and with men." Having won over God to his side, he need not fear what man could do to him (Ps. 56: 11). The Septuagint and Vulgate read "Thou hast power with God, and how much more wilt thou prevail with men." **29. Thy name**—See Judges 13: 18; Isa. 9: 6. "Words have a power, a strange power, of hiding God. Who does not know how we satisfy ourselves with the name of some strange bird or plant, or the name of some new law in nature? It is a mystery perplexing us before. We get the name, and fancy that we understand something more than before, but, in truth, we are more hopelessly ignorant; for before we felt there was a something we had not attained, and so we inquired and searched; now, we fancy we possess it, because we have got the name by which it is known, and the word covers the abyss of our ignorance. If Jacob had got a word, that word might have satisfied him. He would have said, now I understand God and know all about him. God's plan was not to give names and words but truths of feeling. To know all about God is one thing but to know the living God is another." (F. W. Robertson). **He blessed him there**—Instead of a name by which he might label his Benefactor, he gave himself, for God's blessing carries with it His presence more sensibly realized by inner experience. Only as we grow like God can we know Him. "The tree of life is better than the tree of knowledge." (Matthew Henry). His request was granted in the only manner in which a real answer could have been given (See quotation from Robertson's sermon, above). "There are three acts in this dramatic scene: first, Jacob wrestling with the omnipresence in the form of a man, in which he is signally defeated; second, Jacob importunately supplicating Jehovah, in which he prevails as a Prince with God; third, Jacob receiving the blessing of a new name, a new development of spiritual life, a new capacity of bodily action." (Murphy). **30. Peniel**—"The face of God"—*Peniel* is only another form of the same word. This does not contradict John 1: 18; Ex. 33: 20. Compare rather Deut. 34: 10; Gen. 16: 13, "do I then see (i. e. live) also after the vision (of God)." Ex. 24: 17; Deut. 5: 25; Judges 6: 22; 13: 22; Isa. 6: 5. No mortal could survive a vision of the full effulgence of the divine glory. It shines with "chastened radiance" in the person of Christ. To be able to "see God" is the consummation of human bliss (Rev. 22: 4). This whole narrative has been objected to as relating what was unworthy of God. "If God walk in the garden with Adam, expostulate with Cain, partake of the hospitality of Abraham, take Lot by the hand to deliver him from Sodom, we cannot affirm that he may not, for a worthy end, enter into a bodily conflict with Jacob. If we admit any one we are bound by parity of reasoning to accept all the others." (Murphy).

SUMMARY AND REVIEW.

We borrow the following from Hurlburt's *Illustrative Notes*. It is one of the best in a series altogether admirable.

"Show to the class on a map, or what is better, draw in the presence of the class a sketch-map to illustrate, the journey of Jacob to Haran, and narrate briefly the story of his stay at

that place. Notice the locality of this lesson, the brook Jabbok, where it is, and why Jacob was there. Show how the results of early wrong doing pursue us, even after repentance and reformation. Jacob had just cause to fear the anger of a brother whom he had deceived long ago. Do not undertake to separate distinctly the natural and supernatural elements in this lesson, or to ascertain how far it describes a physical wrestling and how far spiritual exercise of prayer.

"I. We may regard this as a forcible illustration or type of supplication to God, and may note in it some traits of true prayer. 1. **Secret**—Jacob was alone; and so must each soul be that pours out its prayer to God. We may be alone, even when others are around us. 2. **Earnest**—Jacob's whole power was concentrated in his application; and so must ours be in prayer. 3. **Grateful**—Jacob recognized what God had already done for him when he asked for more; notice the contrast between the "staff" and the "two bands." 4. **Direct**—He asked for just what he wanted—safety and succor; our prayers are weakened by their diffuseness. 5. **Pleading**—He held up the promises (v. 12) as the warrant for his supplication. 6. **Persistent**—"I will not let thee go," this is the spirit that wins victories.

"II. Ascertain who the wrestler with Jacob was. 1. He was **God**; "I have seen God," said Jacob after the meeting. 2. He was **man**; at least he was in human form. 3. He was **omnipotent**; for he could by a touch render Jacob helpless. 4. He was **gracious**; willing to bestow a blessing. In a word he was the pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ. He whom Jacob met is the One upon whom we call, and we will find Him willing to answer our prayer.

"III. Notice the results of this experience. 1. **A new name**; no longer "the Supplanter," but the "Prince of God." Communion with God turns men into princes. 2. **A new power**; power with God and power among men. He who obtains power from on high is a conqueror over the world. See Acts 1: 8. 3. **A new nature**; More than ever from this hour Jacob is the servant of God, rearing his altar, fulfilling his vow, and giving himself over to Jehovah with complete consecration. Prayer transforms the character."

THE PRAYER.

Secret.
Earnest
Grateful.
Direct.
Pleading.
Persistent.

THE WRESTLER.

God-Man.
Omnipotent.
Gracious.

THE PRINCE.

A new Name.
A new Power.
A new Nature.

NORMAL DRILL

based on the text-book, "The Sabbath School Teacher's Handbook; or, The Principle and Practice of teaching, with special reference to the Sabbath School," prepared by Principal Kirkland of the Toronto Normal School.

TELLING AND QUESTIONING. (CHAPTER VII).

In teaching avoid the too common practice of "telling." Telling is not teaching. Teaching is causing another to know, and this is best done, by "never telling anything which pupils may reasonably be expected to know," or which they may be led to know by judicious questioning. "The Art of putting a question is one of the first and most necessary arts to be acquired by the teacher. To know how to put a good question is to have gone a long way towards becoming a skillful and efficient teacher."

THE ART OF QUESTIONING.

I. The Object of Questioning.

1. To find out what the scholar knows and how he knows it.
2. To excite an interest in the subject.
3. To discover misconceptions and difficulties.
4. To secure activity of mind and co-operation while teaching.
5. To arouse, cultivate and direct attention.
6. To test the result and outcome of what has been taught.