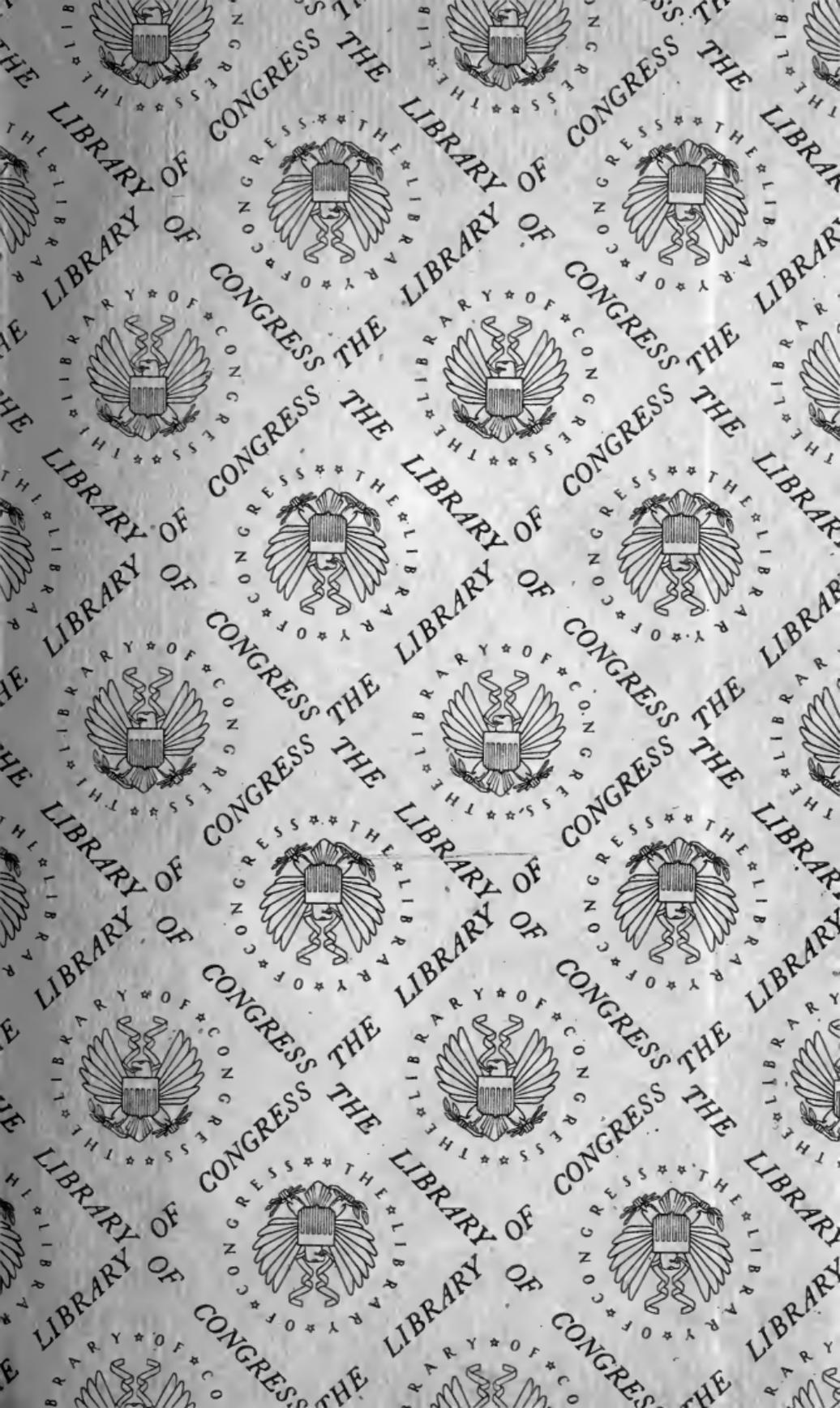


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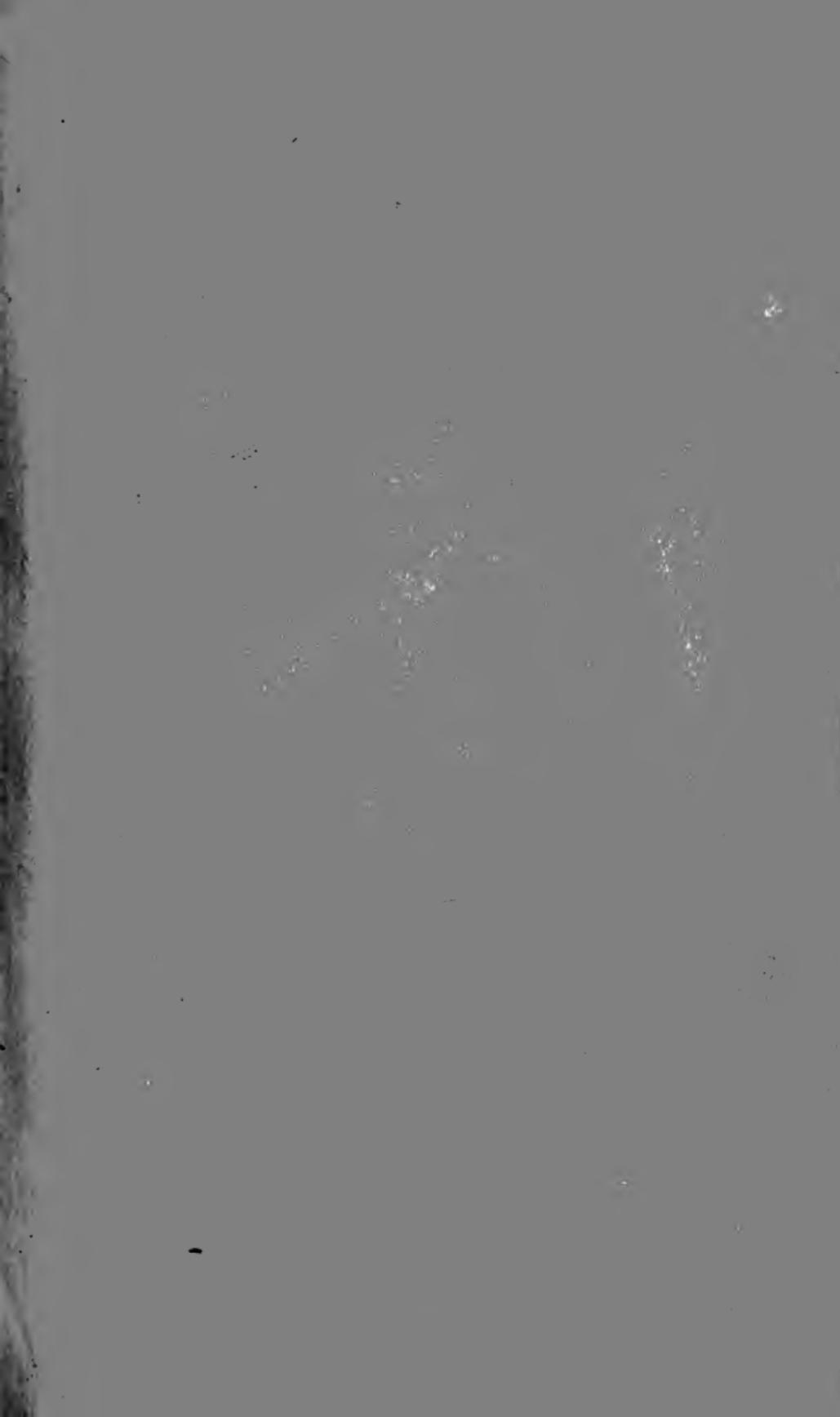
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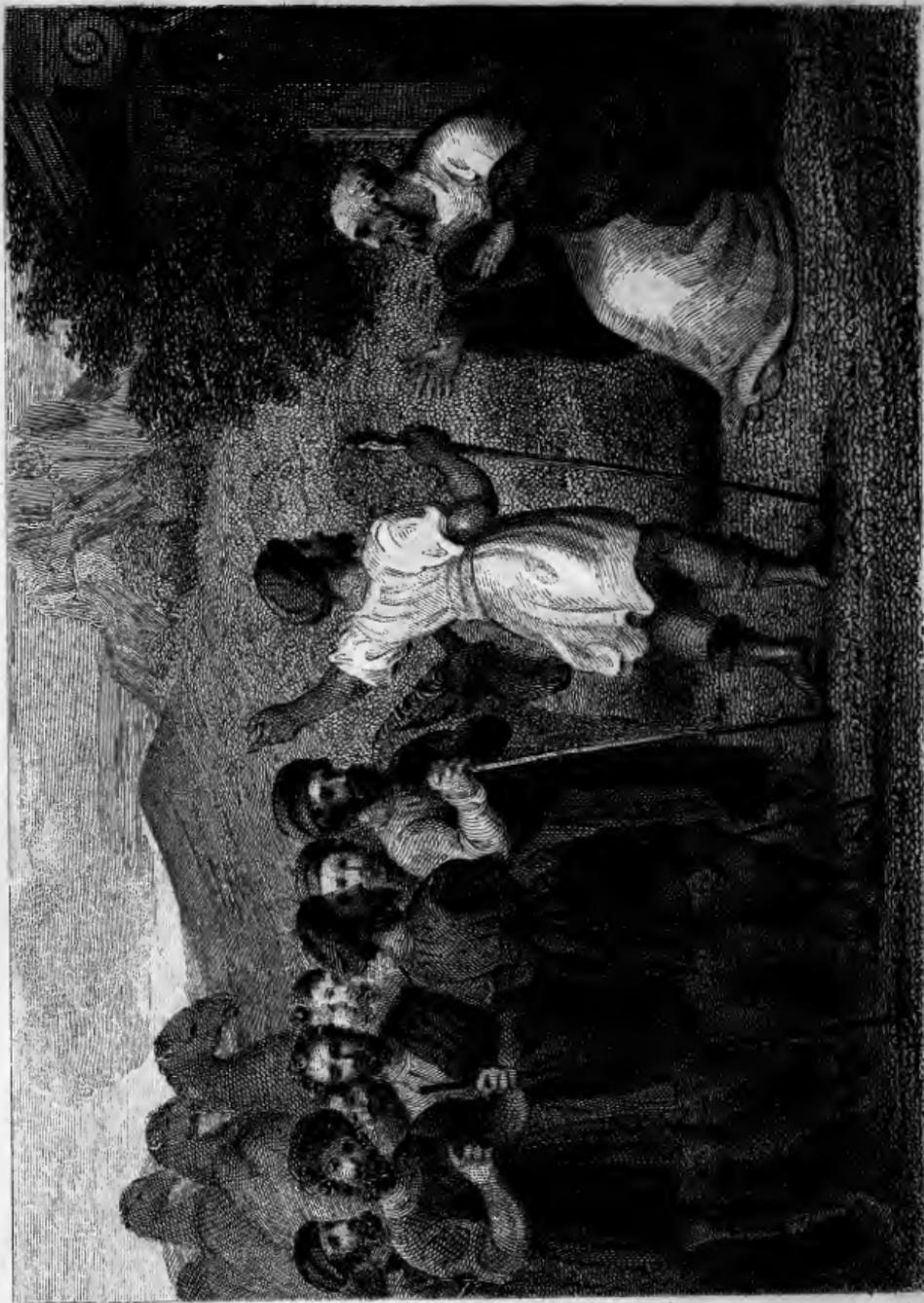
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THE  
LIFE OF JACOB,  
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AND

HIS SON

JOSEPH.

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WRITTEN FOR THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION, AND  
REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.  
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Philadelphia:

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,  
146 CHESTNUT STREET.

1836.



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THE  
 LIFE OF JACOB,  
 AND  
 HIS SON JOSEPH.

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CHAPTER I.

Time when this history begins—Scripture biographies  
 —Description of countries—Birth of Jacob and  
 Esau—Their childhood—Jacob's youth—The Arabs  
 —Hunting in Arabia—The birthright—The birth-  
 right sold—Isaac's wealth and prosperity.

IT is now eighteen hundred and thirty-  
 six years *after* the birth of Christ. If we  
 reckon just as many years *before* the birth  
 of Christ, we shall have the time at which  
 the patriarch Jacob was born. I mention  
 this in order to assist the reader's memo-  
 ry. Jacob was born in the year before  
 Christ, 1836. A little calculation will

show you that this was about 2168 years after the creation of the world.

In the first chapter of the first book of Chronicles you will see a list of all the ancestors of Jacob, from Adam downwards. And it is remarkable, that from the first, God had some one family or race which he preserved from idolatry. In this way he kept up a perpetual race of true worshippers, and he will keep it up until the end of time.

Much of the Bible history is biography, or the lives of particular men. Some of these are good, and some are bad men. And one great reason for giving their memoirs is, that we might see how Jesus Christ descended from Adam. We have a complete list of all the generations from Adam to Christ. You will find it in the beginning of the New Testament.

As the human race spread itself over the earth, the greatest part became very wicked; yet, as was just said, God was pleased to select a portion, to whom he made himself known. Out of Adam's





family, Seth was chosen. Out of Noah's family, Shem was chosen. Out of Terah's family, Abram was chosen. And out of Abram's family, Isaac was chosen. In the mean time, the remaining portions were multiplying by thousands and millions, and overspreading Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Let me try to give you some notion of the countries about which you will read in this history; for you can never have a proper knowledge of any narrative unless you know whereabouts the events took place. The little map on the opposite page shows you the whole at once. And if you will travel with Jacob, as he goes from place to place, you will fancy yourself in many regions very far apart. For, sometimes he was in Asia, and sometimes in Africa. And while in Asia, he was sometimes in Mesopotamia, among the branches of the great river Euphrates; sometimes in Syria, between the Euphrates and the Jordan; and sometimes in Palestine, between

the Jordan and the Mediterranean sea. While he was in Africa, he lived in no country but Egypt, which may be called the north-eastern corner of Africa.

Now I trust you can form in your own mind a little map of all the countries I am going to tell about. Besides this, you will take care to look at every one of the little maps which you will find on the pages.

About the year before Christ, 1836, Jacob, the patriarch, was born. He was the son of Isaac and Rebekah. His father was about sixty years of age when Esau and his brother Jacob were born. And during the twenty years which Isaac and his wife lived childless, they were much afflicted, because they considered children a very precious gift of God; and Isaac knew, that in the line of his descendants the Messiah should come.

In every affliction we should pray. Isaac entreated Jehovah for his wife, and begged that she might not remain childless, and the Lord heard his prayer. Be-

fore the birth of Jacob, Rebekah also was in affliction of mind, and she went to inquire of Jehovah. The way in which she got an answer is not revealed, but the fact, that God did answer her, is certain. And the tidings sent to her were very remarkable. The Lord told her that she should be the mother of twins, and that a great nation should descend from each of these two sons. He also told her that the elder should serve the younger. You will see hereafter how this came to pass.

We do not know the exact spot where the parents lived at this time. It was somewhere in the south-west of Palestine; pro-



bably near the well Lahai-roi, where

Hagar was found by the angel. This was at one time the residence of Isaac.

When the two boys were born, the elder was named ESAU, which means *hairy*, and the younger was named JACOB, which means, *one who trips or supplants*. Both of them afterwards had other names given to them, as you will soon learn, but they are usually called Esau and Jacob.

There is nothing related of their childhood. Children in all times and all nations are much alike; and these little boys played and wandered about the desert, and among the camels and the herds, just as little Arab children do at the present time. Their aged grandfather Abraham was still alive, and lived until they were about fifteen years old; so that it is likely they often saw him, and heard his holy instructions. And the good old man, no doubt, rejoiced to see the promise of God beginning to come to pass, that he should be the father of

many nations. They were the children of a very rich man, for Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac, except the gifts which his other sons took away with them to the east country.

#### THE YOUTH OF JACOB.

The boys grew up to be youths. And now the difference in their character began to appear. Esau used to spend his time in hunting, but Jacob was a peaceable young man, and fond of home. While Esau was roaming over the sandy plains, and rocky mountains, on the south of Palestine, and the edge of Arabia, chasing the deer and the gazelles which abound there; Jacob was staying among the tents of his father's encampment. You must remember that these patriarchs did not settle in walled cities, or live in houses of brick or stone, but wandered from place to place, wherever they could find the best springs and pastures for their herds and flocks, carrying their tents with them.

Just in this manner the Arabs live, who inhabit that country now. They love their tents far more than the finest houses. The Arab tent is generally about seven feet high, twenty-five to thirty feet long, and ten feet wide. It is divided into two apartments, the inner one being for the women. The furniture is very simple, such as saddles for riding and for carrying burdens; skins for water and milk, and the liquid butter of the east; and a few mats and cloths, which answer for chairs and beds. These tents are placed in a circle, the chief's being in the most exposed part. At the door of every tent the horse or camel of the owner is tied to a lance stuck into the earth. When they move, the armed men go in front, next come the flocks, then the beasts of burden, carrying the women, children, and property. Perhaps the wealthy Isaac lived and travelled in this manner, moving from place to place in the south of Palestine.

The borders of Canaan and Arabia

abound in wild animals, and therefore give business to hunters. It was probably by the chase that Esau learned to be a warrior. We find at a later time that he led a band of four hundred men. Among the animals of these rocks and deserts, are the following: the *rock-goat* or ibex, which is good for food, and is like the chamois of the Alps; they pasture in flocks, and are sought for their skins and horns, which are sold at Jerusalem; the *hare*, the *fallow-deer*, the *py-carg*, or antelope. These are pursued and taken or shot by the Arabs. The ancients killed them with the lance or the bow and arrow. And Esau was very expert in this art.

Isaac was fond of the wild meat which his son brought to the tents from time to time; he loved Esau, because he ate of his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob. It is not unlikely that this preference of the parents led to a certain degree of jealousy between the children. The partiality of parents almost always ends

in some misfortune; you will see how it did so in the present case.

In old times the eldest son had a right to many favours. The other children were inferior to him. There was a particular blessing also upon the first-born, and this was called the *birthright*. It was not a mere notion or prejudice, but was agreeable to the will of God, with respect to people of that age. All good men valued this privilege of birthright very highly. It seems to have included many divine blessings, and to have reference to the Messiah that was predicted. Now, although Esau was the first-born, yet, as has been said, God had determined that the elder should serve the younger.

On a certain day, after the young men had grown up, Esau went out into the fields, and spent the time in such a manner, that when he came home, he was quite exhausted with weariness and hunger. On his return he found that his brother had been preparing a dish of vegetables which was very savoury. It

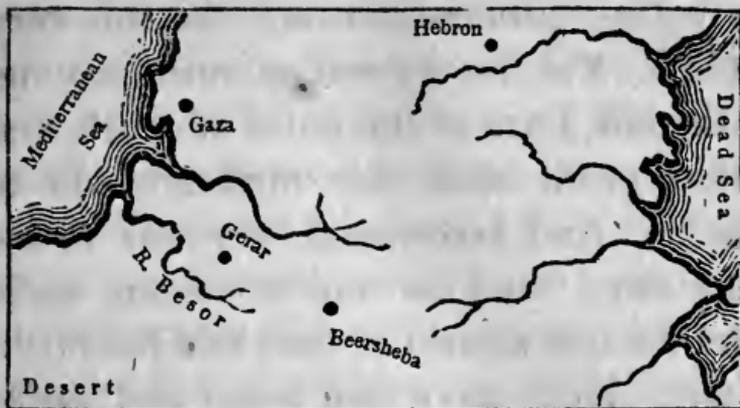
was a pottage of a red colour. And you will find in books of travels that a pottage of a reddish brown, or chocolate colour, is even now made in those countries, of lentiles, a sort of beans, stewed with olive oil and garlic; this is a favourite dish of the rich in Barbary.

Esau was overcome with a feeling of weakness and hunger, so that he thought more of immediate gratification than of all the blessings of God's promise. Some of our greatest follies arise from unbri-dled appetites. He said to his brother, "Feed me I pray thee with that same red pottage, for I am faint."

Jacob answered, "Sell me this day thy birthright." It is probable that he had long known how much Esau despised this privilege. And Esau himself seems to have thought, "What signifies the promise of God to me—why should I care for the land of promise—I shall never live to enjoy it." At any rate, he is blamed in the New Testament, and

called a "profane person," for this very affair. For he agreed at once, saying, "Behold, I am at the point of death, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" And Jacob said, "Swear to me this day;" and he took a solemn oath, and for one morsel of food sold his birthright. Jacob gave him bread and lentile pottage, and he ate and drank, and rose up and went away. Thus Esau despised his birthright. You will soon perceive the serious consequences of his profane contempt of God's mercies.

The whole land of Canaan had been promised to Abraham and his seed. God renewed this promise to Isaac and his seed; but Esau had cut himself off from this promise, and Jacob was now the heir, as if he had been the only son. Thirty or forty years passed away, of which we have no history, except what has just been related. During this time there was indeed a famine, and Isaac changed his place of residence, and went to Gerar,



where Abimelech king of the Philistines lived. Here God renewed the promise of the land to him and his posterity. Isaac dwelt some time at Gerar, and his sons probably lived with him. His wealth increased, for he engaged in agriculture, and received, in one year, a hundred fold, and Jehovah blessed him. The Hebrew historian speaks of his prosperity with a remarkable repetition : And the man was GREAT; and he went, going on, and was GREAT; until that he was exceeding GREAT.\* For he had possession of flocks and possession of herds, and every thing needed in husbandry. After several removals, they settled at Beersheba.

\* Gen. xxvi. 13.

We hear nothing more of Esau until he was forty years old, at which time he married two wives. They were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah, for they were of the idolatrous race of the Hittites. In this southern extremity of the land, Jacob spent the first forty years of his life, a single man, living with his aged parents.

## CHAPTER II.

Isaac's old age—He desires to bless Esau—Esau goes to hunt—Rebekah encourages Jacob to an act of deceit—Jacob receives the blessing—The blessing of Jacob—Esau's return from hunting—Distress of Esau and of Isaac—The blessing of Esau—Esau hates his brother—Jacob flies from his native land—Arrives at Luz—Vision of the ladder—Vow at Bethel.

ISAAC was very wealthy, as you have just been told, but wealth cannot keep off the infirmities of old age. He lived to be a very old man, and, as is common, his eye-sight failed him, so that he could not tell one person from another. When people begin to find their senses failing, it is time for them to think of dying. Isaac thought so, and determined to pronounce a blessing on his eldest son without delay. It is customary for dying fathers to bless their children; and the

old patriarchs, being prophets, could pronounce blessings which never failed to come to pass. The first-born used to have a special blessing, as his birthright. The promise of the whole land of Canaan was part of the blessing of Abraham and Isaac.

But God had chosen Jacob to have this promise, even before he was born, as I have already related. And whether Isaac ever knew this or not, Rebekah knew it very well, and took a dishonest way to bring it about. God's predictions come to pass very often, when wicked people are freely committing wickedness; as we see in the death of Christ.

Isaac called his son Esau, and said to him, "My son," and Esau said, "Behold, here am I." And Isaac said, "Behold, now I am old, and I know not how soon I may die. Take thy weapons, thy quiver, and thy bow, and go out in the desert, and hunt venison for me; and prepare savoury food, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat, and bless

thee before I die." The good old man would thus be refreshed, and be able to pronounce a solemn prophecy and blessing over his favourite son.

Now Rebekah, the mother, overheard these words. She knew that the birth-right was given to her favourite Jacob; but she used deceit in what followed. As soon as Esau had gone to hunting, she told Jacob what had happened, and agreed with him to deceive the blind old man. She told Jacob to get her two kids, that she might dress them like venison, and to pass himself off for his elder brother. Jacob said, "My brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man; perhaps my father will feel me, and then he will think me a deceiver, and I shall get a curse instead of a blessing."

To this Rebekah answered, "Let the curse come upon *me*, my son; only obey my voice, and go and fetch them." And he obeyed, and his mother prepared the pretended venison. Then she took a fine suit of Esau's, and put it on Jacob. One

thing more was wanting, and that was, to make the skin of Jacob rough and hairy like his brother's. Now you must take notice, that travellers say, the Eastern goats have fine silky hair, and I suppose the hair of very young kids is as delicate as that of a man. So she took the soft skins of these young animals, and fastened them on those parts of his body which were naked, such as his hands, and his neck. This was a wicked act of deceit, and though it proved successful, yet you will observe that Jacob had more affliction all his life afterwards, than any one of the patriarchs.

As soon as he was disguised, he went to his father and gave him the food he had got from Rebekah. He then began with a falsehood, and said: "I am Esau thy first-born. I have done as I was ordered; arise, I pray thee, sit up, and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me." The old man was surprised that Esau could have come back so speedily, and said: "How is it that thou hast

found it so quickly, my son?" Jacob wickedly answered, "Because the Lord thy God brought it to me." Isaac was still suspicious, and as he could not see, he determined to feel, whether it was indeed Esau. After he had passed his hands over him, he said: "The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's." Again he asked, "Art thou my very son Esau?" And Jacob said, "I am." Then being satisfied, the good father asked for the food; and Jacob set it before him, and gave him wine, and Isaac ate and drank. Then he said, "Come near now, and kiss me, my son." And Jacob came near, and kissed him. When Isaac perceived the smell of the clothing, which may have been perfumed, as is common in the east, he said: "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed;" a field of sweet plants and flowers. And he then proceeded to give Jacob the solemn blessing of the first-born, supposing

that he was speaking to Esau. His words were these.

#### THE BLESSING OF JACOB.

*God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee. Be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee. Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.*

These words Isaac spake as a prophet. All this blessing was verified. It was not for Jacob alone, but for all his posterity. It was fulfilled to all Israel. They possessed a rich and fruitful land. And the descendants of Jacob ruled over the descendants of Esau.

Jacob had hardly gone out, before Esau returned from hunting. Alas! he knew not what had happened; he knew not the consequences of selling his birth-right. He brought the venison to Isaac,

as if nothing had occurred, and said, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's venison, that his soul may bless me." The old man was surprised. He asked, "Who art thou?" "I am thy son," said Esau, "thy first-born, Esau."

At these words, Isaac was filled with anguish. We read, that "he trembled, with a great trembling, greatly." He cried out, "Who?—where is he that brought me venison? for I ate of it before thou camest, and I have blessed him!" He knew the prediction could not be taken back, and added, "Yea, and he shall be blessed."

Esau had no sooner heard this, than the whole truth rushed upon his soul. He cried, with a great and exceeding bitter cry: "Bless *me*, even me also, O my father!" It was a most touching scene, but the aged father could only say: "Thy brother has come deceitfully, and has taken away thy blessing."

Esau remembered what had passed, and said, "Is he not rightly named *Sup-*

*planter* (Jacob)? For he has supplanted me twice: he took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing. Hast thou not a blessing left for *me*?"

Isaac answered that he had declared Jacob to be the master of Esau, and the possessor of the fruits of the land. He knew not what to do for his distressed son.

Esau cried out, "Hast thou but one blessing? Bless me, even me also, O my father!" And he wept aloud. Isaac was affected, and gave him a lesser blessing, thus:



## THE BLESSING OF ESAU.

*Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother. And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.*

This blessing also was verified hundreds of years afterwards. Esau had been called **EDOM**, or *Red*, from the red



pottage for which he sold his birthright. All his descendants were called *Edomites*. They lived between the Dead Sea and the eastern bay of the Red Sea, along the ridges of mount Seir, and the neighbouring valleys. Edom and his sons were rough and warlike; but Jacob and his sons were never subdued by them.

Both the sons of Isaac had now received the best blessing he could give. Esau was of the wicked one, and hated his brother, from this time forward. He that hates his brother is a murderer in his heart. Beware, my reader, O beware of anger, revenge, and hatred. These are the feelings which make murders so common. Esau knew that his father could not live much longer. But instead of being sorry, or repenting, he said to himself: "It will not be long before my father will be dead, and then I will kill my brother Jacob."

Dreadful words! My reader, pray to God to subdue your angry passions; you see to what they lead. It was his bro-

ther, his *only* brother, his *twin* brother. Not only did he hate him, but he coolly planned to murder him!

Rebekah was a tender mother, and when she heard of his threat she trembled for her darling Jacob. She sent for him, and told him how his life was in danger, and advised him to leave home, and go to the country from which she had come about ninety-seven years before. For Rebekah came from Haran in Mesopotamia. She thought, that after a little absence, Esau's anger would cease; and she promised, in that case, to send for Jacob. "Why," said she, "should I be deprived also of you both in one day?"

Here we have Jacob about to be an exile. He is about to leave the beloved tents where he had passed his childhood, and his aged parents, more beloved still. He is about to fly from an unnatural and ferocious brother, and to go alone, through unknown parts, on a journey of more than five hundred miles. For it was as far as this even in a straight line from

Beersheba to Haran. Yet, with all his faults, he had God for his friend.

The aged Isaac calls his son, and gives him his parting advice. He tells him not to marry a woman of the Canaanites, but to go to Mesopotamia, and take a wife from his mother's family. And then he gave him a second blessing.

#### THE SECOND BLESSING OF JACOB.

*God Almighty bless thee. And make thee fruitful and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people. And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee. That thou mayest inherit the land of thy sojournings, which God gave to Abraham.*

You perceive that this blessing is more extensive than the other. It promises Jacob a vast posterity; this has come to pass, all Israelites being his seed. It promises him the land of Canaan; this also came to pass, when the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan.

Haran was a place to the north and east of Beersheba. In order to reach it, Jacob will have to travel through part of Canaan, a land full of wicked idolaters; then to cross the Jordan; then to go over the sandy deserts of upper Syria; and then to cross the great Euphrates, into the mountains of Mesopotamia, or Padan-Aram.

So Jacob set out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. The first stopping place, that we know of,



was Luz. It was probably situated northeast of Beersheba, but we do not know its exact situation. It was time for the weary traveller to rest, for the sun was set. He had neither tent nor bed, but lay on the bare ground, and he took of

the stones of that place, and put them for his pillow, and lay down to sleep. Hard pillows indeed! But we might all be willing to have such pillows, if we could spend such nights. It was one of the most memorable nights of his life.

#### THE VISION OF THE LADDER.

And Jacob dreamed, and behold, a ladder, the bottom on the earth, and the top in heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. But above it was an awful and majestic sight. It was Jehovah, revealing himself to the sleeping exile. God thus spake:

I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac. I will give to thee and thy seed the land on which thou art now lying. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth. And thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. **AND IN THEE AND IN THY SEED SHALL ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED.**

And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land. For I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, delighted and amazed, and said: "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God! This is the gate of heaven!" He named the place, *House of God*, in Hebrew, BETH-EL.

If you consider this vision, you will see that the ladder, or flight of steps, signified to him that there was a communication between earth and heaven. We use a ladder to reach what is otherwise out of reach. It signified that holy angels minister to the heirs of salvation. It signified the very court and presence of God; so that he was full of awe, and felt himself before the Almighty Jehovah.

If you consider this *third* blessing of Jacob, from God's own lips, you will see that it is what his father had called, "The

blessing of Abraham," the very promise which had been made to Abraham. And it contained a promise of Christ, *the seed*, in whom all nations are blessed.

Jacob arose early the next morning, and took the stone which he had used as a pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon it. This was done in various cases, when either persons or things were set apart to God. Jacob meant it for a monument of God's favour. Thus Abraham used to build altars. And he made a promise to God, which is called a vow.

#### JACOB'S VOW AT BETH-EL.

If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again in peace to my father's house :

Then shall Jehovah be my God. And this stone which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house, *Beth-El*;

And of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

It seems to have been an early custom to give a *tithe*, that is, a tenth of one's gains, to God. The law of Moses only repeated what had been usual before, perhaps from the beginning of the world. It would be well for every Christian, to consecrate at least a tenth of his income to the service of the Lord.

So Jacob pursued his journey with a cheerful heart, for he knew that his father's God was with him. Many years after, we shall find him on the same spot.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE WELL OF HARAN.

The well of Haran—Shepherds of Mesopotamia—Arrival of a traveller—Jacob sees Rachel—Entertained by Laban—Enters Laban's service—Seven years—Marriage of Jacob—Seven years more—Jacob's sons—Escapes from Laban—Another vision.

A WELL of good water is a blessing for which we ought to thank God in any country. But a well of water in the East is invaluable. Those missionaries know its worth who have suffered burning thirst in a dry desert, where no cloud nor tree keeps off the scorching sun. In those lands the wells are often dug very deep, and walled in at great expense. And being sometimes far apart, they are of the greatest importance. It is no wonder that Abraham and Isaac were often

in contests with their enemies about the wells. In desert countries, where the sands fly in clouds, a well would soon be filled up, if it were not covered. Hence they lay over them massy slabs of marble or other rock, and open them only when water is to be drawn out.

It is a lovely sight to behold a well of living water in a hot region. Around it, the herbage is green and fresh. Here the shepherds and shepherdesses assemble, with their goats and sheep. Here the camels, and asses, and kine meet, and are invigorated. And here perhaps are the pleasantest gatherings of friends and neighbours. This is what we call a pastoral scene. In every age it has been the delight of poets and of youth.

Such a scene there was in the land of the people of the East, now called Diarbekr, in the Turkish empire, between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Here Bethuel and Laban had their abode. Here Rebekah spent her youth. And here, on a certain day, a weary traveller came. He

had travelled some hundreds of miles, a fugitive from his father's tents.

He was weary of the desert: he looked, and behold, a well in the field, and lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it. For out of that well they watered the flocks; and a great stone was upon the well's mouth. And thither all the flocks and shepherds were gathered, and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth. Was it not a sight to bring tears of joy into the stranger's eyes?

He approached, and said, "My brethren, where do you dwell?" "We dwell in Haran," said they. It was the very spot the stranger was seeking! "Do you know a man named Laban?" said he. "We do," answered the shepherds. "Is he well?" They answered; "He is, and here is his daughter Rachel just coming with her flock." And while they continued to talk, the young shepherdess came to the well, leading her father's

flock. In those days, and in that country, the daughters even of kings sometimes tended sheep.

The manners of the East, in all ages, have been very simple. The stranger drew near, without an introduction. With that courtesy which arises from good-will, he removed the stone from the well, and watered the maiden's flock; and



kissed her, and burst into tears. His heart was full, and he sobbed aloud. Rachel must have been astonished. "I am Jacob," said he. "I am your father's kinsman. I am the son of Rebekah, your aunt." No sooner had she heard this,

than she ran and told her father. And Laban hastened out to welcome his nephew, the son of his beloved sister. He ran, he took him in his arms, he kissed him, he brought him to his dwelling; and when he had heard Jacob's story, he said, "Surely thou art bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh."

This was a pleasant change for the wandering Hebrew. He found himself received as a kinsman and friend, by his mother's brother, and became one of the family at once. After a month had passed, during which Jacob helped his relatives in taking care of their numerous flocks, he had become well acquainted with his two cousins, the daughters of Laban. The elder of these was Leah; the younger was Rachel, who had met him at the well. Leah was plain in her appearance; but Rachel was beautiful; and Jacob loved Rachel. It was at the end of this month that Laban proposed to his nephew to take wages for tending the flocks. "Should you serve me for no-

thing," said Laban, "because you are my brother? tell me what your wages shall be." "I will serve you seven years," answered Jacob, "for your younger daughter, Rachel." Strange as the offer may seem to us, it was agreeable to the customs of that age, and Laban professed to accept it. "It is better," said he, "to give her to you, than to another man; remain with me."

Seven years now passed away, in which Jacob spent his time as a shepherd, in the company of Rachel. Long as the period was, it seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

At length the seven years of trial came to a close, and he hastened to demand of his uncle the accomplishment of his promise. Laban seemed to consent, and made the usual preparations for the wedding. An entertainment was made ready. All the men of Haran were invited. But as Jacob had made his brother suffer by deceit, so he was now made to suffer by deceit himself. Providence often punishes

men in such a way as to make them see that they fall by their own snares. When the marriage came to be accomplished, Jacob found, that instead of Rachel, he had married Leah. When he found out the cheat which had been put upon him, he said to his father-in-law, "What is this thou hast done unto me? did I not serve thee for Rachel? Wherefore hast thou beguiled me?"

Laban made a poor excuse. He did not fear the poor Hebrew who was in his power. He pretended that it was the custom in that country for the elder sister always to be married before the younger. Even if it had been so, he ought to have informed Jacob of it long before. But he tried to smooth the matter over in this way. He declared, that as soon as the feast, which lasted a week, was over, he would give Rachel also to Jacob, on condition, that he should be his shepherd for seven more years. Jacob agreed to this, and in doing so, fell into the great evil of having two wives. You will see the

family troubles which flowed from this wrong step. Blessed be God, that in Christian times, marriage takes place between one man and one woman only.

Seven years more now passed away, in which Jacob still passed his time as a shepherd. During this period he became the father of a family. Besides Leah and Rachel, he had in his household two women named Bilhah and Zilpah. They were not exactly his lawful wives, neither were they mere servants. But they may be called secondary wives. This is an evil thing, which it is best not to enlarge upon at this time. In our day of gospel light, it is a sin not to know, that God's will is, for one husband to have one wife, and no more. See 1 Cor. vii. 2. Bilhah was the maid of Rachel, and Zilpah was the maid of Leah. And from these four women descended all the children of Israel.

It is not strange that Jacob should love best the wife of his choice: he loved Rachel more than Leah. But, when the

Lord saw that Leah was hated, he made her the mother of children, while Rachel remained childless.

The first four sons of Jacob were born of Leah. These were, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah.

The fifth was the son of Bilhah. This was Dan.

The sixth and seventh were the sons of Zilpah. These were Gad and Asher.

The eighth and ninth were sons of Leah. These were Issachar and Zebulon. And then Leah was made the mother of a daughter. This was Dinah.

All this time Rachel had no children. At length God heard her prayers, and gave her a son. This was Joseph.

In this remarkable increase of Jacob's family, we see the promise fulfilled: *God make thee fruitful, and multiply thee.* You will read of one more son hereafter.

The time had now come when Jacob longed to return to the land of his birth. He was fifty-four years of age. His family was large, and he had been hardly

treated by his father-in-law. In consequence of his faithful service, and the remarkable blessing of God on him, he had been the means of greatly increasing Laban's wealth. And, trusting in God, he was willing to set out on this long and dangerous journey to Canaan, though he had received no wages, but his two wives, during fourteen years. He therefore said to Laban, "Dismiss me, that I may return to my native land. Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served, and let me go. For thou knowest the service I have done thee."

Laban was unwilling to part with him, for he said, truly, "I have learned by experience, that Jehovah has blessed me for thy sake." So he offered to give any wages that Jacob would ask. Jacob reminded him how useful he had been to him. "Thou knowest how I have served, and how thy cattle was with me. For thou hadst but a little before I came, and now it is a multitude." And Jacob

added, that it was time for him to provide something for his own family.

At length they agreed that Jacob should remain for a time, and should have part of the goats and sheep for his own. Jacob was to keep those of the flocks which were marked in a particular manner.

Now Providence so ordered it, that as the flocks increased, a great part of them came into the world with the very marks which made them Jacob's property. And he increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid-servants, and men-servants, and camels, and asses. This is the wealth of the nations of the East. In Arabia, and Syria, and Mesopotamia, they reckon a man's riches, not by his money, but by his flocks and herds.

! Laban had sons, and when they saw their brother-in-law growing rich in this way, they were filled with envy. "Jacob," said they, "hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's, he has got the glory." Jacob

heard of this. He also saw from Laban's manner that he was displeased. It was time for him to depart. But he did not go without God's leave. The Lord came to give him counsel, and said, "Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred, and *I will be with thee.*" He said also: "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me. Get thee from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred."

You here perceive how worthy of remembrance was the occurrence at Bethel. God himself calls himself the *God of Bethel*, and reminds Jacob of the promise and the vow.

## CHAPTER IV.

Eastern sheep-shearing—The Teraphim—Laban pursues Jacob—They meet in the mountains—Their discourse—The search for the idols—The treaty at Mizpah—Esau approaches—Message and gift to Esau—Prayer at Jabbok—Wrestles with an angel—Change of name—Peaceable meeting with Esau—Encamp at Succoth.

THE part of Mesopotamia in which these events took place, was formerly called Happy Mesopotamia, to distinguish it from the south-eastern wildernesses, which were called Desert Mesopotamia. It had hills, and vales, and rivers, and was a good land for flocks and herds. Where there are sheep by hundreds and thousands, it takes a great many men and much time and labour to attend to them. Particularly when the flocks were to be stripped of their fleeces, at the beginning of summer, the care of them occupies the shepherds, and often, many

days are spent in shearing them. The herds and flocks of Laban were immense. Perhaps no reader of this has ever seen half as many animals together at one time.

About the year 1739 before Christ, in the beginning of the warm season, they were all busy in sheep-shearing. Three days had passed in this way, when suddenly news came to Laban, that his daughters and their husband were missing. On making inquiry, he found that they had all gone away while he was thinking of other matters. They had taken away all their possessions, camels, and asses, and cows, and goats, and sheep, and tents, and furniture, and servants. And, besides this, Rachel had stolen her father's images. These were called *Tera-  
phim*, and were a sort of idols, used by the wretched heathen of that country. It was wrong for Laban to own these, but it was also wrong for Rachel to purloin them. She did it without her husband's knowledge, and they became an occasion of evil afterwards, as you will see.

Laban immediately set out to pursue the fugitives, taking his brethren or kinsmen along with him. In those countries camels are the chief beasts of burden. The camel is large and strong, and is easily broken, so as to be as gentle as a dog. He goes many days without water, and carries great loads, and is not injured by the heat or sand of the desert. A company of camels and travellers, with their tents, and cattle, and merchandise, is called a caravan. Jacob's caravan was now three days in advance of Laban. The women and children were mounted on the camels, in panniers or saddles such as you see in this cut.



Laban knew very well that they would take a southerly course, and travel as fast as they could through the desert of Syria, towards the river Jordan. He,



therefore, hastened in the same direction. And he could go almost twice as fast as Jacob's caravan, which was hindered by having women, and herds, and young animals. Hundreds of miles he had to travel before he overtook the caravan. At the end of seven days, Laban reached the chain of mountains which runs north and south, on the east of Palestine, and is called there mount Gilead. But before

he came up with them, God came to him in a dream, and commanded him not to say one word to Jacob to hinder his journey.

Both Laban and Jacob pitched their tents among these mountains, which were afterwards inhabited by the half tribe of Manasseh. They had a meeting there. Laban accused Jacob, at once, of having gone away secretly, and carried away his daughters as if they had been slaves taken in battle. He pretended that if Jacob had let him know, he would have sent them away with honour, and to the sound of music. He complained that he had not even been allowed to give his children a farewell kiss; and declared that he could have revenged himself on Jacob, if God had not forbidden it. But what troubled him most of all was, the loss of his miserable idols, which he called his *gods*.

Jacob answered, that he had really been afraid to let Laban know of his intentions, lest he should have kept his

wives by force. And as to the teraphim, he said: "If you find them with any of us, let the offender be put to death; search for your property, and take it." This seemed very reasonable, and Laban began to search for the stolen goods. He went through the camp, from one tent to another. They were not in Leah's tent, nor in Bilhah's, nor in Zilpah's. And when he entered the tent of Rachel, he searched every part of it in vain, except the camel's furniture, or riding-saddle, which she used as a seat, and from which she did not arise.

Laban was disappointed, and Jacob was angry. "In what am I to blame?" said Jacob warmly, "what is my sin, that you have so pursued me? You have searched all our goods, and what have you found of your property? Set it here before your companions; I will leave them to judge between us. I have lived twenty years with you, and have taken good care of your flocks. Where there was any thing stolen, I bore the loss.

You made me answer for it. I gave you the best, and kept the worst. I lost my rest in your service. I suffered by day from the heat, and by night from the frost. So I have spent twenty years, being your servant fourteen of them, for your two daughters; and the remainder for these flocks and herds. Ten times you changed my wages. And even now, I should have left you without any thing, if it were not for God, the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the God whom Isaac feared. God has been with me. He saw my affliction, and rebuked thee last night.”

This was a forcible speech, and it reached the heart of Laban. At any rate it stopped his mouth. All that was in Jacob's caravan was his own; he had paid dearly for it. Laban now acknowledged that the women were his daughters, and the boys and girls were his children; and proposed to come to an agreement with his son-in-law. To this Jacob consented.

To mark the place, and to set up a pillar of stone on mount Gilead, Jacob's kinsmen made a heap of stones, and they all ate there on the heap, in token of being friends again. The spot thus marked,



was called by three names. Jacob and Laban named it *The Witness-Heap*,\* one in Chaldee, the other in Hebrew. It also went by the name of *Watch Tower*,† because Laban had said, *Jehovah, watch between me and thee*.

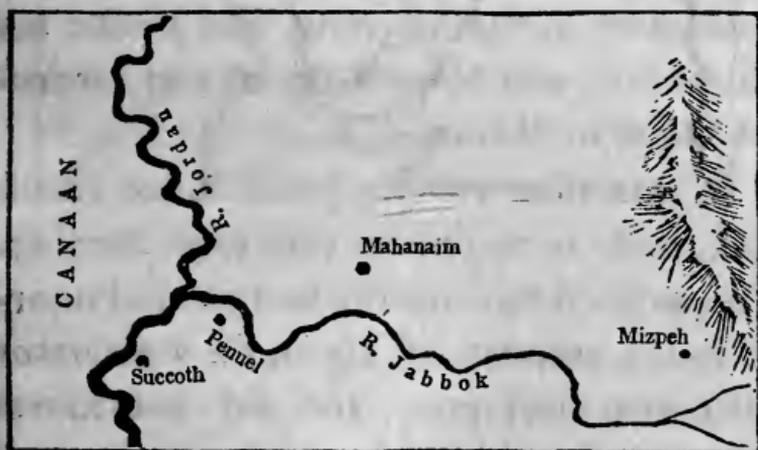
\* In Chaldee, *Jegarsbhadutha*: in Hebrew, *Gilead* or *Gilead*.

† *Mizpeh*.

The covenant or agreement between the two men was this: Jacob engaged that he would be kind to Leah and Rachel, and that they should be his only wives. And both of them agreed that the pillar and heap should be the limit between them. Neither should ever go beyond this to injure the other. And Jacob swore by the Lord, the fear of his father Isaac. He also sacrificed, and joined with his kinsman in a friendly meal. After passing the night in mount Gilead, Laban rose early in the morning, and kissed his daughters, and blessed them, and returned home to Haran.

It was now twenty years since Jacob had fled from his revengeful brother. Yet, as he was drawing nearer and nearer to the country of Esau, he was naturally very anxious. He did not know whether the old grudge still remained or not. In these circumstances, it was an encouragement to Jacob to find that he was not forsaken by God. As he journeyed southward, on the eastern side of

Jordan, near the river Jabbok, he was met by a multitude of angels. In our day angels do not appear, but they were often sent to cheer the hearts of ancient believers. The spot where this memorable meeting occurred, was in the region afterwards allotted to the descendants of Gad, who was then a little boy in that caravan. When Jacob saw the angels, he immediately said, *This is God's army*, and he named the place *Mahanaim*, which means, *The two armies*.



To the south of this place, was a country filled with mountains. These mountains extend round the Dead Sea, into the region between Palestine and the Red

Sea. It is now called Stony Arabia. It was then the land of Edom or Esau. Mount Seir is a desolate chain of moun-



tains, lying between the Dead Sea and the eastern bay of the Red Sea. Among these eminences Esau and his followers pursued their prey, and led a wild and warlike life.

Though Jacob was many miles north of this region, he considered it prudent to send messengers before him, to Esau his brother, unto the land of Seir, the

country of Edom. They were to tell Esau, very respectfully, of Jacob's coming, and of his family, and estate. In a short time the men came back, with the unpleasant news, that Esau himself was on his way to meet his brother, with four hundred men. At this intelligence Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; for as soon as he heard of the warriors who accompanied Esau, he dreaded the worst. In these troubles, Jacob neglected neither prayer nor effort. To pray without labour is presumption: to labour without prayer is ungodliness. What is now to be done, to turn away this bad man's anger, and to preserve the family? The first step is to arrange the defenceless company. He divided it therefore into two parts, so that if the foremost were destroyed, the hindmost might chance to escape. Both the people and the cattle were thus divided.

The next step was to pray to God, who had delivered him in previous trials. It is a touching prayer.

## JACOB'S PRAYER AT JABBOK.

“O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, Jehovah, who saidst unto me, Return to thy country and thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of the mercies and of the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant: for, with my staff (alone) I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and smite me, the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.”

Take notice here, that we are allowed to pray for deliverance from worldly troubles; and that we have a right to plead God's promises.

The next step which Jacob took was, to get ready a present for Esau. A gift

pacifieth anger, says the wise man, and a reward strong wrath. After the night had passed, therefore, Jacob arranged a herd of animals, to the number of five hundred and eighty. Two hundred and twenty goats, two hundred and twenty sheep, fifty neat cattle, thirty asses, and thirty she-camels, with their colts. The camels are of great value in the East, on account of their milk, which they give all the year long.

The servants who conducted this drove were ordered to go forward. When they met Esau, and he asked what the drove was, they were directed to say, "They are thy servant Jacob's, sent to my lord Esau, for a present. And Jacob himself is coming on behind us." In this way Jacob would learn whether Esau was willing to be reconciled; for, in the East, the acceptance of a present is a sign of friendship. The servants went on with the present, and Jacob passed another night with his caravan. But, before the night had been spent, there occurred one

of the most remarkable events ever recorded in any man's life. It took place on the banks of the Jabbok, now called Zerka, a stream which rises in Mount Gilead, and flows through a deep valley into the Jordan.

Over this little river he took the women, and children, and property. And then he was left alone. What then took place is hard to explain, but we know enough to instruct and amaze us. A mysterious being wrestled with Jacob until daybreak. He is called a Man, and an Angel, and, indirectly, God. When this wonderful visiter found that he prevailed not, he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, and put his thigh out of joint, as he wrestled with him. From this we learn to call *prayer* a wrestling with God. The angel said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." Jacob said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." When we pray, we ought to be importunate: God loves such prayer. And the angel said, "What is thy name?" He asked

this, not from ignorance, but to introduce what follows: for, when the patriarch answered, "Jacob," he said, "Thy name shall no more be called JACOB," a *supplanter*, "but ISRAEL," a *prince of God*, "for as a prince hast thou power with God, and with men, and hast prevailed." And Jacob said, "I pray thee tell me thy name." "Wherefore," replied he, "dost thou ask after my name?" And he blessed Jacob there.

We are very sure that this was something more than a bodily contest, because the Holy Ghost says expressly, By his strength he had power with GOD; yea, he had power over the ANGEL, and prevailed; he *wept and made supplication*.\* All the strength which Jacob had in this contest came from him with whom he contended. And all the strength we have in prayer comes from him to whom we pray. For as the apostle Paul says: "We know not what we should pray for

\* Hos. xii. 3.

as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us."

We are also sure that this angel was God, because Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved;" and hence he named the place *Pe-*



*niel*, that is, *God's Face*. It is also called *Penuel*. And thus you have the reason why the patriarch was called *Israel*. This new title became the principal name of his posterity, and of the church.

The Jews, in recollection of Jacob's wrestling and lameness, avoid eating certain parts of the thigh of animals.

Surely, Jacob's fear of Esau must be gone. He has prevailed with God, and

God has met him face to face, and blessed him. When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.\* He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. Jacob hastened to arrange his family so that Rachel and little Joseph might be furthest from danger, and the handmaids and their children in front. Then going before, he bowed himself to the ground, after the eastern manner, (as in the cut,) seven times, until he came near his brother.



And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him; and they wept. These were tears of joy and reconciliation. Esau first broke silence. Looking on the wo-

\* Prov. xvi. 7.

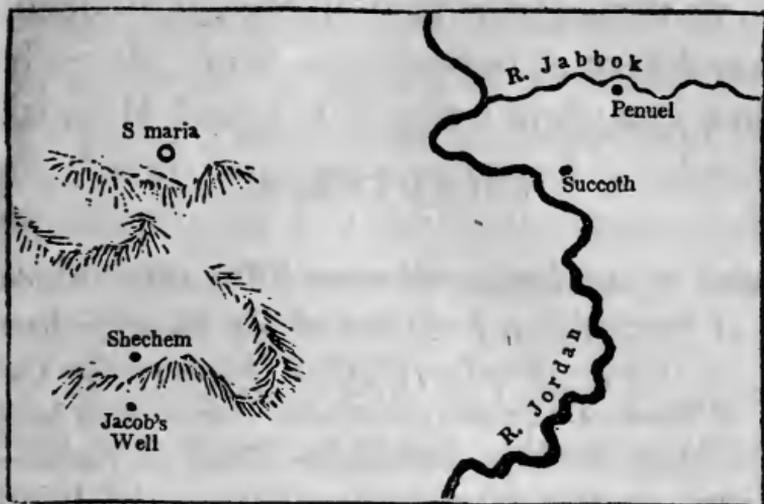
men and children, he asked, "Who are these?" Jacob said, "The children whom God hath graciously given thy servant." And then the whole family, in order, came and bowed themselves before Esau. He then asked what was intended by the large drove he had met, and Jacob explained that it was a present. "I have enough, my brother," said Esau, "keep what thou hast for thyself." Jacob, however, urged him, until he consented to receive it. He even offered to lead the way, and accompany Jacob to the promised land; but Jacob prudently declined the offer, as the tenderness of the flocks and of the children made it necessary for them to go very slowly. So Esau returned that day on his way home, and Jacob, full of joy, went forward towards the south-west. His last encampment east of the Jordan was near the river, almost due east of Samaria. At this spot he built a house, and made sheds or booths for his cattle. Therefore, the name

of the place is *Succoth*, or *booths*. It afterwards fell to the lot of Gad, and was the place where the brass columns of the temple were cast.

## CHAPTER V.

Jacob crosses Jordan—Shechem—The altar—Murder of Shechemites—Jacob reminded of his vow—Revisits Bethel—Idolatry—Death of Deborah—The Oak of Tears—God again enters into covenant with Jacob—Drink-offerings—Bethlehem—Death of Rachel—Birth of Benjamin—Mamre—Catalogue of Jacob's sons.

AT length Jacob crossed the river, and entered the land of promise. To him, it was a well-known land, and he remembered the scenes of his youth, and his aged parents. To his family, it was a country as yet unknown, and strange. Many years before, he had passed this river, with nothing but his staff; now, he re-crossed it with a numerous family. Pursuing his course to the south-east, he came to the valley between mount Ebal and mount Gerizim. Here, about eight miles south of Samaria, there lived a man named Shechem, in or near the ancient



city of the same name, also called Shalim. This young prince, Shechem, was the son of Hamor, a chief among the Hivites, one of the six nations of Canaan. The valley is to this day a delightful spot. Beautiful gardens skirt the stream which waters it. A populous town is there situated, called *Nablous*. "As the traveller," says Dr. Clarke, "descends towards it from the hills, it appears luxuriantly imbosomed in the most delightful and fragrant bowers, half concealed by rich gardens and by stately trees collected into groves all around the bold and beautiful valley in which it stands."

In this lovely vale of Shechem, Jacob purchased a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent. He paid Hamor's family a hundred pieces of money for this land. But he did not forget the mercy of God; he, therefore, erected an altar there, and called it *El-elohe Israel*, that is, *God, the God of Israel*. It has been well said, "Where we have a *tent*, God should have an *altar*." In those days there was no spot set apart for the exclusive worship of Jehovah, and the patriarchs built altars in many places.

It is painful to see, as we proceed in our narrative, that afflictions increase. The severest trials of parents are usually those in which their children are concerned. Should not every child endeavour then to live in such a way as to save his dear parents from griefs of this kind? Jacob now begins to be afflicted in his children. He had but one daughter; and at this pleasant place of sojourning, she was seduced and humbled. Happy had it been for young Dinah, if she had re-

mained in her mother's tent, and never gone out, "to see the daughters of the land." Young women are in most safety when they are "keepers at home." Princes are often wicked men. Shechem betrayed Dinah, and then immediately proposed to marry her. Jacob waited till his sons came home before he gave any answer. When Dinah's brothers heard the lamentable story, they were enraged. They sought revenge. Pretending to agree to the proposal of the marriage, they persuaded the Shechemites to be circumcised. And then, most unexpectedly, Simeon and Levi burst in upon the city, murdered all the male inhabitants, and took every thing else as their spoil.

When Jacob heard of this wicked assault, he was much distressed, and said to the two brothers, who were ringleaders in the outrage: "Ye have troubled me, and made me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and Perizzites. And as we are few in number, they will gather themselves together

against me, and slay me, and I and my house shall be destroyed." Even on his dying bed the old man remembered the transaction, and said: "Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel."\*

We are not informed of the particular manner in which the patriarch and his sons spent the first few years of their residence in Canaan. He had a family growing up around him, in the midst of bad example, and the natural depravity of the human heart is such, that young people easily give way to temptation. Even pious parents often have impious children. Remember, youthful reader, the piety of your parents cannot save you.

There were idols in Jacob's family. It is impossible to say whether these were the false gods that Rachel stole, or images which they got from the Canaanites. In those days, even ornaments, such as ear-rings, were used as idols. Another

\* Gen. xlix. 5—7.

sin was, that Jacob had not hastened to fulfil the vow he had made many years before, at Bethel. You may recollect that he vowed thus: "If God will keep me so that I come again in peace, *this stone shall be God's house.*" When you vow a vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. It is better not to vow at all, than to vow and not pay.\* Jacob had not yet visited Bethel.

On a certain time, therefore, God reminded him of his vow, and said; "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau, thy brother."

This warning reached his conscience. He considered his sins, and the sins of his family. He called to mind his chastisements. They were deserved. They ought to have led to amendment.

The sin of *idolatry* is atrocious. There is no crime which God punishes with

\* Eccl. v. 4.

sorer wrath. Perhaps none of us consider often enough the wickedness of loving or worshipping the creature more than the Creator. Among the ancients, the propensity to leave Jehovah and worship idols, was strong. Even in Jacob's house there were some of these strange gods.

Jacob called his family, and all who were with him, and said, "Put away the strange gods, that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments." Washing the body and the clothes, was a sign of inward purification. You will find it to be so in all ancient nations, and especially among the Israelites. Yet, no outward washing can take away sin, however useful it may be as a sign or token. "Let us arise," added he, "and go up to Bethel, and I will there make an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." Yes, it was indeed a day of distress when the poor, lonely exile lay

down on his stone pillow at Luz. How wonderfully God had brought him back! The people immediately gave up all their images, together with the ear-rings which were in their ears. Jacob buried these in the earth under an oak, near Shechem; and then they set out on their journey further south. As they went

along they passed through a populous country of wicked, war-like men, who might have destroyed every one of them with the utmost ease. But these Ca-



naanites were "in great fear; for God is in the generation of the righteous."\* A

\* Ps. xiv. 5.

dread was cast into their souls by the Lord, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue Jacob's company. The travellers safely arrived at Bethel. And here Jacob built an altar, and thus fulfilled his vow that it should be God's house. He called the place El Bethel, or the God of Bethel, because God had appeared to him there, when he was flying from Esau. While they were at Bethel, they had another affliction, in the death of Deborah, an aged woman. She was not a rich friend, but an humble domestic, the nurse of Rachel; yet she was beloved, and her death is recorded in God's holy book. Let this teach young people to be respectful to those who have watched over their infancy. And let it comfort those who are in humble stations. Deborah was buried near Bethel, under an oak, and in after times the spot was called *The Oak of Tears*,\* from the sorrow of the family for this good woman.

\* *Allon-bachuth.*

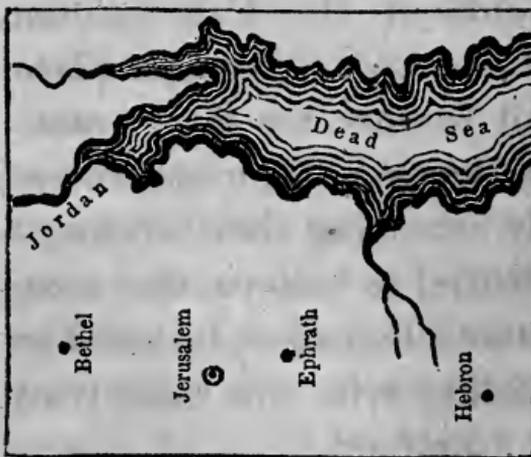
It was not long after this, that God again appeared to Jacob, to confirm his promises, and renew the change of his name. He said, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply: a nation, and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall descend from thee. And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land."

Whenever we read in after times of the immense population of Canaan, or whenever we see how the Jews were multiplied, we should be reminded of God's gracious promise. The Israelites were more than a nation; every tribe was a nation; Israel was *a company of nations*.

After this blessed interview, God went up from the spot where the patriarch was. The place was more memorable than ever; and Jacob marked it by a pillar of stone, which he moistened with oil, as before. He also poured upon it a *drink-offering*, the first men-

tioned in history. This is what we should now call a *liquid-offering*, and under the law, the liquid always used was wine. A number of the rites enjoined by the Levitical law had been divinely appointed ages before. Jacob renewed the name he had previously given to Luz, and called it again "The House of God."

From Bethel he set off, after some time, to journey towards Bethlehem. This place was then known by the name of Ephrath. Its greatest glory is that of being Christ's native place. It was also the native place of David. It is on a rising ground not quite six miles from Je-



rusalem. On the way, Jacob met with another sore affliction, at a place a little to the north-west of Ephrath.

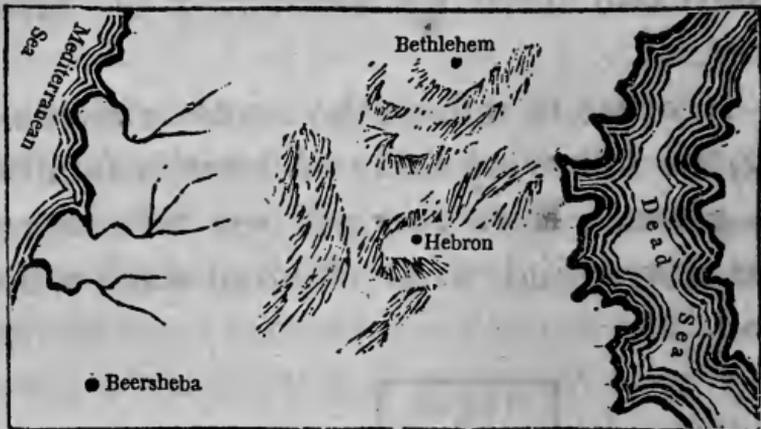
For here his beloved wife, Rachel, died,

after giving birth to the last of his sons. As her soul was departing, she named the babe *Benoni*, that is, "Son of my sorrow." But Jacob called him *Benjamin*, that is, "Son of my right hand." Jacob did not convey the corpse to the family burial place, but committed it to the earth near Bethlehem. He erected a pillar, as a monument over her grave. For ages this was known as *Rachel's Pillar*; and a tomb is even now pointed out as the same, though it is judged by discreet travellers to be a modern work. It so happened that this spot afterwards fell within the tribe of Benjamin.

The shepherds of the East seldom abide long in one spot. No one place can long afford pasture for their numerous flocks and herds. They are, therefore, constantly removing their encampments. It is natural to believe, that soon after Jacob entered Palestine, he went to visit his aged father, who was more than a century and a half old.

After leaving Ephrath, Jacob encamp-

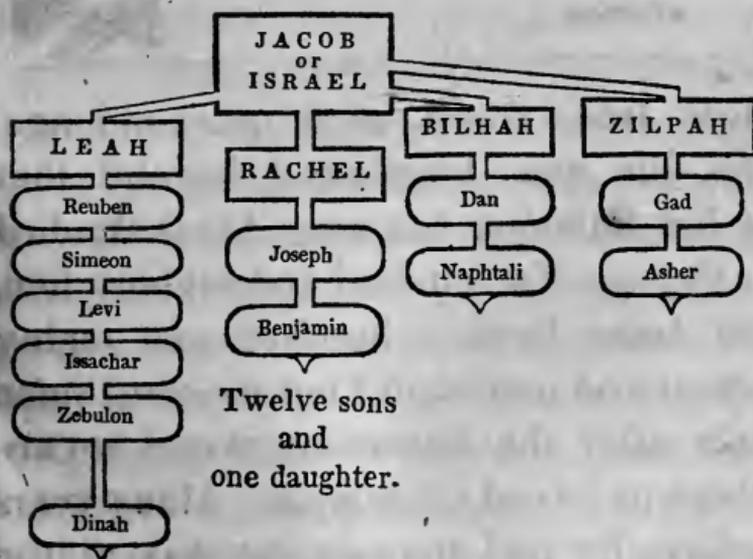
ed at a place called the Tower of Edar, the site of which is not known. The only occurrence mentioned in the history of this period, is a grievous crime of his eldest son. After this we read of a visit of Jacob to Mamre, or Hebron, the old family residence of Abraham and Isaac.



Here Isaac dwelt, in a quiet old age. His life was lengthened beyond that of his father or his son: Abraham died at the age of a hundred and seventy-five, but Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years; and indeed, did not die until some time after the distressing events we are about to record of Joseph. Many years before, he had thought he was at the

point of death, and Esau seemed to think so too; but, after so long a period, the old man is still living. Esau and Jacob were so far reconciled at the time of his decease, that they united in burying him. See how God restrains the wrath of man. This was the very point of time which Esau had fixed for murdering his brother.

In order to refresh the reader's memory, the following table of Israel's family is given. Here you will see who were his wives, and what children each wife had.



## CHAPTER VI.

Jacob's favourite—The coat of many colours—Joseph's dreams—Joseph's journey to Shechem and Dothan—He is seized by his brothers—Cast into a pit—Sold to the Ishmaelites.

IT was very natural that Jacob should feel a partiality towards Joseph and Benjamin. They were not only the youngest of the family, but they were the children of the wife whom he chiefly loved. In particular, Joseph was beloved, as he was of an age to be his aged father's companion, while Benjamin was still an infant. All the other brothers were men of mature age, and spent their time actively as shepherds. Although Joseph was only a *lad*, about seventeen years old, he joined them in feeding the flocks. Generally he kept company with Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. They were all bad men; and the youth saw their

evil conduct, and gave information to his father. It is likely he did this, not as a tale-bearer, but as a brother, whose duty it is to reveal what is wrong, where there is any hope of preventing it.

This would be the very thing to render himself hateful to them; for wicked young men always hate those who reprove their vices. But there was another thing which made them look with great dislike on Joseph; this was Jacob's partiality for him. The other sons could not help seeing that their father loved their brother more than all his children. He had given Joseph a coat of various colours, perhaps of great splendour and beauty; at any rate it was meant for a great distinction, and showed what a favourite he was. It is always unwise for any father, or mother, or teacher, to manifest a marked partiality of this sort. It injures the very person whom it is intended to favour. It raises *envy* in those who are slighted; and envy is a strong and cruel passion. "Wrath is cruelty,

and anger is an overflowing, but who is able to stand before envy?"\* The envy or jealousy of these brothers was excited against Joseph, without any sufficient reason; they hated him without a cause. They so hated him, that they could not speak a fair word to him, or give him a common salutation.

Just in this way Jesus Christ was hated by the Jews and the wicked world. He "testified of them that their works were evil." Just in this way, good men are hated by sinners, even for their very goodness.

But there was still another circumstance which tended to increase this hatred. In that age of the world, God often revealed future events by means of dreams. We must not expect such revelations now. But this is no reason why we should doubt the truth of this or any account given in the Bible, which is our only revelation. God caused Joseph to have two dreams, which were very re-

\* Prov. xxvii. 4.

markable. They signified that he was to be exalted over all the family, and that they were to be subject to him. Joseph was simple-hearted and frank, and accordingly told both his dreams to his brothers. "Hear, I pray you," said he, "this dream which I have dreamed. For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance, or respectfully bowed, to my sheaf."

His brothers immediately saw what this might mean, and suspected him of ambitious hopes. "What!" said they, "shalt thou reign over us? Shalt thou have dominion over us?" Their pride and revenge were fired. They hated him more than ever they had done before.

The dream was of God. All that these bad men were able to do, could not prevent its coming to pass. And the same thing was revealed in another similar dream, which Joseph, in like manner,

related to his jealous brothers, and his father.

“Behold,” said he, “I have dreamed a dream more; and behold, the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.”

This was plainer still. The exact number of his brothers was shown by the stars; and they bowed down to Joseph himself. The sun represented his father, and the moon his *mother*, as Leah was now called. Jacob was, perhaps, ignorant that the dreams were of God; or he wished to teach Joseph more caution. Therefore, he asked, “What! shall I, and thy mother, and thy brethren, indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee, to the earth?” The old man, however, treasured it up in his mind, and no doubt often thought of it, when the whole of it came to pass exactly.

While Jacob was dwelling in the valley of Hebron, in the south of the land, the ten sons were tending their flocks,

about sixty miles to the northward, in the neighbourhood of Shechem, already mentioned. The old patriarch had been some time without any tidings of them, and became anxious for their welfare. This was the more natural, as they had gone to the very spot where they had some years before engaged in such a massacre. He resolved, therefore, to send a messenger, and for this purpose he selected Joseph. "Come," said he, "and I will send thee unto them." And Joseph said, "Here am I." "Go, I pray thee," said his father, "see whether all is well with your brothers and their flocks, and bring me word again."— It was a long, a dangerous journey, for a lad of seventeen. Joseph had to travel through a country of enemies, and to meet brothers who hated him in their hearts. Yet he seems to have undertaken it with willingness and courage.

He travelled as far as Shechem, and somewhere in that region he lost his way.



A stranger found him wandering through the country, and asked him what he was looking for. Joseph answered, "I am seeking my brethren; tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks." The stranger told him that they had left

Shechem, and had driven their flocks to Dothan. Joseph, therefore, proceeded towards Dothan, little expecting the treatment which he was there to receive. For as soon as he came in sight of his unnatural brethren, they conspired to murder him. Even while he was yet at a distance they began to lay their plans. "Behold, this dreamer cometh!" said they to

one another, as they saw him approaching in the hateful dress. "Come, now, let us kill him, and cast him into some pit; and we will say some wild beast has devoured him. Then we shall see what will become of his dreams." This was not altogether pleasing to Reuben, the eldest brother, who seems not to have been as cruel as the rest, though he was a wicked man. "Shed no blood," said he, "but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him." It was Reuben's design to get the youth out of the hands of these wretches, and restore him to his father.

All this occurred before Joseph reached the place where they were talking. As soon as he came near, they seized him, stripped him of his coat of many colours, and threw him into a pit. All except Reuben intended perhaps to leave Joseph to perish of hunger and thirst.

The situation of the unfortunate boy was dreadful indeed. In the anguish of his soul, he besought them to spare him,

but they would not hear.\* Indeed, so unfeeling were they, that while Joseph lay in this dreary pit, they sat down to eat, as if nothing strange had happened. We here see that those whom God loves may sometimes be brought into great difficulties. Several times in Jacob's history we have found this to be the case, and we shall observe the same thing more than once in the history of Joseph.

While the barbarous sons of Jacob were thus abandoning their brother to his fate, they beheld, at a distance, a company of Arabian traders, travelling in a caravan, in the way already described in this volume. These wandering merchants were the descendants of Abraham; some of them being of the posterity of Hagar, and some of Keturah. In this account, they are called Ishmaelites, and also Midianites. They dwell in the regions east and south-east of Palestine; and, at that early age, had a trade with Egypt, whither they carried, on their camels, the rich

\* Gen. xlii. 21.



productions of Arabia, such as myrrh, balm or balsam, a gum which flows from trees, frankincense, and other spices and perfumes. The company which now appeared, was on its way from mount Gilead to Egypt. It is possible that Judah had, by this time, begun to shrink from the bloody plot of the others, and now when he saw these traders, it occurred to him that he might avoid the guilt of murder. He said, therefore, "What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmael-

ites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh." Reuben was absent at this time, but all the rest assented at once to the proposal of Judah. They immediately offered their innocent brother to these strangers as a slave, and sold him for the paltry sum of twenty pieces of silver. Joseph was drawn up out of the dry well or pit and put into the hands of the Midianites, who proceeded with him to Egypt. No one of the persons concerned had any idea of God's wise purpose in this transaction. Distressing as the event was to Joseph, it was intended by Providence to be the greatest blessing to himself, and his father, and his wicked brethren. God was now sending him before them to save them all from famine.\* But this does not lessen the guilt of these hard-hearted men. Regardless of Joseph's cries and tears, they had sold him as a slave; and for many years afterwards

\* Gen. xlv. 7.

their consciences stung them for this enormity.

After all this had taken place, Reuben returned, and went to the pit where Joseph had been left. When he saw that Joseph was not there, he was filled with grief. He rent his clothes, which, in the eastern countries, is a sign of great distress or horror. He said to his brothers, "The child is no more! And I, whither shall I go!"

One difficulty had now been removed, but the cruel brothers had still another. They had disposed of Joseph, but what should they say to their father? They knew that the lad was his darling, and that to hear of his death would almost break his heart. Still they determined to persuade their father that Joseph was no more. They had retained the favourite coat of many colours. This they took, and dipped it in the blood of a kid. And then, with matchless falsehood and cruelty, they took this bloody



garment to their aged father, as if they had found it by chance, and said, "We have found this; see if it is thy son's coat or no." The terrified patriarch knew it in a moment. It was the very garment he had given Joseph as a distinction; and it had contributed to this sad event. "It is my son's coat!" cried he; "some evil beast has devoured him! Joseph is, without doubt, torn in pieces!" And Jacob rent his clothes, and covered his body with sackcloth, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons, and all his daughters, (or sons' wives,) endeavoured

to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted, and said, "I will go down mourning to my son to the grave." Thus his father wept for him.

## CHAPTER VII.

Joseph is carried to Egypt—Account of Egypt—Sold as a slave—Honoured by Potiphar—Joseph's temptation and escape—Cast into prison—Honoured in the prison—Pharaoh's butler and baker—Joseph interprets their dreams—The butler's promise.

IN the mean time the merchants to whom Joseph had been sold, carried him into Egypt. But, before we proceed with his history, it is necessary to give the reader some account of this interesting country.

Egypt is in the north-eastern part of Africa, next to Arabia. It is a narrow strip of country lying along both sides of the famous river Nile. This river rises in unknown regions, and runs northward into the Mediterranean sea. It regularly overflows its banks, and enriches the lands on both sides by the rich loam

which its waters leave ; so that Egypt was celebrated as the most fruitful land of the ancient world. Even at present, it abounds in garden-plants, fruits, and grain. As rain is almost unknown, the river Nile is an unspeakable blessing to the Egyptians.



Egypt was first settled by Mizraim, the second son of Ham. After this it was governed by princes of its own for about a century, when it was conquered by the *Shepherds* or Cushites from Asia.

The kings of Egypt, for some ages, all took their name of *Pharaoh*; just as, at a later period, they all took the name of *Ptolemy*. The one who is mentioned in Abraham's history, is supposed to have been one of the *Shepherd-kings*. The shepherds were driven out of the land by Amosis, after they had been in power about two centuries and a half; and this event seems to have taken place a little before the entrance of Joseph. This was about 1728 years before Christ.

The country into which the injured Hebrew was now carried, was greatly celebrated for population, riches, and learning. At one time it is said to have supported 7,500,000 persons. Such were its abundant crops, that it fed many other nations by its exports; and we find, that when the neighbouring countries were oppressed with famine, it was common to resort to the Egyptians for supplies. And long before Greek or Roman literature had been heard of, Egypt was famous for its wise men and its writings.

Its kings lived in great splendour and luxury; and all classes of the people were given up to vile idolatry. They also believed in magic, and divination, and had innumerable superstitions. Instead of burying or burning their dead, the Egyptians embalmed the corpses in such a way with spices and gums, that they would remain thousands of years. Bodies thus embalmed, are still found in the caves of Egypt, and are called *Mummies*. (See cut on the following page.)

Into this country, then, was Joseph brought in the caravan of the Midianites. Little did the youth suppose, when he entered it as a slave, that he should one day rule it as a prince. He was soon purchased by a great man of Egypt named Potiphar. This man was one of Pharaoh's officers, being either the commander of his guard, or the chief of his executioners, which last is by no means a dishonourable place in the East. Forsaken as the young Hebrew seemed to be, an exile and a slave, he was not friend-



less. The Scripture uses one expression concerning him, which every youthful reader would do well to remember: *The Lord was with Joseph*; and he became a prosperous man, and he was admitted to a place of comfort and respect in the house of the Egyptian. Every thing which was committed to his charge prospered, and he enjoyed the entire confidence of his master. Potiphar made him superintendent of all his concerns, and gave him charge of all his property. From this time, the affairs of Potiphar were remarkably prosperous, and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he was concerned in, both in the house and in the field. Thus it is, that God not only blesses those who love him, but often, for their sake, blesses those who are about them. Who can tell how many divine favours have come down on a household by reason of one pious domestic.

In our greatest honour we often meet our greatest temptations. Joseph was

honoured to such a degree, that his master intrusted every thing to his hand, without taking any account. He was in a manner the master of the house. The wife of Potiphar was a wicked woman. She endeavoured, from day to day, to entice Joseph to commit a great offence against God and his master. But he refused, and said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" A good answer for every youth to make to every temptation. The base woman, disappointed and mortified, was at once filled with a spirit of revenge. When Joseph fled from her, as the only way of avoiding her temptation, she called the people of the house, and charged the young Hebrew with having offered her a wicked insult, indeed, with having attempted the very crime which his pious soul had abhorred. This was a sore trial to a virtuous youth.

Nothing personal is dearer to any one than his good name, but the purest beings may be calumniated. It is so easy

to destroy one's reputation, that we ought to feel our continual dependence on God for our character, and render him hearty thanks for its preservation. And when we are falsely accused, as even our blessed Saviour was, let us commit ourselves to God, and rejoice in the witness of a good conscience.

It was natural for Potiphar to believe his wife. He was enraged at the supposed ingratitude and vice of his servant. He took Joseph and cast him into prison, where the king's prisoners were confined. Here again we find Joseph in a very forlorn and helpless situation. Yet he was not forsaken, *for the Lord was with Joseph*, and showed him mercy, and made the keeper of the prison favourable to him. We do not find that Potiphar ever inquired after him again. But even in a jail, honesty and fidelity will become conspicuous. The jailer perceived the purity of Joseph's character, and accordingly gave him the charge of all the other prisoners. Thus he rose to eminence in the

prison, just as he had before done in the house of Potiphar. Let this encourage all young persons, however low their condition, or however misrepresented they may be, to maintain a constant uprightness of conduct. Sooner or later, it will meet its reward. Joseph was in the condition of an orphan, of an exile, of a slave, of a convict; but the Lord was with him. The God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, remembered his covenant. In consequence of this, all the affairs of the prison were at his disposal, and they were all seen to prosper in a very remarkable manner.

Among the prisoners who were under Joseph's care, there were two who had been living in the palace of the king. One of these was Pharaoh's butler, the other was his baker. The butler's business was to provide his master with such drinks as he loved, and the baker furnished his table with luxurious food; it is likely he was not unlike the chief-cook of modern princes. Both these persons

had offended Pharaoh, and were accordingly imprisoned, under the care of Potiphar. They were, of course, put into the charge of Joseph, as he was the under keeper of the prison. It is probable they were both expecting a speedy death, which, in arbitrary governments, is inflicted for very slight offences, and in very barbarous ways. Here I cannot refrain from calling on my young readers to bless God that they live in a free country. We have no tyrant over us, who can imprison or slay us without reason. We cannot be punished without a regular trial, in public, and the same rights are enjoyed by all, whether high or low, rich or poor.

After these two men had been some time under Joseph's care in the prison, he took notice, that on a certain morning, they both looked sad. His own afflictions had taught him to sympathize with the distressed. Though he was their jailer, yet he felt for them, and especially

as he know very well that innocent men might be imprisoned. He, therefore, kindly asked the cause of their despondency. "Wherefore look ye so sadly, to-day?" They answered that they had each had a remarkable dream the night before, which troubled their minds. They seem to have had no doubt that these dreams had a meaning, but they could not tell what it was, and there was no one who could explain them. At our own day, we are not to expect revelations in dreams, but, in former ages, God often made known future events in this manner. Joseph had himself been favoured with remarkable dreams, and this would be likely to make him listen with more attention to the account given by his prisoners. He did not pretend to any wisdom of his own, but piously directed their minds to the true God, saying, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" And then he requested them to relate their dreams.

## THE CHIEF BUTLER'S DREAM.

“Behold, in my dream,” said the butler, “a vine was before me, and in the vine was three branches; and it seemed to bud, and its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters bore ripe grapes. And Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh’s hand.”

As soon as Joseph heard the dream, he knew, by divine inspiration, what it signified. He immediately explained to the butler, that the *three branches* meant *three days*, at the end of which period the dream should be fulfilled. In three days the butler should be restored to his former office, and should serve Pharaoh as his cup-bearer. And then Joseph modestly stated his own case, and sought the friendly aid of the butler. He knew that this man would soon be in the court, and would be able to represent his situation to the king. He did not accuse those who had injured him, but simply declared

his own innocence. "Think on me," said he, "when it shall be well with thee; and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me to Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house. For, indeed, I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into this dungeon."

This was a very reasonable request. The butler, if he had possessed a grateful and generous heart, would have been quick in rendering this small kindness to one who had treated him well, sympathized with him in his sorrows, and relieved him by glad tidings. We shall see how it was in the event. When the other prisoner heard these things, he perhaps thought that the same good tidings were now coming to him; he, therefore, related his dream likewise.

#### THE CHIEF BAKER'S DREAM.

"I also was in my dream," said the baker, "and behold, I had three white

baskets on my head. And in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh. And the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head.”

Joseph, no doubt, sighed, when he heard this dream, for he knew its distressing signification. But he was not at liberty to conceal the truth. He therefore told the baker, that the *three baskets* meant *three days*; at the end of which, the dream should be fulfilled. For, in three days, Pharaoh would behead the baker, and hang up his corpse to be torn to pieces by birds of prey.

The three days passed away. To one, they were days of pleasing expectation; to the other, of anguish and dread. At the close of them came Pharaoh's birthday; a season which princes often celebrate with great pomp. Pharaoh made a feast to his court, and to render the day more memorable, he restored the chief butler to his former honours, and caused the chief baker to be executed.

Thus the dreams were accomplished, and Joseph was proved to be under the guidance of heavenly wisdom.

Joseph was as happy, we may naturally suppose, as any one can be in a prison. He was in an important office, and had freedom to go about within the walls. And, better than all, he had peace of conscience, and divine instruction, for *the Lord was with him*. Still he was in bondage, and he sighed for freedom. Liberty is one of God's most precious temporal gifts; and every day we should give thanks for our birth in the freest country on the globe. After the butler had left the prison, Joseph waited with great desire for the time when some good news would come from the court. Surely, he thought, it was time that the butler had made known his case to Pharaoh. Yet no such good news arrived. Notwithstanding his earnest request, "the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him." It has been truly said, we cannot expect too little from man, or

too much from God. Though this ungrateful man forgot his benefactor, yet God remembered Joseph, and was preparing a way for his release.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Pharaoh's dreams—The butler's account of Joseph—Joseph is brought to court—Interprets the king's dreams—Counsels Pharaoh respecting the famine—Joseph is made governor of Egypt—His honours—Marriage—Provision for the famine—His two sons—The seven years of plenty.

Two whole years passed away, and Joseph saw no signs of being set free. But, about this time, Pharaoh had two very extraordinary dreams.

## PHARAOH'S DREAMS.

The king dreamed that he stood on the banks of the great river Nile. Out of the river there came seven cows, which were fat and well-looking. After these, there came as many more, which were lean and ill-looking. And the lean ones devoured those which were fat and well-looking.

The king also dreamed a second time, that seven ears of corn,\* rank and good, sprang up; and after these, seven ears which were thin and blasted; and while he was looking, the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears.

In the morning, after these dreams, the king was much troubled in mind. He felt that these were more than common dreams, but who could explain them for him? There were indeed men in his court who made a business of predicting future events. Egypt was famous for magicians, who practised secret arts, and wise men who passed for prophets. But no one of these impostors could give the king any interpretation which satisfied his mind.

The chief butler heard their consultations, and thought this a fair opportunity to mention Joseph. It was a shameful neglect not to have done it before; and

\* Not maize or Indian corn, but some smaller grain, such as wheat or rye; which, in Egypt, sometimes produces numerous ears on one stalk.

we are not sure whether he had really forgotten him, or had been silent out of mere self-interest. He now spoke, however, and said to Pharaoh: "I do remember my faults this day; Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and imprisoned me in the house of Potiphar, together with the chief baker. We both dreamed the same night, dreams which had interpretations. And there was with us a young Hebrew, Potiphar's servant, to whom we related our dreams. And he interpreted them to us; and the event was just as he said. The king restored me, and executed the chief baker."

No sooner had Pharaoh heard this, than he perceived that this foreigner was just the man he wanted. He instantly sent to the prison for Joseph to come to the court in haste. The poor Hebrew slave was now found to be of some importance. Long had he remained in the gloomy prison, with no refuge or helper but the God of his fathers; but now, God was making a way for his honourable

liberation. No doubt he was mean and ragged, and his beard had grown during his imprisonment. As quickly as he could, he changed his clothes, and shaved himself, and proceeded to the king's palace. This was a new scene for Joseph, and the change was the more striking as he had now been a slave for thirteen years. When he appeared in the palace, Pharaoh said to him, "I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it, and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it." Joseph was desirous that the king should not think that he could interpret the dream of his own wisdom; he, therefore, humbly directed his mind to God, from whom he might look for a favourable interpretation. "It is not in *me*," said Joseph; "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." The king then related his two dreams. As soon as Joseph heard them, he received from God the knowledge of their signification. He told the king that both the dreams

had the same meaning, and that, by them, God was showing him what he was about to do. The seven kine and the seven ears signified seven years. The good cattle and the good ears signified years of plenty. The poor cattle and the thin ears signified years of famine. This was what God was about to bring upon Egypt; first seven years of fruitfulness, and then seven years of want. And, in these last years, the famine should be so great, that all the previous plenty should be forgotten. The dream was doubled to make the greater impression on the king's mind, and to show him that the purpose of God was fully established, and would shortly come to pass.

This must have filled the mind of Pharaoh with concern. Though the years of famine were far off, yet it was his duty and interest to make some preparation for them beforehand. Joseph knew this, and after he had explained the dreams, he gave the following advice. "Let Pharaoh look out a man discreet

and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt; and let him appoint officers, or inspectors, over the land, to receive the fifth part of all that is produced by the harvests of the seven fruitful years. And let him gather all the fruit of these good years, and lay up corn, and keep provision in the cities. And the food thus stored away will be a supply for the seven years of famine, and will keep the inhabitants from starvation.”

This was wise counsel, as the event proved. The fifth part of all the produce was a large tax, but it was for the welfare of the people, and in years of such extraordinary plenty could be paid without difficulty. Pharaoh and his ministers approved of the plan. The only difficulty was to find a person fit to undertake so great a charge. Pharaoh said to his attendants, “Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” And then, turning to Joseph, he added, “Since God has showed *thee* all this, there is no one so

discreet and wise as thou art. *Thou shalt be over my house*; all my people shall be governed agreeably to thy orders. Only in the throne will I be greater than thou. See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt." How marvellous are the ways of Providence! A young Hebrew slave is brought by a caravan to Egypt. He is bought by a great man, and on a false accusation imprisoned. He remains in jail a number of years. And then, all at once, after having been a slave thirteen years, he is made the viceroy of the kingdom! No one but Pharaoh is above him, and his power is almost absolute. Thus he is abundantly rewarded for having resisted temptation to sin, and finds it not in vain to wait on the Lord.

Pharaoh then took off his ring, which was a symbol of authority, and put it upon the hand of Joseph. He also caused him to be clothed in fine linen, which was then exceedingly precious, and put a gold chain around his neck. He



also caused him to ride in the second chariot which he had ; and while Joseph passed along, the people saluted him by cries of, *Bow the knee!*\* Indeed, so absolute was the authority that Pharaoh proclaimed : “ I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” He moreover gave Joseph the name of *Zaphnath-Paaneah*, which some interpret “ the Revealer of secrets ;” and gave him for a wife *Asenath*, daughter of a priest or prince of On, called Poti-Pherah.

\* The original word has been variously rendered, but the greatest modern critics coincide in this version

When Joseph appeared before Pharaoh he was thirty years of age. Being placed in so important a station, he immediately began his labours, by making a circuit through all the land of Egypt ; probably to build granaries, and appoint proper officers to receive the corn. As the years of plenty began at once, Joseph collected grain and other provisions in store houses throughout all the cities. The quantity was so great, that they found it useless to attempt any reckoning. This gathering continued during all the fruitful years.

In the mean time, Asenath, his wife, had two sons. Joseph named the elder *Manasseh*, or "Forgetting," because, said he, "God hath made me forget all my toils and all my father's house." Not that he had lost all natural affection for his aged father, or even his cruel brethren ; but that his prosperity was such as to take away all painful longing after the scenes of his childhood. He named the second son *Ephraim*, or "Fruitful,"

because, said he, "God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

When we read of the wonderful plenty that prevailed in Egypt, it is necessary to recall what has already been hinted, respecting the peculiarity of the soil and country. The harvests of this land were dependent on the great river Nile. The ground is watered and enriched from no other source, as rain is almost unknown. When the Nile does not rise high enough, the grounds are not fully overflowed; when it rises too high, the waters lie so long that the seed-time is lost. These inundations were, no doubt, so directed by God, and so accompanied by other providential cares, that the plenty was unexampled.

But the seven years of plenty came to an end; and then began a period of distressing famine. The dearth was felt in all the neighbouring countries; and in these there was no such provision as had been made in Egypt. Even the Egyp-

tians began to fear starvation, and in their distress applied to the king, whose constant reply was, "Go to Joseph—what he says to you, do." The wisdom of erecting public granaries was now manifest, for the people had made no private provision during the plenteous years. The famine was grievous, and the land must have been stripped of its inhabitants if Joseph's counsel had not been followed. In these distresses he caused the storehouses to be opened, and sold food to the people. The news of these things reached other countries, and they sent into Egypt for a supply of their wants. Among others, the people of Canaan were in danger of perishing. When we read of such great national calamities, let us raise our hearts in thankfulness to God, who has cast our lot in a land of great plenty; where, as yet, famine is a thing altogether unknown.

## CHAPTER IX.

Jacob's age and sufferings—Famine in Canaan—Sends his ten sons to Egypt for corn—They appear before the governor—Are treated as spies—Are imprisoned—Their anguish and remorse—All are released except Simeon—Joseph demands Benjamin—The brothers find their money in their sacks—Return to Canaan.

It is time that we should return to aged Jacob, whom we have not heard of for twenty years. He was now nearly a hundred and thirty years of age. Around him were settled his ten sons and their families; and Benjamin, the child of his old age, was his darling. As for Joseph, he had long given him up as dead.

Jacob had endured many afflictions. In addition to others, he now suffers the evil of want, for the famine was sore in all lands. We see that this particular trial was experienced by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; to which Stephen refers

when he says, Acts vii. 11, there was "great affliction, and our *fathers* found no sustenance." The distress was so great that they seemed to lose all hope, and looked upon one another as men do who are utterly disheartened. The old patriarch had heard of the provisions collected in Egypt; probably some of his neighbours had been there for supplies. He said, therefore, to his sons, "Why do ye look upon one another? Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: go down thither, and buy for us from thence, that we may live, and not die."

The ten sons of Jacob assented, and set out on their journey. They took with them money to pay for the grain, and asses to carry it. For this purpose a great number of beasts must have been necessary. Two sorts of sacks are mentioned in the Hebrew narrative. One sort seems to have been large, resembling the woollen bags lined with leather which are still used in Asia. (Gen. xlii. 25.) The other sort (ver. 27) was probably smaller,

containing the provender of the beast which carried it.

All went except Benjamin, but Jacob could not allow him to accompany his brothers: "Lest," said he, "peradventure, mischief befall him." Other people from the land of Canaan went down for the same purpose. When they arrived in Egypt, they found it necessary to appear personally before the viceroy, or governor, as no corn could be sold without his order. These shepherds of Canaan were, therefore, introduced, and bowed themselves before Joseph. Now were fulfilled the dreams at which they were so much enraged twenty years before. Joseph remembered these dreams, and knew his brothers, but they did not know him. Twenty years had greatly altered the lad of seventeen, whom they had sold, and the governor's palace was not the place where they could expect to rejoin him. It is a lovely trait in the character of Joseph, that when he had his brothers completely in his power, he

cherished no feeling of revenge. Instead of harbouring spite, he looked upon them with affection and tenderness. Yet he determined to conceal these feelings, and to treat them in such a way as might lead them to reflection and penitence. He, therefore, made himself strange to them, and addressed them roughly: "Whence come ye?" They answered, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food." Joseph said, "Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land are ye come;" as if he had thought they were messengers belonging to different tribes, who had come to spy out some way of attacking Egypt during this great calamity. They declared that they were not so, but had come to buy food. And they added, that they were of one family, because it was very unlikely that a whole family should go from home as spies. Joseph still said, "Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land are ye come." In the confidence of truth they repeated their story. "Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one

man in the land of Canaan; and behold the youngest is this day with his father, *and one is not.*” Little did they suspect that *the one* of whom they spake was now before them. And deeply must Joseph’s heart have been touched at the account, and at this first notice that his beloved brother, Benjamin, had escaped, and was still alive. The ten brothers were now in distress in the very land to which they had sold their brother, and their hearts must have been filled with remorse. And Joseph saw before him the very men who had seized him, stripped him, planned his death, thrown him into a pit, and, regardless of his cries, sold him for a trifling sum to a party of strangers. He continued to accuse them. “This is what I spake unto you, saying, ye are spies; hereby ye shall be proved. As surely as Pharaoh lives, ye shall not go hence unless your youngest brother come hither.” He then ordered that one of them should return to bring Benjamin, and that the other nine should be imprisoned. Otherwise he would treat

them as spies. Accordingly he shut them up in prison for three days. During this time their suspense and anguish must have been great. At the end of the three days, Joseph changed his plan, perhaps out of pity to their father and their families, who might perish with hunger. He declared to them that he was a worshipper of the true God ; and ordered them to return, and bring that younger brother whom they had mentioned. In this way he would know them to be honest and true men. Meanwhile he would keep one of them a prisoner, as a security for their return. It must be remembered that Joseph had as yet received no evidence that his brothers had ever repented of their sin ; and he may have thought this a good means of awakening them. So it proved. Now, when they were in distress themselves, they remembered poor Joseph. They called to mind their inhuman treatment of him. After more than twenty years, conscience awoke in their breasts with

amazing power. They were so torn with remorse that they could not conceal their feelings from one another, but spoke out, even in the presence of Joseph; though they did not suppose that he could understand their conversation in the Hebrew tongue. Thus it is, that when grievous distresses fall upon men, they remember their sins. Beloved reader, beware lest conscience rise against you in some hour of trial. Prevent this by a speedy repentance. "We are verily guilty," said they, "concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." To this Reuben replied, "Did I not say to you, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold his blood is required."

When Joseph heard these things he was moved to tears, so that he had to leave the place that he might weep. After he had become again composed, he returned and talked with them, by means

of an interpreter. He then took Simeon, and bound him before their eyes. He ordered, however, that their sacks should be filled with corn, and that they should have provision for the journey.

With heavy hearts the nine brothers set out on their return to Canaan. They had procured food, it is true, but they had left one of their number, and they could not expect his release until they brought their younger brother. After travelling a while, they found it necessary to stop at what is called an *inn*. At that day there were no inns or taverns properly so called; the word means merely a stopping place. In those deserts we are told that travellers generally try to reach some spring or rivulet. Here they fill their leathern bottles, and allow the beasts to browse upon the little herbage which may be around the place. In later times it was common to erect, at such places, an enclosure of four walls without a roof, which was called a *caravan-serai*. When they reached the stop-

ping place, they opened their provision sacks to feed the asses; but what was the astonishment of the one who first did so, to find in the mouth of his sack all the money which he had paid for the corn. The others afterwards found also their money in their sacks.\* The man who first made the discovery exclaimed, "My money is restored! See, it is even in my sack!"

They had been treated in so strange a way that they were now ready to be alarmed at every new occurrence. Their hearts failed them, and they were afraid, and said to one another, "What is this that God hath done to us?" They continued their journey, and reached their home. Here they related to their father the surprising occurrences of their expedition. "The man," said they, "who is lord of the land, spoke roughly to us, and

\* Compare Gen. xlii. 27, with xliii. 21, and it will be evident, contrary to the judgment of some learned men, that *all* the brothers found their money at the halting place.

took us for spies of the country. And we said to him, 'We are true men, we are no spies: we are of a family of twelve, all sons of one father; one is no more, and the youngest is this day with his father in the land of Canaan.' And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, 'Hereby shall I know you to be true men; leave here one of your brothers with me, and take food for your households, and depart; and bring your youngest brother unto me. Then shall I know that you are no spies, but true men. I will then release your brother unto you, and you may trade in Egypt.' " And then, on opening their packages, every man's bundle of money appeared in his sack, to the great alarm both of their father and themselves. But the chief distress of the aged father arose from the demand of his youngest son. So tender had he been of his darling that he would not allow him to go with his brothers after corn. And now he is sent for by this harsh and mysterious lord of Egypt,

and unless he is sent, no more corn can be procured. The old man burst out into complaints: "Me have ye bereaved of my children! Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away! All these things are against me." We are so blind that we often consider as misfortunes the most useful events of our lives. All these things were *for* Jacob and his whole posterity, though he thought they were all *against* him.

Reuben answered his father, "Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him to my care, and I will bring him to thee again." "No," said the distressed father, "my son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him in the way, you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

The whole scene is most touching. The old patriarch, filled with grief and fear—remembering the fate of Joseph—perhaps half surmising the truth concerning it—trembling on account of Si-

meon—and clinging to his beloved Benjamin, lest he also be removed. The speechless brethren, on the other side, conscious of their former guilt—and altogether unable to account for many things in their late adventure. Reuben alone venturing to plead with his father, and offering his own children as a pledge of Benjamin's safety. All these circumstances form a picture not often equalled in history.

## CHAPTER X.

Famine in Canaan—Jacob is persuaded to send Benjamin—The ten brothers revisit Egypt—Entertained by Joseph—Set out on their way home—Overtaken by a messenger—Accused of stealing the governor's cup—Are brought back.

THE famine continued without any mitigation; and the provision which had been brought from Egypt came to an end. The second year of famine was now near its close, and the distress was of course increasing. As long as the supply lasted, Jacob probably remained firm in his purpose not to let Benjamin go. But the prospect of death makes men willing to run great risks, and make great sacrifices. It is not unlikely that many around them had already perished with hunger, and they began to be themselves alarmed with the prospect of starvation. There is no death more dreadful than this, and

the aged patriarch was overcome. He said to his sons, "Go again, buy us a little food." Judah replied, "The man did most solemnly protest unto us, saying, *Ye shall not see my face unless your brother be with you.* If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food; but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down." And Israel said, "Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me as to tell the man that you had another brother?" They answered, "The man questioned us closely about our circumstances, and our family. He said, *Is your father yet alive? Have you another brother?* We answered him accordingly. And how could we know that he would say, *Bring your brother down.*"

Finding their father still very reluctant to comply with the only condition, Judah made an offer to bear the whole responsibility: "Send the young man with me," said he, "and we will arise and go; that we may live and not die, both we and

thou, and also our little ones. I will be surety for him. Of my hand thou shalt require him. If I do not bring him back, let me bear the blame for ever. For if we had not lingered in the way, we might have been twice to Egypt before this time." Both in this and on another occasion, Judah shows great power of natural eloquence; and he prevailed over the timorous heart of his father. Jacob seemed to consent, but he desires to take every precaution against an unfavourable reception. He directs them to go, but to take with them double money; both the price for more corn, and that which had been returned in their sacks. He also directs them to take a present of the more precious productions of Canaan. For though the necessaries of life were exhausted, they still had some of its luxuries. But nature cannot be supported with drugs and aromatics, however rich. Last of all, Jacob, with a heavy heart, directed them to take Benjamin. "Take also your brother,"

said he, "and arise, go again to the man. And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." That is, "If God's will is that I lose them both—his will be done!"

It is to be borne in mind, that although Benjamin, as the youngest, is called, after the Hebrew manner, *the lad*, or the *young man*, he was at this time not much less than thirty years of age, and had a family of his own. Still he was as much as ever the prop of his father's old age.

The ten brothers set out on their second expedition to Egypt. Jacob's parting with Benjamin was no doubt very tender. The company carried with them some of the choicest fruits of the land. Among these were the following. *Almonds*; which grow in greater perfection in Canaan than in any other land. *Honey*; which so much abounded there, that Palestine was called a land of milk and honey. *Nuts*; probably pistachio

nuts, which are of an oblong-angular shape, with an oily and savoury kernel. These were abundant in Canaan, but rare in Egypt. *Myrrh*; a costly gum, greatly used as a perfume in the east. It was also employed in Egypt in embalming. *Balm*, or balsam; a resin which exudes from the balsam tree. It flourished in Canaan, especially in Gilead, whence it was called *balm of Gilead*. The value set upon it as a medicine caused it to be constantly imported into Egypt by the caravans of the Ishmaelites. *Spices*; by which are meant other aromatic substances, whether gums or barks, such as stacte, galbanum, frankincense, calamus, cinnamon, cassia, and cane. From the earliest ages, presents of this kind were used as introductions to great men. And it shows that in the worst times men commonly have some mercies, when we see such things as these still left to Israel and his house.

They journeyed on, and in due time came to Egypt, and gained admittance to

the governor. As soon as Joseph saw that his own brother Benjamin was with them, he gave directions to his steward to make ready an entertainment, and invite the Hebrews to dine with him at noon. But when these plain shepherds were brought into the viceroy's palace, they were filled with fear. This seemed to them to be another unaccountable step in the strange treatment they had received. In their dread, they began to suspect that the money in their sacks had been put there in order to fabricate against them a charge of dishonesty, and that they were about to be made slaves. Therefore, before venturing into the great man's house, they took aside his steward, at the entrance, and related to him the fact respecting the money; adding that they had now brought it back; and declaring that they did not know who had put it into their sacks. In fact, it had been done by Joseph's own orders. The steward quieted their minds by saying that he had received what was right, and

that this money was a gift from the God of their fathers. He also released to them Simeon. He then brought them into the house, and, after the manner of the Orientals, gave them water to wash their feet. This is peculiarly needful in those countries where sandals are worn, as these do not so cover the feet as to exclude dust and sand. He provided for their beasts, and in the mean time they were getting ready their present, for the governor had not yet arrived.

The hour of dinner was twelve o'clock, and at this time the governor came. The visiters immediately presented their gifts, and bowed themselves before him to the earth. The dreams of Joseph are fulfilling more and more. After saluting them, the governor asked, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he yet alive?" Probably he feared lest his aged parent was no more. They answered, "Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive." And then they bowed themselves again, and

made obeisance. Joseph was chiefly interested in gazing on his own brother, Benjamin, the son of his departed mother Rachel. They had not met since they were children, Benjamin being an infant when his brother was stolen. Looking at Benjamin, he said, "Is this your younger brother, of whom you spake to me?—God be gracious unto thee, my son!"

Joseph's heart was full. The recollections of past years, of his childhood, of his father, of his dear mother, of the little brother now grown to manhood, all came upon him and unmanned him. He hastened to his chamber, and wept there. When he had in some measure composed himself, he washed his face, returned, and commanded the dinner to be served.

There was between the Egyptians and the Hebrews a sort of antipathy, so that they did not eat together. The Hebrews were *shepherds*, and the Egyptians had been conquered by certain shepherd kings, as has been said above. The

Hebrew shepherds offered in sacrifice, and even ate those animals which the Egyptians worshipped. For these and other reasons there was little intercourse of a social kind between the Egyptians and other people. And Joseph thought it expedient to maintain that distance which his subjects would expect from him. The servants provided food for Joseph by himself, and for his brothers by themselves; because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians. To the great surprise of the eleven brothers, they were served with food exactly in the order of their respective ages. They must have suspected the governor to have some power of divination. Agreeably to the custom of the times and country, the portion of Benjamin was five times as great as that of any other. And thus they ate and were exhilarated.

When the entertainment was over, the

governor took his steward aside, and gave him particular directions concerning the eleven Hebrews who were now about to return. Agreeably to these directions, they were furnished with as much provision as their beasts could carry; and as soon as the morning of the next day began to dawn, they left the capital of Egypt to return to Canaan.

They had not proceeded a great way on their journey, before they found that they were pursued. The steward of the governor soon overtook them, and threw them into the utmost consternation by his words. The fact was this; they had scarcely set out before Joseph called his steward, and ordered him to follow these men; giving him directions as to what he should say to them. The steward, accordingly, addressed them with a serious charge, accusing them of having stolen the governor's silver cup. "Wherefore," said he, "have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this the cup from which

my lord drinks? and by which he divines? Ye have done evil in so doing.”\*

The brothers were alarmed, but they had the witness of a good conscience. They knew that they were altogether innocent of the crime alleged, and in this confidence they made an offer to the steward, which might be considered rash. Even if one of them had stolen the cup, this could be no good reason for the punishment of the rest. In conscious honesty they replied: “Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do such a thing! Mark, that we returned the money which we formerly found in our sacks; how then can we be suspected of having stolen silver or gold out of thy master’s house? But if the cup is found with any one of us, let him die, and let the rest of us be slaves to my lord.”

\* It would be tedious and unprofitable to give all the explanations attempted of this. The heathens pretended to divine by cups; but it is not certain that this is the idea here. The original word is sometimes used for diligent inquiry.

The steward assented to a part of this, but rejected the harsh proposal. He said: "Now let it be as you have said. He, with whom the cup is found, shall be my servant; and the rest of you shall be blameless."

In great haste they then took every sack and laid it on the ground. Every man opened his sack, and the steward proceeded to search them, beginning with Reuben's, and going according to their respective ages. No cup appeared in any of them, until he came to the last, and there it lay hidden in the sack of Benjamin.



## CHAPTER XI.

The brothers are arraigned before Joseph—Judah's defence—Joseph reveals himself—Pharaoh allows Joseph to send for his father—Jacob hears the wonderful tidings—The family leave Canaan for Egypt—God appears to Jacob at Beersheba.

It would be vain to attempt any description of their feelings. They were struck dumb with horror. All their plans were frustrated. They rent their clothes, in token of their anguish, laded their asses, and sorrowfully turned towards the city. Joseph was still at his house, and they were taken again into his presence, where they fell before him on the ground. He addressed them sternly: "What deed is this that ye have done? Know ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine? (or make sure trial?)" To this Judah, who was the

principal speaker, made the following eloquent reply; for tenderness, simplicity, and strength, there is no oration of antiquity which surpasses it. Judah seemed to think they would all be enslaved, but even if this were not the case, as he had become surety to his father for the safe return of Benjamin, he could not endure the thought of going back without him. His speech would suffer by any material alteration of the language. He spake as follows:



“O, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord’s ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy ser-

vant; for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, *Have ye a father, or a brother?* And we said unto my lord, *We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one;\* and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.* And thou saidst unto thy servants, *Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.* And we said unto my lord, *The young man cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.* And thou saidst unto thy servants, *Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.* And it came to pass, when we came up unto thy servant, my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, *Go again, and buy us a little food.* And we said, *We cannot go down. If our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down. For we may not see*

\* That is, in Hebrew style, *the youngest one, or the darling.*

*the man's face, unless our youngest brother be with us.* And thy servant, my father, said unto us, *Ye know that my wife Rachel bare me two sons. And one of them went out from me, and I said, 'Surely he is torn in pieces;' and I have not seen him since. And if ye take from me this son also, and mischief befall him, ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.* Now, therefore, (continued Judah) when I come to my father, and the young man is not with us, (seeing that his life is bound up in the young man's life,) when he sees that Benjamin is not with us, he will die, and we shall bring down the gray hairs of our father with sorrow to the grave. For I became surety for the young man unto my father, saying, *If I return him not to thee, then I will bear the blame to my father for ever.* Now, therefore, I pray thee, let me remain instead of the young man, as a bond-man to my lord, and let him return with his brothers. For how can I go up to my father without our

youngest brother? lest I see the evil which shall come upon my father.”

No one can fail to honour the respect and affection which Judah here exhibits for his aged parent, and, also, the nobleness of his offer to ransom Benjamin with his own person. Joseph was deeply moved, and when Judah had spoken thus far, his emotions became too great for concealment. He is no longer able to refrain himself; he orders all his attendants to withdraw; he is left alone with his eleven brothers; he bursts into loud weeping. With a bursting heart he exclaims, “I AM JOSEPH. Doth my father yet live?”

The brothers were overpowered. They were speechless. Fear, remorse, and amazement, made it impossible to answer. While the sobs and cries of Joseph were heard by the Egyptians and the courtiers of Pharaoh. “Come near to me,” said he, “I pray you.” His brethren approached. “*I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.* Now, there-

fore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves (that is, beyond measure) on account of your having sold me hither. God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years there has been famine in the land, and there are yet five years, in which there shall be neither plowing\* nor harvest. And God sent me before you, that you might have a posterity, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. For, now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God; and he hath made me a father (or counsellor) to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler of all Egypt. Haste ye, go up to my father, and say to him, ‘Thus saith thy son Joseph, *God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, tarry not; and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children’s children, and thy flocks and thy herds, and all that thou hast; and there*

\* For this is the meaning of the old English word, *earing*.

*I will support thee, (for there are five years of famine yet to come,) lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.'* And behold your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither."

And when he had thus spoken, he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them, and after that his brethren talked with him.

It is likely that when Joseph revealed himself, his elder brethren found in some of his features the lineaments of the youth whom they had sold. Besides, he spoke to them now in the Hebrew tongue, and none but himself knew of the crime they had committed. All doubt as to the truth of his statement was, therefore, taken away.

The occurrence was too extraordinary and affecting to remain long a secret. The news spread, and soon reached the palace of the king, where all were highly gratified. Pharaoh, himself, approved Joseph's plan respecting his father, and encouraged him to send for the aged patriarch and all his family and connexions. He further promised that when they all arrived in Egypt they should enjoy the richest productions of the earth. He went so far as to say, that they need not be careful about bringing all their household effects, as he would make up to them all that they abandoned. All this was in consequence of the honour in which Joseph was held by the king.

Joseph, accordingly, furnished wagons or carriages to bring their numerous relatives and such of their goods as they chose; together with provisions for their journey. To each of his brethren he gave a change of raiment, or two full suits; but to Benjamin he gave five changes of raiment, and three hundred

pieces of silver. He sent, likewise, a special present to his honoured father; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn, and bread, and other food for the journey. And when his brothers set out, he particularly charged them, "See that ye fall not out by the way." He, probably, saw that they were in danger of contention, as to the part which each of them had taken in their former crime; or about making it known to their father.

The brothers hastened to return to their anxious father, and had a successful journey. They told him the good news: "*Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt!*" Who shall undertake to describe the feelings of Jacob? He was overwhelmed with tidings so amazing, so joyful. His heart fainted within him. It was too good to be true, and he could not believe them. After twenty-two years of lamentation for his slain son—how can he credit the news that he is alive—and a mighty prince!

The sons of Israel then went on to give him the particulars. They doubtless informed him, as they had been directed to do, of Joseph's glory in Egypt. That he was second to the king only; that he rode in the second chariot of state; that he was the most honoured counsellor of Egypt; that he was revered by all the nation; that he lived in wealth and splendour; and that both he and Pharaoh invited Jacob to go down and end his days in Egypt. At length, when the incredulous old patriarch saw the wagons which his son had sent to convey him, he yielded to the delightful truth. "It is enough!" said he, "Joseph my son is yet alive. I will go down and see him before I die."

Well might he have exclaimed, This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!

Jacob collected all his family, and all the goods which they chose to carry, and began his journey. Their way led them by Beersheba, at the southern extremity

of Palestine. At this place, it will be remembered by the reader, God had appeared to him, almost a hundred years before, and had said to him, *Fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.* Here, also, he had built an altar and worshipped. It was the same spot on which God had formerly appeared to his fathers, Abraham and Isaac.\* The pious heart of Jacob did not allow him to pass the memorable place. Prayer hinders no journey: and what is begun without prayer is likely to end without profit. He stopped, therefore, at Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. In the visions of the night God once more appeared to him, and said, JACOB, JACOB! and he said, "Here am I." And the Lord said, "I am God, the God of thy father; fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into

\* Gen. xxi. 33, and xxvi. 23.

Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again. And Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes."

These promises were all fulfilled. Jacob died in Egypt, and Joseph closed his eyes when he expired. But his remains were brought back into Canaan. His descendants there became indeed a great nation, amounting to near a million, and they were delivered from that bondage into which they fell. With the hope of these blessings, Jacob arose encouraged. His sons conveyed him, and their wives, and their children in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent. And they took their cattle, and all the goods which they had got in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his seed with him; his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt. Let us look back a moment at the increase of his family, according to the promise of God. When he first left Canaan, he crossed the Jor-

dan, with his staff, a single man. When he came back again, he had eleven sons and one daughter; for we know nothing about any grand-children. When he now leaves Canaan for the last time in his life, he has a family of seventy.\*

\* This is not the place to explain the difficulty respecting the enumeration. It is discussed in all the commentaries.

## CHAPTER XII.

The land of Goshen—Meeting of Jacob and Joseph—Pharaoh assigns them a residence—Jacob appears at court—Severity of the famine—Joseph's wisdom and fidelity—Jacob's last days—Dying words—Blesses his sons and grandsons—His death—Prediction of Shiloh.

BEFORE Jacob's entrance into a strange country, he sent before him his son Judah, to remove every difficulty from their passage into the district allotted to them. This district was called the land of Goshen. It is hard to say where it was. As nearly as we can judge, it was north of Pelusium, south-west of the desert of Shur. It was part of the land of Rameses, in the north-eastern portion of Egypt. This was not overflowed by the Nile, but for shepherds it was *the best of the land*.

As soon as Joseph learned—perhaps

from Judah—that his father was entering the land of Goshen, he ordered his chariot, and hastened to meet him. He presented himself to Israel, and fell upon his neck, and wept over him a good while. It was almost too much joy for the feeble old man. He exclaimed in transport, “Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive!” Thus in later times, aged Simeon, when he took the infant Jesus in his arms, said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

Joseph took pains to instruct his brothers' how they should act in the king's presence, and then informed Pharaoh of their arrival. It was important that they should be settled together, in a district separate from the people of the land, and where they could pursue to advantage their labours as shepherds. Such a region was the land of Goshen, which they arrived at before they saw the capital or the court. In order to secure this bene-

fit, Joseph advised his brothers to make at once a frank statement of the fact that they were shepherds. And as shepherds were abhorred by the Egyptians, the people would be unwilling to be near them; and thus, with the utmost fairness, they would gain their separate abode. They succeeded in all this, as we shall see.

Joseph took five of his brothers and introduced them to the king. "What is your occupation?" said Pharaoh. They answered, "Thy servants are shepherds, both we and also our fathers. We have come to live in the country, for we have no pasture for our flocks, in consequence of the distressing famine. Now, therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen." On hearing this, Pharaoh turned to Joseph and said, "Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee. The land of Egypt is before thee. Let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if any of them are men of activity, make them rulers over my cattle." In

this way a pleasant and retired abode was secured to Israel and his sons.

It was now suitable that the patriarch himself should be introduced to the king. Joseph accordingly presented him. The venerable man no doubt tottered with age, and was adorned with gray hairs. When he entered, he pronounced a solemn benediction on the king. Pharaoh then said to him, "How old art thou?" Jacob answered, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

Jacob calls himself a pilgrim, and his life a pilgrimage. A pilgrim is one who wanders in a foreign land. We are all pilgrims here below; and especially those who fear God, have no home in this world, but seek one to come. Aged as Jacob was, he was not as old as his father and grand-father were, at the times of

their death. Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years, and Isaac a hundred and eighty. Jacob again blessed Pharaoh, and withdrew from his presence.

By authority of Pharaoh, Joseph then settled his father and all the family in Rameses, which was the best of the land. He also furnished food to each of their households, because the famine continued with increasing horrors.

Indeed, so great was the dearth, that the supply of food among the people entirely failed. Both Canaan and Egypt fainted by reason of the famine. The only provision in all the country was that which Joseph had collected in storehouses. This had been laid up at the expense of the king, some of it, perhaps, purchased with his money during the years of plenty; it was, therefore, Pharaoh's property. Joseph did not give it to the people, but sold it, as long as they had any money to pay. When they had spent all their money, they offered their

cattle. It was as benevolent as just for Joseph to take these, as they must have perished for want of food, if they had remained with their owners. All this served only for one year. At the close of this year, they came to him again, declaring that they were ready to perish, that both their money, and their flocks and herds, were gone, and offering their lands and their own persons. "Wherefore," said they, "shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land! Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh." Accordingly, every man in Egypt sold his land to the king, and the whole soil became Pharaoh's, with the exception of that which was appropriated to the priests. It appears that they received a gratuitous support from the king. Joseph then provided the people with habitations in the cities where corn was stored. He gave them also seed to sow the land. We may understand the nature of the claim which the king hence-

forth made to the land by what follows. Although the people had sold both their bodies and their lands, they were not treated as mere slaves, working the soil of others. All that was required was a regular tribute of one-fifth. This continued in force until the time of Moses.

In all this transaction, Joseph acted as a faithful servant of his king, and a wise provider for a perishing people. The kingdom and the stores were not his, but Pharaoh's. In all that he did, he was repaid by the people as the saviour of their lives. And the inspired record contains no censure of his conduct.

The length of time which Jacob spent in Egypt was seventeen years, a long period for one already so old. It appears to have rolled by in peace and comfort. He was, in Goshen, a favoured part of the land, surrounded by a growing family. But the longest life must have an end, and the time drew near that he must die. Sensible of approaching dissolution, he became anxious that his re-

mains should be taken to his native country, which he regarded as the type of the rest that remaineth to the people of God in the heavenly Canaan. He, therefore, sent for Joseph, and caused him to engage in the most solemn manner to fulfil this wish. "Bury me not," said he, "I pray thee, in Egypt, but I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place." And Joseph answered, "I will do as thou hast said." And Jacob said, "Swear unto me," and he swore unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head, probably in solemn worship.\* The whole transaction shows his implicit faith in God's promise, that his descendants should one day return to their own land.

Soon after this the patriarch was seized with more alarming illness, and a messenger was despatched for Joseph. When Joseph went to see his father, he took with him his two sons, that they might

\* Heb. xi. 21.

receive the dying words of their grandfather. Some of the attendants told Jacob, "Behold thy son Joseph is come to see thee." And the old man strengthened himself, and sat up in the bed, and said, "God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto me, *I will make thee fruitful and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people, and will give this land to thy seed after thee, for an everlasting possession.* And, now, thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born to thee in the land of Egypt, are mine: as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. And thy other descendants shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren, in their inheritance. When I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan, in the way, near to Ephrath, and I buried her in the way of Ephrath, which is the same as Bethlehem." It is touching to observe the attachment of Jacob to his beloved Rachel.

She was the wife of his choice. For her sake he toiled and suffered. When she died he was deeply grieved. For her sake he loved Joseph and Benjamin. And now, at the age of a hundred and forty-seven years, in the agonies of death, he loves her still, and mentions her with his failing lips.

The patriarch now observed his two grand-sons, and said, "Who are these?" "They are my sons," said Joseph, "whom God hath given me in this place." "Bring them unto me, I pray thee," said the patriarch, "and I will bless them."

In consequence of his great age, Jacob was almost blind: and Joseph brought the boys very near to his bed. Jacob kissed and embraced them: "I had not expected," said he to Joseph, "to see even *thy* face, and lo, God hath showed me, also, thy offspring." Joseph then presented the two youths, in order that their grand-father might lay his hands on them and bless them. He wished Ja-

cob's right hand to be laid on the elder, and his left hand on the younger. So Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his own right hand, towards Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand, towards Israel's right hand, and brought them near to the patriarch's bed. But Israel, being under divine inspiration, knew that the younger should have the chief blessing. He, therefore, crossed his hands, and laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, the elder. And, first, he blessed their father, and said:

“God, before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads. And let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac. And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

But when Joseph saw the manner in

which his father had placed his hands, he was disturbed, and supposing it to be a mistake, he took his father's right hand, in order to remove it from the younger to the elder. "Not so, my father," said he, "for this is the first-born; put thy right hand upon his head." Israel, however, was better informed than his son. "I know it, my son," said he, "I know it; Manasseh, also, shall become a people, and he, also, shall be great; but, truly, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations." And he proceeded further to bless them: "In thee shall Israel bless, saying, *God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh.*" Thus, he gave Ephraim the preference before Manasseh. He also said to Joseph, "Behold, I die; but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers."

After this he caused all his twelve sons to be assembled, and pronounced a remarkable prophecy, together with blessings; naming them all in order. This is

a very difficult part of Scripture, and it would take up much room to explain it. For this reason it is here omitted, and also because we are not concerned at this time with the history of any of the twelve, except Joseph. There is, however, a part of the blessing pronounced upon Judah, which is too remarkable to be passed in silence. It contains a very striking prediction of the Messiah, and has been wonderfully accomplished. It is as follows:—

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until SHILOH come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”

As soon as you read this you perceive that the dying patriarch foresaw the coming of some great personage, whom he calls SHILOH. He foresaw that Judah should be the chief tribe; governing the rest by his *sceptre*, and furnishing to the rest *princes* and *lawgivers*. He foresaw that this authority should not forsake the tribe of Judah until this great personage

should come. And, finally, he foresaw that people of all nations should be gathered together under Shiloh.

SHILOH is the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.\* Until his coming the descendants of Judah possessed considerable authority; afterwards their power was taken away. Now as all the authority of Judah has long since ceased, the Jews ought to believe that Shiloh has already come. But the reader must look in other works for a full interpretation of this remarkable prophecy.

Israel now gave his last commands to his family. He charged them thus: "I am to be gathered unto my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite. In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite, for a possession of a burying-place. There they

\* The word is variously rendered, *Peace*, the *Peaceful one*, *His to whom it belongs*, &c.

buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.”

And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed, and yielded his spirit, and was gathered to his people. In other words, his soul was joined to the souls of his pious forefathers. As soon as this took place, Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him: no doubt closing his eyes, as had been foretold. His age was a hundred and forty-seven years. How peaceful is the dying scene of this good old man! We read of no doubts, no shrinking, no horror. All is calmness and faith. Though fully assured that he is on the brink of eternity, he shows no confusion or fear. Is there any reader who is not ready to say, *Let Jacob's God be my God?*

## CHAPTER XIII.

Embalming—Jacob is embalmed—The mourning—  
Funeral proceeds to Canaan—Burial at Machpelah  
—Guilty fears of Joseph's brothers, and his kindness  
—Increase of his family—Joseph dies.

BEFORE proceeding to give an account of the burial of Jacob, it will be necessary to say a few words respecting the manner in which the Egyptians treated the bodies of the dead: for Joseph conformed in this respect to the customs of the land.

The changes which death produces in the human frame are very distressing. The most beautiful features soon change, and the finest form becomes a heap of putrefaction. It seems natural, therefore, to desire some way of preserving the corpses of friends and relatives from this shocking decay. This the Egyptians attempted, by the process of *embalming*.

They excelled all nations in this art. Bodies preserved in this manner are still in existence, after several thousand years. The writer has seen a number of such bodies, which are called *mummies*.\* Although after so long a period they have a disgusting appearance, yet historians inform us, that for a great number of years a dead body might be kept in almost perfect preservation. Many of the Egyptians (as we are told by Diodorus) kept the dead bodies of their ancestors in splendid houses, and thus had before them the exact countenance of those who had died many ages before they were themselves born. Strange to say, these dead bodies were sometimes brought out to feasts, and set at the tables.

The physicians or embalmers, in order to preserve the dead body in this way, were employed several weeks in performing various operations upon it. Removing the more corruptible parts, they filled

\* See page 100.

the body with myrrh, cassia, salt, and the richest gums and spices. After many washings, saltings, and rubbings, they rolled the corpse in fine linen, smeared over with a sort of glue. They then prepared a frame or case of wood, resembling the human shape, and into this they put the embalmed body. The whole process lasted from thirty to seventy days. In the case of Jacob we find forty days to have been employed.

At a proper time after his father's death, Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to take measures for the embalming. Forty days were employed in this manner, and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days. In eastern countries the expressions of grief for the dead are loud and long continued. Days are often spent in lamentation and wailing, and where the deceased has been distinguished, multitudes join in these ceremonies. The principal mourners, during these seasons, were clothed in rough and unsightly garments, and ab-

sented themselves from places of splendour and amusement. This is, probably, the reason why Joseph did not go in person to make a request of the king. For, we find, that as soon as the days of mourning were past, Joseph requested some of the courtiers, or officers who were around the king, to inform him of Joseph's wish to carry the body of his father to Canaan. He directed them to tell Pharaoh of the oath which Israel had exacted from him respecting this, and to request the king's permission. This was readily granted by Pharaoh, and preparations were made for a magnificent procession and funeral. This plain man, a foreigner and a shepherd, was buried with the pomp of kings. Not only did his sons attend the corpse on its way, but all the servants of Pharaoh, all his principal officers, and all the elders or nobles of Egypt. There were both chariots and horsemen in the retinue; a very great company.

When they had reached the threshing-

floor of Atad, which is thought to have been near Jericho, the funeral procession stopped. There they renewed the customary ceremonies of lamentation, and mourned for seven days; after which, nothing remained but to inter the corpse. So remarkable was the expression of grief, that the Canaanites who witnessed it, and who did not know the country of the deceased, said, "This is a grievous mourning of the Egyptians." Therefore, the place received its name, *The Mourning of the Egyptians*, or ABEL-MIZRAIM. The sons of Jacob then proceeded to bury him in the family burying-place near Hebron; and all of the company returned to Egypt.

In all that has been related, we have seen the forgiving temper of Joseph towards his brothers. Although they had treated him with the utmost cruelty, he had requited them with remarkable favours, for a great number of years. As long as Jacob was alive, they appear to

have had no anxiety. They knew that a desire to prevent his father's being distressed, would be enough to keep him from punishing them, or taking revenge on them. But, now that Jacob was no more, their guilty consciences again made them afraid. They did not enter into Joseph's benevolent feelings, but suspected that he might now exercise his authority upon them, and avenge himself. They said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him." They, therefore, sent a messenger to say to him: "Thy father did command us before he died to say to Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee, now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil. And, now, forgive, we pray thee, the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father?"

Joseph was deeply grieved at these suspicions. When he heard their request, he wept. His pain must have been increased, when they fell down before

his face and said, "Behold, we are thy servants." He immediately relieved their fears, saying, "Fear not. Am I in the place of God?" That is, revenge belongs not to me, but to God. As we read elsewhere: Vengeance is *mine*. I will repay, saith the Lord.

"As for you," continued Joseph, "ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good, to save much people alive, as it is this day. Now, therefore, fear ye not. I will support you and your little ones."

Thus he acted the part of a good brother and a godly man, and comforted them by words of kindness. Joseph was about fifty-six years of age when his father died. Of the remaining fifty-four years of his life we have little account. No doubt they were years of prosperity; and, by his favour with the king and the people, he was able to promote the comfort of his brothers and their descendants. He lived to see Ephraim's children of the

third generation, and, also, the children of Machir, the son of Manasseh.

When he perceived that his end was near, he said to his brothers, "I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

So strong was his faith, such his implicit confidence, that the children of Israel should return to Canaan, that he caused his brothers to swear that they would take his bones with them when this event should take place. The apostle Paul records this as a mark of his faith, "*By faith*, Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departure of the children of Egypt, and gave commandment concerning his bones."\*

Thus, Joseph died, aged a hundred and ten years. And he was embalmed, and put in a coffin in Egypt. This event

\* Heb. xi. 22.

took place about the year of the world, 2369, or, 1619 years before the birth of Christ. The history contained in our narrative, occupies, therefore, a period of about two centuries.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Closing Reflections—Jacob the chosen servant and friend of God—All God's covenant promises to Jacob fulfilled—Remarks on Jacob's sins and afflictions—Joseph an example for youth—The history of Joseph a striking illustration of the wonderful ways of Divine Providence.

WE have now finished the history of Jacob, and his son Joseph, and it only remains to make a few observations upon the whole.

1. *Jacob was the chosen servant and friend of God.* In various parts of the Scripture you will find him named with honour. In many places God condescends to call himself *the God of Jacob, the Holy One of Israel, the Mighty One of Jacob.*\* He also refers to the cove-

\* Ps. xlvi. 7; lxxv. 9; lxxvi. 6; lxxxii. 1. 4; lxxxiv. 8; xciv. 7; cxiv. 7; cxxxii. 2. 5; cxlvi. 5. Isa. ii. 3. Mic. iv. 2.

nant which he had made with Jacob, often bringing it up to the recollections of his descendants. The most honourable name of this nation was that of their great ancestor, *Israel*, or, the *children of Israel*. They are called, "The seed of Israel, his (that is, God's) servant."\* Truly, the memory of the just is blessed!

2. *All God's covenant promises to Jacob were fully accomplished.* Jacob's posterity increased beyond all computation, and they enjoyed the land which God had promised to their fathers. All the Israelites are from this one stock. Whenever we look at a Jew, we should remember that he is one of the promised descendants of Jacob. Millions after millions have lived and died, and millions of Jews are now alive. All these are Israel's seed. And what is very remarkable, the Jews have continued until the present day, unmixed with other nations. Though, for their sins, they have been scattered among almost every peo-

\* 1 Chron. xvi. 13. Ps. cv. 6.

ple on the globe, they have still remained a distinct people. This was predicted, and this, as well as all other predictions of God, will never fail.

3. *In the character of Jacob we see virtues and faults intermixed, and we also see, by turns, prosperity and adversity.* The sin of Jacob, in deceiving his aged father, was visited upon him long afterwards. No one of the patriarchs ever suffered so many distresses. Take notice, that as he sinned by deceit, so he suffers by deceit. As he deceived Isaac, so he is himself deceived, first, by Laban, and then by his cruel and perfidious sons.

Yet he was a holy man. It would seem that as he advanced in life, he became more free from sin, and his last days were his best days. If you look back at the history you will be surprised to observe how many times God appeared to him, and conversed with him, and blessed him. Although we are not to expect communications from God by the

same methods, yet we too may walk with God and have communion with him. For, by his Holy Spirit, God does to this day reveal himself, in some good measure, to every sincere Christian. Be reconciled to the God of Jacob, and then you may live the life, and die the peaceful death of this good man.

4. *The history of Joseph sets a lovely example before youth, and teaches us much of the wonders of Providence.* Joseph is a suitable example for every young person. He was tempted to a great sin, to commit which there were many inducements; yet he was faithful to God and his conscience. O that every youthful reader would remember Joseph's words in times of temptation: *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* True, Joseph was cast into prison, under a false accusation, but that very trial opened the way for his greatest exaltation.

Joseph is an example in his spirit of forgiveness towards his cruel brethren

He had been grossly injured by them—he had them fully in his power—and yet he does not punish them, or even upbraid them.

He is an example in the faithfulness with which he discharged the duty of every station in which he was placed. When a shepherd's boy he goes willingly on a dangerous errand; when the slave of Potiphar he obeyed and served his master with the utmost faithfulness; when the under keeper of a prison he is laborious and trusty; and when the vice-roy of Egypt he discharges every duty with earnestness and diligence.

And, finally, he is an example in the tender and affectionate regard which he manifested toward his aged father.

But this history teaches us much of the wonders of divine Providence. This narrative has always been considered as one of the most astonishing displays of God's wise and mysterious dealings. Here we see the Most High bringing good out of evil—making the wrath of

man praise him—and overruling even the sins of men to a great and glorious end.

What contrasts we observe in the life of Joseph! See him at one time, in that dreary pit, stripped and trembling, awaiting death; and then behold him a prince, followed by the acclamations of Egypt. It was the Lord's doing. Not one of the persons concerned could have foreseen such a change.

When Joseph was sold into Egypt, he no doubt considered it the greatest affliction of his life. Yet see the wonderful purpose of God in it. If this had not taken place, he never could have become the ruler of that land—he never could have saved the life of his friends.

Again, when Joseph was falsely accused and thrown into prison, it is likely his heart was almost broken. Yet here again we behold the finger of God. If he had not been imprisoned, he never could have seen the king's butler; if he had not seen the butler, he never could

have been admitted to court; if he had not been admitted to court, he never could have been made governor; and if he had not been governor, he could never have relieved and saved his aged father.

Even the wickedness of the wicked is overruled to the praise of God. The sin of Joseph's brothers in selling him, and the sin of Potiphar's wife in falsely accusing him, are made to conduce to the great end which God had in view. This is remarkably owned by Joseph himself, when he made himself known to his brothers and said, "God did send me before you to preserve life. So it was not you that sent me hither, but God." Gen. xlv. 5—8.

The friendship of God to Jacob and Joseph is remarkable in the whole narrative. All their life long God was near them to befriend them, and when they came to die,—how calm and serene was their death!

Reader, if you would be happy in life, and fearless in death, yield yourselves to

the God of Jacob and of Joseph. By reason of sin you are naturally at enmity with the Most High. Repent, therefore, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be adopted into the family of God.

**THE END.**

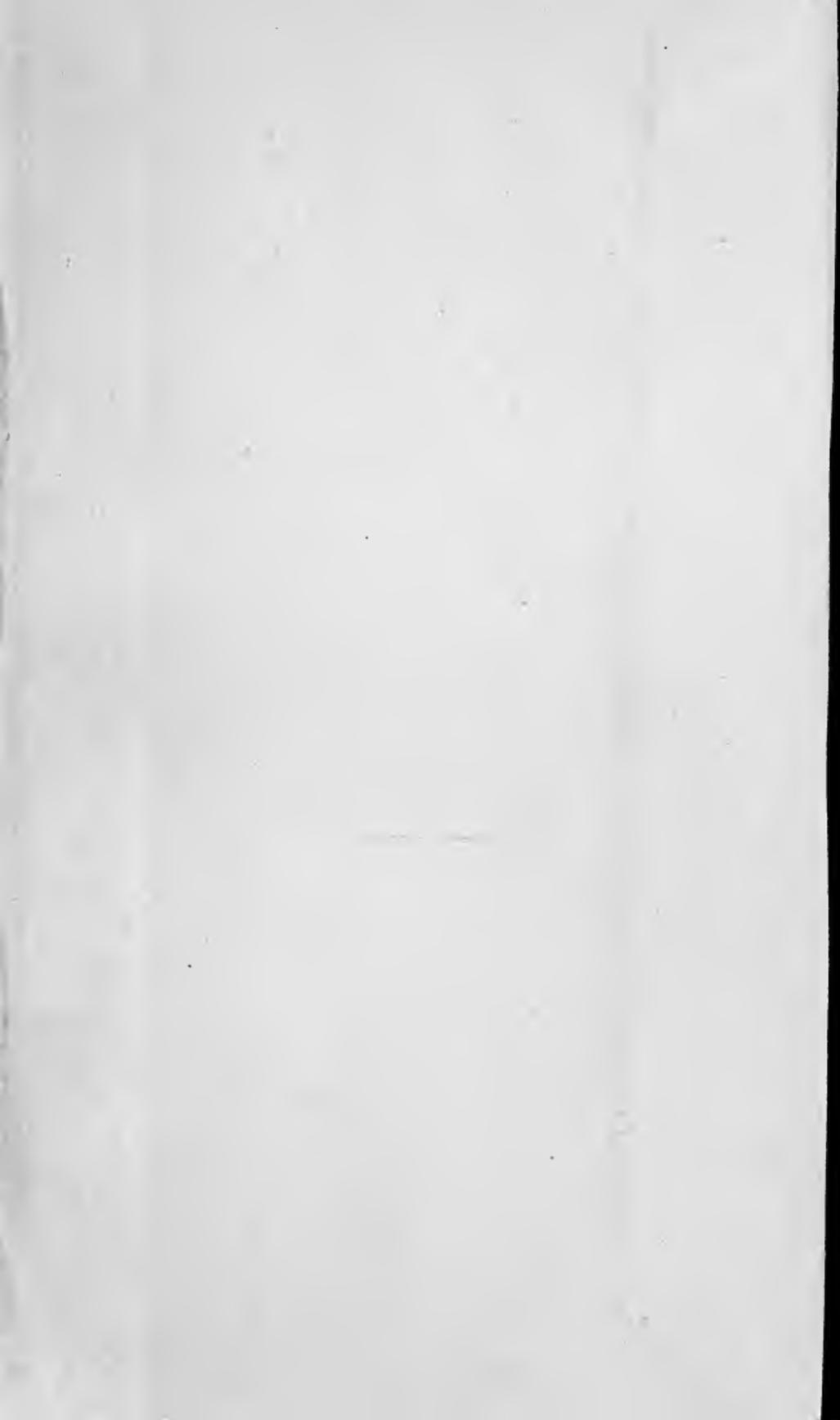
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