The Old Testament for Schools

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

IN THE TEXT OF THE REVISED VERSION WITH INTRODUCTION, MAPS, NOTES, QUESTIONS, SUBJECTS FOR STUDY AND INDEX

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS edition of Genesis is intended for the use of Middle and Upper Forms in Schools, or for the general reader. The notes, in conjunction with the introductions, deal concisely with difficulties or points of special interest in the text, and give information in accordance with modern Biblical scholarship; at the same time they aim at placing the whole history in its setting, as part of the Divinely guided religious education of Israel, leading up to the Christian revelation.

The questions at the end of each chapter will be found useful for class work, especially for written answers. The subjects for study may be used for essay-writing. The authorities suggested are not of the nature of a bibliography, but are such as the teacher will usually have access to, and from which he will be able to supplement the information in the notes.

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I. The Book and its Purpose

THE Book of Genesis, the first of the five books which Jewish tradition ascribed to Moses, is so called from the Greek word meaning "birth" or "beginning." It is the word by which the Greek translators of the Old Testament rendered *toledoth* or "generations" in Genesis ii. 4 and elsewhere. The Hebrew name for the book is simply its first word, *B'reshith*, "in the beginning."

The idea which underlies the whole plan of the Old Testament is to illustrate from the beginning of the world God's purpose to redeem mankind by means of a chosen people. Genesis sets before us the first stages of the revelation of this purpose. Beginning with the Creation, it traces the history from this point of view, down to the separation of the people of God in one family, and its temporary settlement in Egypt.

Genesis falls into two well-marked divisions :—

1. Chapters i.-xi. contain a selection of narratives concerning the origin of the world and the early history of the human race. The first three chapters form a sort of a prologue which deals with the fundamental questions : "How did this world come into being ?" "Why is it in a condition which needs redemption ?" To answer these problems two independent accounts of the creation of the world and man are given, each showing it to be the direct work of the one and only God, and then follows the momentous story of the Fall. From this point two strands of human history are suggested, first, the development on natural lines and general deterioration of mankind, until the Divine judgment brings upon them the catastrophe of the Deluge, and a new beginning ensues ; secondly, the preservation throughout of a line of men of faith, in which lies the hope for the future. This is seen

before the Deluge in the descendants of Seth, and afterwards in those of Shem, the son of Noah.

2. Chapters xii. to l. form a more consecutive narrative. In contrast with the early or prehistoric traditions which have been put together in the first section, we are presented at the outset with a more definitely historical event, the Divine call of Abraham, the man of faith, with whom God is described as entering into personal relations in the form of a "covenant." From him the "people of God" now trace their descent. We see in his life the beginnings of the instruction and discipline of those who were from century to century to preserve the revelation of God and to cherish the hope of redemption.

The chosen line is traced through Isaac, and Jacob and his twelve sons, the "children of Israel." Various side-lines are summarised and dismissed. So at the end of the book the eve is reached of the next great stage in this process of religious evolution, the call of Moses and the deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

The whole story is told with remarkable dignity and beauty. There is no more impressive book in the Old Testament than Genesis. It has made an ineffaceable mark on human thought about God and His ways with men. The method on which the book is compiled will be described later. Here it is sufficient to point out that though the materials evidently come from very varied sources and bear the marks of primitive legend and folklore, the whole book is informed by a noble and consistent conception of God. Stories derived apparently from heathen mythology have been purified and uplifted and made the vehicles of conveying profound religious truths. We cannot fail to recognise from the beginning a real "inspiration" in Genesis, a real Divine guidance given to the writers and compilers to choose or reject, to bring out fundamental principles of God's working in human history. There is nothing like this in any other literature.

Another secret of the charm and power of Genesis is found in the personal portraits which abound in it and the natural-

ness of the events and the dialogues. It is all vivid and convincing. The story of "man's first disobedience" (Gen. iii.), for example, whether we regard it as history or legend or allegory, is told in language that cannot be forgotten, and impresses the reader with its essential truth. The pictures of Abraham, Jacob and Joseph are literary as well as spiritual treasures. They breathe "the freshness of the early world." Even viewed apart, if we ever can so view it, from its religious teaching, Genesis, like the poems of Homer, is very great literature, and the English reader has the advantage of having its record translated into very perfect and splendid prose.

II. Composition and Sources

Any observant reader of Genesis will probably notice that the book is a compilation. There are very marked differences of style, and sometimes a lack of connection. Two independent accounts of Creation are given ; genealogies, not always consistent, have been introduced into the narrative ; passages like vi. 1-8, the marriage between heavenly and earthly beings, or xi. 1-9, the presumption of the would-be builders of Babel, are inserted without much attempt to connect them with the preceding history. Again there are apparently double accounts of the same event, as in the making of the covenant with Abraham (xv. and xvii.) ; Jacob's consecration of the pillar at Bethel (xxviii. and xxxv.) ; the representation of a wife as a sister (xii., xx., and xxvi.). And even the more continuous records like that of the Deluge or the history of Joseph and his brethren, present traces of a combination of narratives resulting sometimes in apparent inconsistencies.

Most modern scholars are practically agreed that there can be distinguished in Genesis, and indeed in the three following books and also in Joshua, two distinct narratives. These are the Priestly narrative (called P), a history compiled by the priests and scribes of later Israel, and an earlier document (JE). In this latter can again be distinguished two sources : J, so called from its characteristic use of Jehovah (or Jahweh) as the Divine Name, and E, which prefers the name Elohim (God).

P and JE at some time after the Captivity must have been combined by unknown compilers or redactors into one continuous story which was afterwards divided into books.

Sometimes the two were placed side by side, at other times when they covered the same ground, one which seemed preferable was chosen and the other abandoned; in other cases the two were dovetailed.

In addition to the varying use of the Divine Names (a fact which first suggested to scholars the possible divisions of narratives) these original sources have all distinct characteristics of style, vocabulary, point of view and general atmosphere.

P, the priestly document, was probably drawn up either in the later years of the Exile in Babylon, or shortly afterwards, embodying a mass of traditions and written records which had been preserved by the priests of Israel, of very varying dates. P is marked by orderly arrangement, love of repetition and the use of set phrases, e.g., see Gen. i.-ii. 4. It lays stress on chronology and abounds in genealogies. The Name Jehovah is not used until the story of the call of Moses and the revelation to him of the name of God (Ex. iii.). The point of view is that of the later legislation, e.g., no sacrifices are recorded until Moses is said to have ordained them, nor any distinction till then of "clean" or "unclean" meats. We do not know what was the extent of P, but probably it covered the whole ground from the Creation to Moses or later, and served the compilers of Genesis as the framework into which were interwoven materials from JE. A trace of the way in which the early narrative was arranged in P is seen in the recurring phrase in Genesis, "These are the generations," a phrase which the later compiler allowed to stand, though its connection with the completed work was no longer clear, e.g., Gen. xxxvii. 2.

J is a narrative of wonderful dignity and freshness, picturesque and poetical, and more "anthropomorphic" in its ideas of God than P, as can be seen at once by comparing the two accounts of Creation (Gen. i.-ii.). It was probably written in Southern Israel in the ninth century B.C.

E covers much the same ground and is again marked by the bright vividness of its portraiture. It was probably produced in the "schools of the prophets" of Northern Israel in the

eighth century B.C., the period of the first writing prophets, Amos and Hosea.

Both J and E, therefore, may be called "prophetic" narratives as distinguished from the more formal and "priestly" P. From these written materials the present Book of Genesis was compiled, with the exception of xiv. and xxxiv. which are of uncertain origin, and of a few connecting or explanatory phrases added by the compilers. It is clear that Moses cannot have been the author of the book in its present form nor is his authorship anywhere asserted. But we must not run into the error of supposing that these documents written so long after the events were really new productions, or that they lack trustworthiness. It is quite certain that their writers had before them much earlier matter derived from primitive Israel, folk-lore, traditions connected with certain places or families and poetical fragments, preserved in the retentive memories of past generations. And much again of this material may have been not merely oral but already existing in written records. Researches and discoveries (e.g., the Tel-el-Amarna letters of the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C.) have shown that the art of writing was well known in Babylonia and the countries influenced by it in very early times. Moses and even Abraham himself may have committed to writing the stories of their own or earlier days.

Nor again must we be drawn by the somewhat fascinating study of these different documents in Genesis into ignoring the fact that the book is a connected whole and comes to us with the authority both of the Jewish and Christian Churches. We must not lose sight of the wood in counting the trees. Bearing this caution in mind, we gain much light from this analysis of sources upon many apparent difficulties and inconsistencies. We gain also a more instructive and illuminating view of the methods of the Holy Spirit in thus gradually evolving out of all sorts of human memories and associations, out of materials of the most varied sort, legendary, traditional, or written, a convincing witness to the continuous and pro-

gressive revelation of God. Such a view is far more impressive and more harmonious with what we know of the Divine operations in nature than if we imagined the whole book to have been an original production of one inspired writer. We may apply to the evolution of the Old Testament the remarkable words of Walter Pater about the growth of the liturgy of the Church, "Wisdom was dealing, as with the dust of creeds and philosophies, so also with the dust of outworn religious usage, like the very spirit of life itself, organising souls and bodies out of the lime and clay of the earth, adopting, in a generous eclecticism . . ., one thing here, another there, from various sources . . . to adorn and beautify the greatest act of worship the world has seen" (*Marius the Epicurean*, xxii.).

On this subject may be consulted such books as Driver's *Genesis* and his *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, Chapman's *Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Cambridge Bible), and Simpson's *Pentateuchal Criticism*.

III. Historical Background of Genesis

The countries with which Genesis is chiefly concerned are Babylonia, Northern Mesopotamia, Canaan and Egypt. Babylonia or Shinar forms undoubtedly the background of the early part of the book. The Garden of Eden was probably thought to be situated there (if not in Armenia); the early stories of the Creation, the Fall, the Deluge, the Babel-builders, etc., were no doubt derived from Babylonian sources. Here, too, was the first dwelling of Abraham. Babylonia was probably the original settlement of the human race. Her civilisation goes back to immense antiquity, probably its beginnings were long before 4000 B.C. Public buildings and inscriptions of at least that date have been discovered. Ur of the Chaldees, whence Abraham came, the present *El-Mukayyar*, is even now (1928) yielding up to the archaeologist its wonderful treasures of art, architecture and religion. The early inhabitants of Babylonia were of two races, Semitic and Sumerian. The Semitic language was current over the whole country westward to the Mediterranean. In Gen. xiv. the King of Babylonia with his allies is seen as claiming lordship over the southern part of Canaan. Babylonian beliefs and worship had also a wide influence—the Nimrod of Gen. xiv. was probably a Babylonian God. The characteristic divinities of Canaan, Baal and Ashtoreth, had similar origins. (The Hebrew sacred Name of God, JHVH, or Jahweh (Jehovah) cannot, however, so be traced. It was a secret revealed by God and preserved in the sacred line.)

Northern Mesopotamia, also a part of the Babylonian empire, with its important city of Haran on the trade-route between Nineveh and Damascus, was for a time the home of Abraham. Later in the books we find his relations settled

there. It is a region enclosed by mountains and rivers. Haran itself lies in a very fertile alluvial plain. Its inhabitants seem to have been largely pastoral. Its interest in Genesis is chiefly with the life of Jacob, and apart from family relationships, has not much to do with the narrative.

Canaan from Gen. xii. onwards provides the chief setting for the story, and is marked out as the future national home of the people of God. It was well adapted for this remarkable purpose, being at once secluded and open. It lay on the highway of the nations between Egypt and the East, and was in touch with the great civilisations of the time. But it was also remote, for it had no harbours on the coast and the interior was mountainous and difficult. It contained great varieties of land from the semi-tropical Jordan valley to the breezy uplands of Gilead, or the mountains of the centre and the north; from savage desert and arid and waterless pastures to rich corn-growing plains or terraced highlands adapted to vineyards; a land of charm and inspiration, but withal of temptations and struggle. Its population consisted of a number of different peoples, some of which are difficult to identify, with little unity or coherence, and governed by many petty kings. They were probably all of the same Semitic race, except the Hittites, and spoke or understood the Babylonian tongue. Little is told us of them in Genesis. They appear for the most part friendly to the Hebrew sojourners, with the exception of the quarrels of rival herdsmen, even ready to make alliances, conduct business, and intermarry with them. On one occasion at least they show a strong sense of right (xx.): and little is said in their disfavour, except in the flagrant case of the cities of the Plain, and the allusion in Gen. xv. 16 to the "iniquity of the Amorites," from which verse we may also gather that they were morally deteriorating. In the great and mysterious Melchizedek (xiv.) there is an instance, no doubt an exception, of exalted monotheism. We may conclude from the condition of things when the Israelites invaded Canaan some centuries later, that its inhabitants were generally polytheists and idolaters, their

religion being a worship of the personifications of the heavenly bodies and the life-giving powers of nature, combined with gross superstitions and magical practices, and tending to immorality.

The Philistines, though their name is mentioned in Genesis by anticipation, were not yet settled in Canaan. The civilised Phoenicians were already a great power, but they do not come into the narrative of Genesis. The Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites, kindred to the Hebrews and hostile during most of the later history, were not yet established on the fringe of Canaan, though their origins are alluded to.

The latter part of Genesis introduces us to the splendid and ancient civilisation of Egypt. The narrative shows remarkable familiarity with Egyptian customs and institutions. The Egyptians were at this time probably under the rule of the alien Semitic dynasty of the Hyksos or "shepherd kings." They appear, at least in official circles, as ready to welcome the Hebrews; and the country generally recognised the debt it owed to the ability and statesmanship of Joseph.

The early ancestors of the Israelites must have widened their experience by these contacts with the greatest civilised empires of the time. They learned something, too, of the land which was afterwards to be the heritage of their race. They had made acquaintance with both the brighter and the darker aspects of the heathen world.

IV. Chronology

The priestly document P evidently aimed at preserving a careful chronology, giving the years of each generation and the ages of important individuals. Unfortunately no reliance can be placed on this system as it appears interwoven in Genesis, for this reason, if for no other, that the numbers differ very widely in the three great versions of the Old Testament, the Hebrew, Samaritan and Septuagint texts. For instance, the Hebrew calculates the years from the Creation to the Exodus as 2666, the Samaritan as 2752 and the Septuagint as 3837! Nor can the unsolved difficulty of the long ages of the patriarchs be used as evidence for chronology (see notes on Gen. v.).

For the early chapters of the book no chronology is possible. The events of Gen. i. must have extended through incalculable ages. It is unfortunate and misleading that such a date as 4004 B.C. should still be allowed to stand in the margin of the A.V. at the beginning of Genesis. A very long period of human development is again required for the growth of the arts as described in Gen. iv. The date of the Deluge is lost in the mists of primitive folklore.

Not till we come to the age of Abraham is it possible to hazard a conjecture at dates. And even here the only hints lie (1) in the possible identification of the Amraphel of Gen. xiv. with the famous Hammurabi of Babylon whose date was about 2250; (2) in the probability that the Pharaoh of the latter part of Genesis was of the Hyksos dynasty, which ruled Egypt for 511 years, ending perhaps about 1600 B.C. or earlier; (3) in the statement (xv.) that the sojourn of Abraham's descendants in Egypt (beginning presumably with his grandson Jacob) was to be 400 years (given in Exod. xii. 40 as 430).

But the date of the Exodus is still one of the most vexed questions of chronology. Until recently modern scholars seemed agreed to place it at about 1230 B.C. or even a little later, assuming that the Pharaoh of the great oppression of Exod. i. was Rameses II. and his son Meneptah the Pharaoh with whom Moses and Aaron strove. But opinion is again veering to a date possibly two centuries earlier, in which case the Khabiru mentioned in the Tel-el-Amarna letters (about 1400 B.C.) as threatening Palestine, would probably be the Hebrews or Israelites under Joshua.

Thus the life of Abraham might be placed within dates varying as widely as the twenty-third and eighteenth centuries B.C. We can only conclude that the exact chronology of the early history of the people of God is no part of Divine revelation. The calculations of the priests of Israel were only human attempts subject to the limitations and errors of their times; moreover they are now in hopeless confusion, nor are they helped out by Babylonian or Egyptian records.

V. Problems of Genesis

1. HISTORICAL.—The whole idea of the Bible is to show that the religion of Israel and of the Christian Church (which has its roots in Judaism) is based on a historical and continuous revelation of God to man. It is from that point of view that the history contained in Genesis must be approached, and it will provide the key to many difficulties. The compilers did not aim at giving a complete history of the world, or even of one particular nation. Their record is strictly *selective*. Matter was chosen which seemed to illustrate the main purpose of the book: much more must have been rejected. Hence we need not trouble ourselves about such an ancient difficulty as "How did Cain get his wife?" Moreover, the history is viewed not from the standpoint of the mere chronicler of events, but from that of writers who had had a long experience of the Divinely guided fortunes and institutions of Israel. They see much in the primitive records which would not have been observed by contemporaries. Genesis is history as it was visualised and interpreted by the prophets and religious teachers of Israel, by those who before the Captivity were striving to awaken the national conscience to the true meaning of the past, and by others again in the spiritual resurrection of Israel in Babylon who were seeking to reconstruct and teach once more the ancient faith.

The question doubtless still remains: How far are we justified in regarding the stories of Genesis as strictly historical? A distinction must no doubt be drawn between the earlier and later parts of the book. In the first part (i.-xi.) *allegory* rather than history must certainly be recognised, at least in the second Creation narrative and in that of the Fall; while in other cases

(e.g. vi. 1-7), it is difficult to find a historical basis in the mythological atmosphere of the story. The account of the Deluge (which is corroborated by very widespread traditions among ancient peoples) is described poetically and imaginatively, and its details cannot be pressed. Again, in the latter part of the book, the stories of the patriarchs have no doubt been re-written by men who were literary artists as well as prophets; the details are dramatical and need not be interpreted as if they had been taken down on the spot by a scribe. Nevertheless these stories, as a whole, bear the stamp of truth; they are true to what we learn elsewhere of the dealings of God with His people, and they are true to human nature. The patriarchs are real personalities, with subtle differences of character, not mere dramatic figures, or personifications. Although these records, as we have them now, were written many centuries after the events, and although they cannot be tested, proved or disproved, by comparison with other early records, there seems no reasonable doubt that the substance of them is historically true. Even if people call them "legends," it must be remembered that legends seldom exist without a substratum of fact.

Moreover Genesis comes to us, as already pointed out, on the authority of the Church, and on what appeals more perhaps at the present day, the authority of the spiritual experiences of Christians of all ages. And our Lord's own references to Genesis are very remarkable, and should at least make our approach to its study one of reverence and not of mere criticism. (Cp. the allusions to the Creation, the Deluge, Abraham, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha, St. Mark x. 6-8; St. Matt. xxiv. 37-9; St. John viii. 56; St. Luke xvii. 28, 29, 32.)

It is true that the Church has never either defined "inspiration" or laid down the absolute inerrancy of Holy Scripture. Nevertheless she certainly presents the Old Testament to us as containing the Word of God, and as a trustworthy guide as far as its main purpose is concerned. We may safely say that Genesis is historically true, at least to the extent that it does

give us a true account of the first stages of God's self-revelation to man, and of the way in which a "people of God" was first called and preserved. "The truest historian is not the accumulator of the largest number of ascertained facts, but the best interpreter of the age which he describes; he who is best able to pick out the thread of purpose in the tangle of details" (W. Lock).

2. SCIENTIFIC.—These difficulties are on a different level from the historical uncertainties. The worst that can be said about the latter is that the stories of Genesis cannot be submitted to the usual tests of historical accuracy; while, on the other hand, their general verisimilitude and their appropriateness to the periods and sorts of life which they describe, create a presumption in their favour. But the scientist does not fail to point out that some of the statements about Creation or the apparent age of the world are irreconcilable with the facts of geology or astronomy or archaeology. This may be freely admitted, though the differences have been sometimes exaggerated and the correspondences ignored. (For example, Gen. i. is a remarkable forecast of an evolutionary conception of the universe.) Without doubt, Genesis reflects the popular ideas of primitive ages as to the position of the earth as the fixed centre of the solar system, or the existence of a solid "firmament" above our heads, or of an abyss of waters surrounding and upholding the earth. But such early misconceptions do not detract from the main purpose of the book, which is religious and not scientific. It was no part of God's self-revelation to teach men truths which they could afterwards learn for themselves from the testimony of the rocks or the observation of the heavens. All the statements of Genesis are profoundly true from the religious standpoint. They teach things about God and nature and man which are independent of science, and which men could not have known with certainty without revelation.

It need not therefore trouble us if we find that the world has taken millions of years to create, instead of six days, or

that death existed long before man's appearance, or that man himself was probably evolved from an animal ancestry. None of these apparent discrepancies with Genesis really touch the profound religious lessons which the book conveys.

3. MORAL.—Speaking generally, a high standard of justice and purity of life is set forth in Genesis. Murder and adultery are specially reprobated. Cain's fratricide is condemned with the greatest solemnity. The violence and wickedness of the ancient world bring the catastrophe of the Deluge. The cities of the Plain are destroyed for their sins against purity. Joseph rejects with horror the temptation to adultery; so too do even the heathen kings, Pharaoh and Abimelech. Laban's grasping and covetous spirit is rebuked. Forgiveness of injuries is the brightest star in the character of Joseph. Conscience is shown working in Joseph's brethren. Even where no actual condemnation of the evil-doer is expressed, the narrative shows tacitly how sin works out its retribution, as in the case of Jacob.

On the other hand there are things in Genesis that shock the Christian conscience. Polygamy is treated as a matter of course; Hagar and her child are callously thrust out into the wilderness; lies are told freely to gain personal ends: the command to sacrifice Isaac recalls the most dreadful feature of heathen religion. These are old difficulties. Origen, the early Christian father, got out of them by asserting that such things are not historical at all but allegories. The Gnostics attributed them to some other god than the God whom Christians know and worship.

The true explanation, no doubt, is to be found in the method of God's revelation. It was progressive, educational, and adapted to each stage of human advance. As our Lord taught His disciples "as they were able to bear it" (St. Mark iv. 33, cp. St. John xvi. 12), so in the Old Testament God dealt with men just as they were, dealing gently with their primitive and imperfect moral ideas. He led men by slow degrees to a fuller understanding of what righteousness and holiness mean.

Abraham was taught that God does not require human sacrifices: God was shown to see and care for the outcast Hagar; Abraham and Isaac are reproved for their deceit; Jacob's subtlety and fraud and ambition were proved wrong by a life-long discipline of labour and suffering. Thus we gain a far more illuminating and credible conception of the way in which God educated His people, than if a complete moral code had been represented as given from the beginning, or if the Old Testament heroes had been portrayed as perfect characters. The unpleasant incidents of Genesis are not proposed for our imitation or our excuses, but for instruction in the wisdom and forbearance of God's ways with men.

VI. The Religious Teaching of Genesis

Genesis lays firmly the foundations of the religion of the Bible, the fundamental truths about God and man which would prepare for the great end of revelation, the coming of Christ. Throughout there is a noble conception of God, as one, universal, all-seeing, just, purposeful, and desiring to enter into personal relations with men. It stands out in strong contrast with the heathen ideas of a multitude of local and limited gods, with their futile rivalries and absence of moral character; in contrast too, with all pantheistic or dualistic theologies and philosophies. God's personality, God's unity, God's righteousness, God's care are stamped on every page of Genesis.

It is true that we can distinguish in the different narratives into which Genesis has been analysed some differences in the way in which the writers thought of God. The solemn dignity and transcendence of the Creator in P may be contrasted with the more familiar and human way in which He is represented in JE. But we must not discount as mere "anthropomorphism" JE's pictures of God walking, conversing, even eating with men, visiting them to inquire into their conduct, making covenants with them, giving them signs and promises. These pictures are a precious and necessary side of religious truth, even if expressed in primitive imagery. God is essentially "sociable," awful and tremendous indeed in His judgments, but still the lover and friend of man. Such a conception of God prepares even more than the lofty theism of P for the crowning act of His intercourse with men, the Incarnation, when the Word by whom the worlds were made became flesh, was born and grew up as a man, walked and talked and ate with men, limited Himself by His own will to think and act

and suffer and die in human fashion. Turning back from the Gospel to Genesis, we feel that they are all of one piece, they are consistent parts of the great unbroken chain of God's self-disclosure.

There is again a noble conception of man in Genesis, not so much in what he is, but in what he was created to be, and has the power to become. He is represented as a responsible being, with a conscience, and able to enter into communion with God by prayer and sacrifice. The momentous statement that man was made "in the image of God," strikes the keynote of all that is to follow. Man finds the purpose of his life and his ultimate reward in nothing lower than God Himself. But man's degeneracy is also stated with entire candour. He needs "redemption." Even if it was not till long afterwards that the story of the Fall in Gen. iii. was accepted by Jews and Christians as the explanation of man's sinfulness, sin is represented as a great and terrible fact, involving Divine judgment, and yet not hopeless; repentance is possible, God is merciful and long-suffering. He needs propitiation that the lost harmony may be restored, but He Himself will provide it.

Again Genesis clearly suggests the principles of God's method of training mankind for the great reconciliation with Himself. We see the first stages of the process which is continued in all subsequent revelation. There is election and separation; there is a community called out of the world for the sake of the world. "I have known him," it is said of Abraham, "to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment: to the end that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (xviii. 19). This is the beginning of the great development which leads to its climax when St. Paul is inspired to declare, "If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. iii. 29). In Genesis, too, we see that continuity of hope which never fails throughout the Bible. In what seems universal ruin, there is ever to be seen a remnant of

faith; the dove bearing the olive leaf is ever returning. Noah escapes from the Deluge, Abraham from idolatry and heathenism, the faithful exiles from the overthrow and scattering of the nation, the holy few who recognised and welcomed the Saviour from apostate Israel, the "little flock" from the crowds of fickle followers, the Catholic Church from the turmoil of the nations. God's ways in Genesis are continued through history: *uno avulso, non deficit alter.*

It is natural to look in every book of the Old Testament for any indication of hope of the Messiah. In the case of Genesis such indication is for the most to be seen only in the general lines of its teaching, as suggested above. The Fall and the degradation of mankind call for a Redeemer; the "humanity" of God, His kindly approaches to men, suggest the possibility of some closer union; the whole outlook of the history forecasts some greater development to come, a blessing given to "all nations of the earth" through the election and preservation of the chosen line. Certain passages have naturally been fixed upon by Christian readers as more definitely Messianic—the promise after the Fall of the wounded but victorious seed of the woman (Gen. iii.); the proverb connected with the place of Abraham's sacrifice, Jehovah-jireh (xxii.); the mysterious allusion to Shiloh in Jacob's blessings and his ejaculation, "I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD," (xlix.). Nor must we dismiss as merely fanciful the "types" which for the Christian abound in Genesis. They are rightly recognised as illustrations of laws of God's working, which are repeated in various forms in different ages. Such types are "the tree of life," the gift of spiritual food and of immortality; the Ark with its strangely mingled cargo, like the Church, containing both bad and good, but preserving the chosen faithful amidst "the waves of this troublesome world"; the sacrifice of Isaac, where a father offers his only son; the ladder of Jacob's vision, foreshadowing some closer union of earth and heaven, to be realised in the Incarnation. There are also typical characters in whom some resemblance may

be traced to Christ: Enoch in his mysterious translation to the presence of God; Melchizedek in his royal priesthood, bringing forth his bread and wine; Joseph in his persecutions, his purity and his forgiving generosity.

> "Through every page the Universal King,
> From Eden's loss unto the end of years,
> From East unto the West the Son of Man appears."

THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES

COMMONLY CALLED

GENESIS

The First Story of Creation (i.-ii. 3)

1 IN the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And

i. This first account of the Creation is derived from the Priestly narrative called P (see Introduction, p. xv). It bears the characteristic marks of orderly and chronological arrangement, and love of repetition. It stands in vivid contrast with the Babylonian creation stories, from which it has been supposed to be originally derived. The Babylonian myth makes the world to have been the somewhat meaningless result of the warfare of various gods. This account emphasises (1) the *unity* of God the Creator; (2) the ordered purpose of creation, culminating in *man*; (3) the essential *goodness* of all created things. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the priestly writers of Israel completely transformed the Babylonian story, and made it the means of conveying profound religious truths. Gen. i.-ii. 3 in several ways anticipates the teaching of modern science, and clearly teaches some process of *evolution*. But it must be remembered that its purpose is not scientific, but religious. It is couched in a poetical form, and reflects the ideas of an unscientific age, but its value, as revealing the great principles of creation, is permanent, and of the highest importance.

1 **In the beginning,** i.e. of time. Cp. St. John i. 1, where we are told "In the beginning *was* the Word," i.e. He, the Logos, was before creation, eternally pre-existing.

God (*Elohim*). The word is plural in form, and is generally explained as a plural of "majesty," expressing the greatness of the God of revelation. It may also convey a suggestion of the plurality of Persons in the Godhead. See note on *v.* 26. The priestly narrative uses only *Elohim* until Exod. vi. 3.

created. The Hebrew word (*bārā*) is used especially of Divine creations: not merely giving new forms to existing matter, but calling the matter itself into existence (cp. Heb. xi. 3). The word is used in this account three times only, here, of the whole process; in *v.* 21 of the creation of animal life, and in *v.* 27 of human life.

the heaven and the earth. A Hebrew way of describing the universe,

the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face 2
of the deep: and the spirit of God [1]moved upon the
face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: 3
and there was light. And God saw the light, that it 4

[1] Or, *was brooding upon.*

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both what is seen and what is unseen. "Heaven" is a plural word in Hebrew, no singular form exists: probably again the plural of majesty. This opening verse is a summary introduction to the whole account, which now proceeds to describe in detail the process of creation.

2 **And the earth was waste and void.** Cp. Is. xlv. 18; Jer. iv. 23. This is a poetical way of describing formless matter, not yet subject to law and order, "chaos." Some have thought that a previous world had been destroyed, and from the waste and ruin of it a new world is about to be constructed. This, of course, is only a speculation, perhaps suggested by the belief in the fall of the angels. See Milton's magnificent attempt at a description of chaos in *Paradise Lost*, i.

and darkness was upon the face of the deep. The description is poetical rather than scientific. The primeval chaos is thought of as a waste of unfathomable depths of dark water enveloping what was afterwards to be given shape as the earth.

the spirit of God: literally "the breath of God," a constant image in O.T. to express the outflowing of God's creative and life-giving energy, in nature and in man (cp. Ps. civ. 30). There are tendencies in later Hebrew writing to personify this "breath" of God, e.g. Is. lxiii. 10, but the full revelation of the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity is not made until the N.T.

moved. The original word suggests a bird either brooding over the nest, or fluttering over it, waiting for or cherishing the new beginnings of life. Perhaps the writer imagined this first operation of God upon chaos as a great wind stirring the dreadful waters; the ideas of "spirit" and "wind" in Scripture are often interchangeable.

3 **And God said.** God's will finds expression in the spoken word. In this phrase is hidden the mystery of the Logos, or Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, afterwards to be revealed. (Cp. St. John i. 1-5; Col. i. 15-17; and also Ps. xxxiii. 6.)

Let there be light. Light is conceived as having an origin and existence independent of the luminaries of *v.* 14. This is curiously in agreement with the teaching of modern science. Light probably existed in a nebular form before it was concentrated in the heavenly bodies. Light is the first self-revelation of God, and it always appears in Scripture as symbolical of His nature, its splendour and purity, its beneficence and life-giving power. (Cp. 1 St. John i. 5.)

was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

And God said, Let there be a [1]firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

[1] Heb. *expanse.*

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4 **and God divided the light from the darkness.** In contrast with light, darkness is generally used in Scripture for what is evil. But here we are not told that the darkness was evil. There is no suggestion of dualism; though darkness seems to be represented as having an independent existence and place, it has its sanction from God, and its origin from Him.

5 **one day.** The meaning of these "days" of creation is an old difficulty. It is argued that the writer cannot have meant literal days because the sun was not yet created, on which the division of day and night depends. Moreover, it is impossible to conceive the work of creation as taking place in a week of our time. Immense ages must have intervened between the creation of light and the first appearance of man on the earth. So it is generally assumed that by "day" we are to understand an indefinitely long period of time. But on the other hand the writer speaks of "evening" and "morning" (the Hebrews counted each day as beginning on the previous evening), and the consecration of the seventh day (ii. 3) suggests that literal days are meant. It is a mistake for us to try to interpret in a prosaic way this imaginative and poetic narrative. The writer sees, as it were in a vision, the unfolding pageant of creation, and each great event seems to him to pass before his eyes in the course of one day. See notes on ii. 2, 3.

6 **Let there be a firmament,** etc. So far there is no earth to be seen, only the waste of waters, with the alternating darkness and light. The next step, the second day's work, is the separation of the waters into upper and lower divisions divided by a barrier. This barrier the Hebrews conceived as being a solid vault of sky (*firmamentum* = that which is firm or fixed). Above it they thought were all the waters which descend on the earth in rain. Although we no longer think of the sky as solid, we may rightly consider this separation of the waters as implying the creation of the atmosphere.

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered 9
together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it
was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering 10
together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was
good. And God said, Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding 11
seed, *and* fruit tree bearing fruit after its kind, wherein is the seed
thereof, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought 12
forth grass, herb yielding seed after its kind, and tree bearing
fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after its kind: and God saw
that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, 13
a third day.

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the 14

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9 **Let the waters under the heaven,** etc. The third day's work deals now with the lower waters, which are reduced, as it were, to order, and given their appointed places, and the earth itself appears (cp. Ps. civ. 5-13). The Hebrews regarded the earth as encircled and supported by waters.

11 **Let the earth put forth grass,** etc. A second work follows within the compass of the third day. Light, air, earth, and water offer the suitable conditions for vegetation, which now appears. Three types apparently are spoken of; the **grass,** which in the parched soil of the East appears with almost miraculous quickness as soon as the rain descends; the **herbs** or larger plants, having in themselves the seed for further growths; and the **fruit-trees.** All these have their purpose in providing food for higher forms of life (*v.* 29, etc.).

14 **Let there be lights,** etc. Although apparently day and night have already been distinguished, the writer proceeds now to describe the creation of the heavenly bodies in which the light is concentrated. It is difficult to explain this order, but perhaps in placing sun, moon, and stars so late in the evolution of the universe, he is warning against making these heavenly bodies into objects of worship, as if the world depended on them alone. He gives three reasons for their creation: (1) to mark the division of day and night; (2) to divide time in such ways as would be useful to men; (3) to give light generally. The whole conception is, of course, that of primitive man, the earth being regarded as the centre of the universe, and the heavenly bodies existing for its benefit. Though we no longer think in this way, and have gained a far wider view of the immensity of the universe, the writer's description is not without its value from his own point of view. This earth is all we know, and all the writer is concerned with, and he describes the works of God in their relation to that alone.

heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for
15 signs, and for seasons, and for days and years: and let them be
for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the
16 earth: and it was so. And God made the two great lights; the
greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night:
17 *he made* the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of
18 the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule
over the day and over the night, and to divide the
light from the darkness: and God saw that it was
19 good. And there was evening and there was morning,
a fourth day.
20 And God said, Let the waters [1]bring forth abund-
antly the moving creature that hath life, and let fowl
fly above the earth [2]in the open firmament of heaven.

[1] Heb. *swarm with swarms of living creatures.*
[2] Heb. *on the face of the expanse of the heaven.*

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let them be for signs, etc. A "sign" usually means something suggestive, which indicates some truth or law. It is not clear in what sense the word is used here. We can dismiss the ideas of astrology, that the heavenly bodies are signs or arbiters of human destiny. Sometimes in Scripture the changes in celestial phenomena, e.g. eclipses, are spoken of as indications of calamity, e.g. St. Matt. xxiv. 29, 30, but on the other hand we are warned against dwelling on such things (cp. Jer. x. 2). We may, for ourselves at any rate, interpret the heavenly "signs" as testifying to the power and splendour of God. "The undevout astronomer is mad."

seasons, i.e. the periods of the year, the times for sowing or for reaping, the occurrence of festivals.

days and years, the orderly sequence of time, depending on the movements of the earth, the sun, and the moon.

20 **Let the waters bring forth,** etc. The fifth day sees the beginnings of *animate* life. Remarkably enough science also teaches that such life began originally in the sea, and that fishes developed into birds, and birds into ground-animals. The marginal translation is nearer the Hebrew, which refers to such living creatures as are produced in vast shoals or flocks.

that hath life. The word for "life" (*nephesh*) is applied both to animals and to man, like the Greek *psyche*. It is the principle of animal life, with its instincts and feelings, but does not imply immortality, or that higher life of man, which the N.T. calls *pneuma*, "spirit."

And God created the great sea-monsters, and every living 21
creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kinds, and every winged fowl after its kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, 22
Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And there was evening and there 23
was morning, a fifth day.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature 24
after its kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after its kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the 25
earth after its kind, and the cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the ground after its kind: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, 26

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21 **And God created the great sea-monsters,** etc. The summary of these creations is introduced again by the significant word *bārā*, as in *vv.* 1 and 27. The appearance of animate life marks a new stage in the evolution of the world. **Sea-monsters** was applied by the Hebrews to great and fearsome creatures like the crocodile, or perhaps the whale (if they knew it), and also to fabulous creatures such as "Leviathan." It would well describe the enormous sea-animals and reptiles which existed in the earlier stages of the world's history, such as the ichthyosaurus.

22 **And God blessed them.** This is a new phrase (cp. *v.* 28), and seems here to imply some special mark of Divine approval upon the unconscious life and activities of the animal world. The animals have their place and purpose in the counsels of God, and the seal of His benediction. (See Jonah, iv. 11.)

24 **Let the earth bring forth,** etc. The higher forms of animate life are on the sixth day evoked from the earth itself. They are classified as **cattle,** i.e. domestic and useful animals; **creeping things,** e.g. snakes and lizards, much more prominent in the East than among ourselves; **beasts of the earth,** i.e. wild animals generally (cp. Ps. civ. 20-22). The Hebrews were evidently much interested in animal life. Cp. Solomon's writing on the subject (1 Kings iv. 33) and the remarkable pictures of Job (xxxix.-xli.). The Law of Moses made special provision for kindness to animals (Deut. xxii. 4, 10, xxv. 4).

26 **And God said, Let us make man,** etc. Man is created on the same day as the animals. His bodily frame and his natural instincts resemble theirs. But his creation is clearly the crown of the whole

after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of
the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over
all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon
27 the earth. And God created man in his own image, in the image
28 of God created he him; male and female created he them. And

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process. What has gone before has prepared for him, and his appearance to "have dominion" introduces order and conscious purpose. So there is a new solemnity about the Divine words. God appears, as it were, to pause and deliberate. The plural form "let us" has given rise to much discussion. It has often been explained as meaning that God consulted with the angels, the higher beings in His presence, whose creation has never been alluded to. This does not seem to agree with the severe monotheism of the narrative. Others explain the expression as they do the word *Elohim*, as a plural of dignity, implying the transcendent greatness of the Creator. Christians have naturally seen here, as in *v.* 2, an intimation of a plurality of Persons in the Godhead.

in our image. This is one of the most significant statements in the Bible, and gives indeed the key to everything that follows in O.T. and N.T. alike. Man, though so like the animals, differs from them not merely in degree, but in kind. He is fitted by his likeness to God to be God's representative and deputy upon earth. Moreover, when God in the future willed to reveal Himself personally on earth, He was able to do so by becoming man: the perfect man Jesus Christ is the full revelation of God.

It would be idle to attempt to give a full explanation of what is implied in the "image of God": "it is not yet made manifest what we shall be." Some things, however, may be said with certainty. Man is like God, as being rational and conscious of himself, as endowed with a moral sense and the power of free choice. Moreover, being in God's likeness, man is able to have conscious fellowship with God, to know Him, to worship and love Him, and to rise to the ideal which God set before him in revelation.

27 **male and female created he them.** The great mystery of sex runs through all nature, but it is here specially noted in connection with the creation of man in the likeness of God. Though we cannot attribute sex to God, there is in Him a unity in diversity, the unison in love of different Persons. So man is created not a bare unity, but a social being, who finds the completion of his nature, as well as the foundation of all human society, in the love of man and woman. See further notes on ii. 18-25.

God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that [1]moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you 29
every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat: and to every beast 30
of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is [2]life, *I have given* every green herb for meat: and it was so. And 31
God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. ii

[1] Or, *creepeth.*

[2] Heb. *a living soul.*

And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host 1
of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which 2

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28 **Be fruitful, and multiply,** etc. Here, as in the case of the lower animals (*v.* 22), God, as it were, deputes His own power to create life to his creatures. It is true indeed that every new birth is from God, but it comes through the mediation of parents, and is thus one of God's greatest gifts, and carries with it, in the case of rational and conscious beings, the highest responsibility.

and subdue it. See notes on ii. 15. The created world cannot attain its highest except through the intervention of man. He is to act for God in ordering and developing all the rest of creation. Human history, with all man's discoveries and labours, illustrates this. Man has power to utilise or modify the laws of nature.

29 **Behold, I have given you every herb,** etc. Another great mystery of created life is here ordained, the preservation of life by food. Here only vegetable food is spoken of: for the use of flesh, see ix. 3. Food, of whatever sort, carries with it the necessity of *sacrifice*. The life of the plant, which appears at first sight to be an end in itself, is surrendered and appropriated to nourish some other life. This fact becomes more startling when the animal's life is given to support man. We may catch some suggestion in all this of the self-sacrificing nature of God Himself, and of the imparting of a sacrificed Life for the soul's nourishment in the Holy Eucharist.

ii. 2 **And on the seventh day God finished his work.** The division of days into periods of seven is thus traced back to God Himself in His

he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work
3 which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it: because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made.

CHAPTER I

Questions

1. What are the chief religious truths taught by this first story of Creation?

2. In what ways is this account of Creation similar to that given by scientists?

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creative work. It is remarkable that the week is the only one of our divisions of time which cannot be clearly referred to any natural and inevitable law of movement of the earth or the heavenly bodies. Days, months, and years must obviously be as long as the sun and the moon and the earth perform their courses. The week is different, for the lunar month does not consist exactly of four weeks or four "quarters." The arrangement is artificial, and may be referred to some early tradition of a Divine revelation. There is no allusion to the seven days in the Babylonian myths of creation.

he rested. It is difficult to understand in what sense God may be said to "rest." The process of creation, as concerning this earth, as far as we know it now, had been completed with the creation of man. But God is always working (cp. St. John v. 17, our Lord's reply when accused of breaking the Sabbath). St. Augustine well describes God as *semper agens, semper quietus*. God's "rest" must be the repose of eternity, which lies, as it were, in the background of time. And we notice (1) that He is spoken of as finishing on the seventh day rather than the sixth, and (2) that, unlike the previous days, the seventh has no "evening and morning." This suggests that this "seventh" day is on a different plane from the other days, and is still eternally proceeding. Christians have naturally seen also a fulfilment of this "rest" in the fact that our Lord's Body rested in the grave during the Sabbath.

3 **And God blessed the seventh day.** There is clearly an allusion to

3. What are the chief differences ?

4. How would you explain the difficulty of these differences ?

5. Describe the account given here of the creation of man. What are the chief points of interest in it ?

6. Explain, " the spirit of God," " firmament," " sea-monsters," " waste and void."

7. What special importance is attached to the seventh day ?

8. What other book of the Bible opens with the same words of Genesis ? Compare the two statements and show their connection.

Subjects for Study

1. The Babylonian story of Creation.
   Ryle, *Genesis* (Appendix)—Cambridge Bible.
   Driver, *Genesis.*
   Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, " Cosmogony."

2. The Religious value of the story of Creation in Gen. i.-ii. 3.
   Driver, *Sermons on the Old Testament.*
   Aubrey L. Moore, *Science and the Faith.*

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the Sabbath (=" rest "). Its institution and its sanctity are traced directly to God. It is " hallowed," made holy, i.e. *separated* from all other days—the earliest meaning of " holy "—and is a perpetual witness to the eternal world. As such it was re-enacted for Israel in the Fourth Commandment, " Remember," etc., and has passed into the Christian consecration of the first day, the " eternal octave " of creation, the Lord's Day, the Day of the Resurrection, which inaugurated a new order.

The Second Story of Creation (ii. 4-25)

4 These are the generations of the heaven and of the earth when
they were created, in the day that [1]the LORD God
5 made earth and heaven. And no plant of the field
was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had
yet sprung up: for the LORD God had not caused
it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man
6 to till the ground; but there went up a mist from

[1] Heb. *Jehovah*, as in other places where LORD is put in capitals.

This narrative is plainly derived from some other source than that of the preceding, probably from the document known as J, an earlier and more pictorial style of writing than that of the priests (see Introduction, p. xv). It describes the creation from a different point of view, making the creation of man the starting-point or centre round which everything else is grouped, instead of the culmination of a series. The language is probably for the most part allegorical, though the story is set in a framework of literal geography.

ii. 4 **These are the generations.** Heb. *toledoth*, or genealogies. The phrase occurs several times in Genesis, and is derived from P. Here it is used as a preface to the second narrative, though it may originally have belonged to the first.

in the day. There is no allusion in this story to the days of creation: the one day spoken of means simply "at the time when."

the LORD God. This is a remarkable combination of the two most common names in O.T. of the Divine Being. **The LORD** (see margin) is the name of the Covenant God of Israel, the sacred tetragrammaton JHVH, the original vowel sounds of which have been lost owing to the unwillingness of the Jews to pronounce the name. In reading they substituted for it Adonai, "lord," and later the vowels of this word were inserted in the tetragrammaton, thus producing the incorrect word Jehovah. The real pronunciation of the name is generally thought to have been "Jahweh." The compiler has here combined the two names, perhaps to show that the Jehovah of the second (but earlier) story was the same as the Elohim of the first.

5 **And no plant of the field,** etc. The creation of the earth itself with its waters is assumed but not described. Owing to the absence of rain there was as yet no vegetation. The mention of the **mist** (6)

the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the 7
LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into
his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And 8
the LORD God planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there he
put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made 9
the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and
good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and
the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out 10

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cannot be satisfactorily explained. It may be that the picture was suggested to the writer by the spectacle of the dry, parched plains of Babylonia, which only put on their garment of green when the periodical rains descend.

7 **And the LORD God formed man,** etc. The human body is composed of the same materials as the earth itself, here poetically described as the **dust of the ground.** But the principle of life is directly imparted by God Himself. The same word "living soul" is used as in the case of the animals, but it seems implied that man received from the **breath** or Spirit of God some higher position. The same expression occurs in St. John xx. 22, where the risen Lord breathes the Holy Spirit into the disciples, as a sign of a new creation.

8 **a garden eastward, in Eden.** Eden is the name of the district in which the garden was placed. Eden seems to mean "pleasure" or "delight." The word "garden" is translated in LXX, "paradise," a Persian word meaning a park, with trees and water. This garden is referred to also in Is. li. 3; Ezek. xxviii. 13, etc. "God Almighty first planted a garden. And indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures" (Bacon).

9 **the tree of life also,** etc. Here the description seems to pass into allegory. The tree of life is a frequent Oriental image. It seems to imply the gift of immortality. The plural word "lives" is used, perhaps because this is a tree which does not merely nourish man's natural life. Cp. Rev. xxii. 2 and notes below on 16 and iii. 22-24.

the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This tree, which plays so tragic a part in the following chapter, is very difficult to explain (see Ryle, *Genesis*, pp. 61, 62). If the tree of life by its fruit gave the power of an endless and supernatural life, which would be wholly good and would develop the Divine image in which man was created, the other tree might be thought, by contrast, to be the means of man's development in intellect on the merely natural plane, where evil is competing with good, and tends to spoil and ruin it.

of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted,
11 and became four heads. The name of the first is Pishon: that
is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there
12 is gold; and the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium
13 and the [1]onyx stone. And the name of the second
river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the

[1] Or, *beryl*.

10 **And a river went out from Eden.** This description (10-14) is probably intended to be taken literally, as a piece of actual geography, for two at least of the rivers mentioned are well known. But the difficulty of the passage has from ancient times led writers to assume an allegorical meaning. The problem is indeed insoluble. Pishon and Gihon are unknown, so is Havilah. The mention of the Euphrates and the Tigris would naturally lead us to suppose that Eden is located somewhere among the mountains of Armenia, where these great rivers take their rise. Hence Colonel Conder thinks that Pishon is the Araxes, and Gihon the Halys. But Eden is by modern scholars associated rather with the south-east of Babylonia. Hence a favourite modern theory is that the **river** is really the Persian Gulf, and the **four heads** are Euphrates, Tigris, the canal Pallakopas on the west of the Euphrates, and the Choaspes. The difficulty of this is that the four heads are apparently described as flowing out of the original river, whereas this theory makes them flow into it.[1] It is possible, of course, that the channels of the rivers have so altered in the passage of time that attempts at identification are useless, e.g. Euphrates and Tigris formerly flowed separately into the Persian Gulf.

Perhaps the real solution is this. The narrative is partly literal and partly imaginative. The writer represents four great rivers known to his contemporaries as alike taking their origin from the river which passed through the mysterious garden (which man could no longer enter, iii. 24). And he may have meant by Pishon and Gihon the Indus and the Nile, in which case Havilah might be India, and Cush, as elsewhere, Ethiopia.

11-13 **Pishon—Gihon.** These rivers are not mentioned elsewhere except in Ecclus. xxiv. 25, a poetical description evidently founded on this passage.

Havilah, from Gen. xxv. 18. This would seem to mean some part of Arabia, which was anciently famous for its gold. If the river of Eden (10) is the Persian Gulf, the whole of Arabia would be "com-

[1] Possibly the flow of the tides from the Persian Gulf up the rivers gave the impression of a contrary movement.

whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is 14
[1]Hiddekel: that is it which goeth [2]in front of
Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. And 15
the LORD God took the man, and put him into the
garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the 16
LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every
tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of 17

[1] That is, *Tigris.*
[2] Or, *toward the east of.*

passed" by it. According to Colonel Conder, Havilah is Colchis in the Caucasus, a region where gold is found.

bdellium. The meaning is uncertain. It may be a precious stone, or a resinous gum, derived from balsam, valued for its fragrance. The manna is compared to it (Num. xi. 7). Possibly pearls are meant.

onyx—again uncertain; various precious stones have been suggested.

Cush. This name in O.T. usually means Ethiopia, i.e. the Soudan and the district generally south of Egypt. But it has also been interpreted here as meaning Babylonia, or a district W. of the Caspian.

14 **Hiddekel,** the Assyrian name for the Tigris; the latter name is derived from a Persian word meaning "arrow" or "swiftness."

15 **to dress it and to keep it.** Man was created not for idleness but for work. God has so deputed man to be the ruler and guardian of nature that nature cannot produce her best without his care. Vegetation, uncultivated by man, runs to waste and riot, to wildernesses and jungles. This is one of the most significant facts bearing out the truth of what we are here told of God's purpose and methods in creation. Man has a transforming influence upon the natural processes of evolution, to modify and improve them.

16-17 **And the LORD God commanded,** etc. There is no mention of the tree of life, and we may fairly conclude that man was intended and allowed to eat of that. Man is not represented as created perfect or immortal. But he was capable of progress on the right lines, and of attainment of immortality by obedience and use of God's gifts. The tree of knowledge presented to him the alternative of a different and lower kind of development. Cp. the description of Cain's descendants in iv. Evil already existed in the universe, though its origin is unrevealed (otherwise there could not have been a tree of knowledge of it), but man was not intended to know it by sharing in it. He was meant to know it only as something alien from his nature, to be shunned. So God and His angels know evil, but have no share in it or experience of it. But it was necessary that man should have the power of obeying or disobeying, being created as a free being. Otherwise his goodness would only have been the unconscious innocence of the animals.

the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be
19 alone; I will make him an help [1]meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them: and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name
20 thereof. And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for [2]man there was not found an help meet for him.

[1] Or, *answering to.*

[2] Or, *Adam.*

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17 **thou shalt surely die.** If man had voluntarily obeyed this command out of love of God, in whose image he was made, it is implied that he would have retained his fellowship with God, and escaped death as we know it. He did not actually die on the day he disobeyed, but he entered on the lower sort of life, which leads to death. See further notes on iii. 19.

18 **It is not good that the man should be alone.** Man is a social being, who can only find his full realisation in the companionship of others. The writer represents the animals as created after man, and as it were experimentally, to fulfil his need of society.

an help meet for him. In *v.* 20 it is seen that no mere animal can be "meet," i.e. suitable, for full companionship with man. Man is created in the image of God; and as God finds His self-realisation in Persons (the Son and the Holy Spirit) who are His equals and of the same nature as Himself, so man requires some being on his own level, "like in difference."

20 **And the man gave names,** etc. In this is implied man's power of observation and his use of language. "This is the birth of Science" (Ryle).

there was not found an help meet, etc. The animals are useful to man in many ways; they are also a source of interest and amusement. He watches them, plays with them, draws pictures of them. Of some of them he can make friends and companions to a limited extent. But no animal can really answer to man's need of sympathy and understanding. There is no bond of common language, though an animal may learn to understand certain human words: nor has companionship with the animals any possibility of further development. Animals and men remain as much a mystery to each other as they were in the earliest ages of the world.

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, 21
and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh
instead thereof: and the rib, which the LORD God had taken 22
from the man, [1]made he a woman, and brought her
unto the man. And the man said, This is now bone 23
of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be
called [2]Woman, because she was taken out of [3]Man.
Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, 24
and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be

[1] Heb. *builded he into.*
[2] Heb. *Isshah.*
[3] Heb. *Ish.*

---

21 **And the LORD God caused a deep sleep,** etc. The creation of woman is veiled in mystery. The account given of it is evidently figurative. What is implied in it is the real unity of nature between man and woman, and at the same time the dependence of woman on man for the love and protection which he is bound to give to one who is really part of himself.

22 **and brought her unto the man.** The institution of marriage is thus traced to God Himself in the morning of the world, and before the Fall had destroyed man's innocency.

23 **she shall be called Woman.** See margin for the play on the Hebrew words,[1] which cannot be reproduced in English.

24 **Therefore shall a man leave,** etc. These are, of course, not the words of "the man," but an inspired comment of the compiler, and are stated by our Lord to convey an injunction from God Himself (St. Matt. xix. 4-6; St. Mark x. 6-9). Marriage is the highest and the most sacred of human relationships, and so takes precedence even of that between parent and child. Our Lord definitely interprets the passage as laying down that monogamy is the primal law of creation. Polygamy and divorce were tolerated for a time in the O.T., but both are unlawful for a Christian. See also St. Paul's comments in Eph. v. 22-33.

The ideal relation between the sexes is splendidly described in Tennyson's well-known lines in *The Princess* (vii.) beginning, "Henceforth thou hast a helper."

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[1] The word "Ish" means "male" or "husband," and is a different word from that previously used for man, viz. Adam. The latter is really a generic word, but it comes to be used as a proper name for the first created man. See v. 2.

25 one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

CHAPTER II. 4-25

Questions

1. Compare this account of the creation of man with that contained in chap. i.

2. What different views have been held as to the site of the Garden of Eden ?

3. What other allusions to the "tree of life" are found in Scripture ? What do you think is its significance ?

4. How is this story of the creation of woman referred to in N.T. ?

Subject for Study

Religious value of Gen. ii.

Ryle, *Early Narratives of Genesis.*

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25 **and were not ashamed.** The state described is one of natural innocence and purity: the sense of shame did not arise until sin entered into man's nature and defiled his thoughts about the great mystery of life and its transmission.

The Fall (iii.)

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field 1
which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman,
Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of [1]any tree of
the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, 2
Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat:
but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, 3
God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it,

[1] Or, *all the trees.*

iii. This profound and difficult chapter is evidently intended to explain the beginning of sin in the world, and the cause of man's need for redemption and salvation, which is the leading idea of the whole Bible. The vivid story of the Fall, though it is very seldom alluded to in O.T., has deeply influenced Christian thought and theology. Like the Creation stories, it may have been developed from some primitive legend. Babylonian mythology has some interesting parallels (see Ryle, *Genesis*, p. 60 onwards). On a Babylonian cylinder in the British Museum there is a representation of a tree, with two human figures by its side, apparently eating its fruit, while in the background there is a serpent (see "Fall" in Murray's *Bible Dictionary*). This *may* be an illustration of the same story as that of Gen. iii., but it is by no means certain. The whole narrative is probably allegorical, but it conveys religious truth of the highest importance.

1 **the serpent.** The writer can hardly have meant that a mere animal, however **subtil** (i.e. clever or wily), possessed the gift of speech and was capable of acting as tempter. It is a figurative way of stating the great truth that evil had to be suggested to man from outside. Evil already existed, though no explanation is given of this, but not as yet in man himself. The serpent was probably chosen as a suitable image to represent this approach of evil, for man has always felt a peculiar antipathy towards snakes, and this is especially the case in the East, where snakes are often supposed to be possessed by evil spirits or *djinns*. Later theology identified this serpent of Paradise with Satan himself. See Rev. xii. 9, and probably also St. John viii. 44.

And he said unto the woman. The serpent approaches the woman, apparently considering her the more likely to be deceived (cp. 1 Tim. ii. 14). His question is subtly framed. The opening word **yea** implies some sort of surprise, or protest, and the question itself may suggest a doubt whether God has really said such a thing at all. In any

4 lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not
5 surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then
your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as [1]God,
6 knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw
that the tree was good for food, and that it was a
delight to the eyes, and that the tree was [2]to be
desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof,
and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her,
7 and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened,
and they knew that they were naked; and they
sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves
8 [3]aprons. And they heard the [4]voice of the LORD
God walking in the garden in the [5]cool of the day:

[1] Or, *gods.*
[2] Or, *desirable to look upon.*
[3] Or, *girdles.*
[4] Or, *sound.*
[5] Heb. *wind.*

---

case the insinuation is exaggerated. God had certainly not forbidden *any* tree to be eaten of.

4 **And the serpent said,** etc. The woman is found to be fully aware of the prohibition. She corrects the misstatement of the serpent. It is only one tree that is forbidden, but there is no doubt about that. The serpent then boldly attacks the Divine command itself, and represents it as an unjust attempt to keep man in a lower position; to rebel against it is justifiable and in man's own interests.

6 **And when the woman saw,** etc. The course of the temptation is clearly described. It appealed first to "the desire of the flesh" (1 St. John ii. 16), its fruit was good for food; then to "the desire of the eyes," it was beautiful, a delight to the eyes, and lured one on to possess it; thirdly it awoke the desire of self-assertion, to gratify curiosity or pride, or to seize knowledge which God had withheld; it was an appeal to what St. John calls (*ib.*) the "vainglory of life." The same series is to be noticed in our Lord's Temptation, in St. Luke's arrangement (iv.), the gratification (1) of bodily desire, (2) of ambition or covetousness, and (3) the more subtle and fatal desire to assert oneself without reference to the will of God—leaping down from the Temple pinnacle would have been a vainglorious display of power, a presumptuous act.

7 **And the eyes of them both were opened.** They got what the serpent had promised them (*v.* 5), but very differently from what they expected. The sense of shame arises: they have lost innocence, and become conscious of *sin*, which they have made their own by breaking the Divine command.

8 **walking in the garden in the cool of the day.** This description is

and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And 9 the LORD God called unto the man, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, 10 and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast 11 thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou 12 gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this thou hast 13 done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the serpent, 14 Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou [1]above all cattle, and [1]above every beast of the field; upon thy

[1] Or, *from among.*

---

suitable for an allegory. God is represented in quite a human way, walking in His garden, as any Eastern potentate might do, towards evening, when a refreshing breeze springs up. It is implied that up to this time the relations of God and man had been intimate and friendly.

the man and his wife hid themselves. Another very significant intimation of the change that sin had wrought. They were now afraid of God, and tried vainly to conceal themselves from Him.

9 **Where art thou?** In the allegory, God is represented as directly speaking. The voice may also be understood as the reproof of conscience, which inevitably follows sin. Man cannot escape God.

12 **The woman whom thou gavest me,** etc. The man has often been blamed for trying to cast the blame on the woman, and indeed his tone does not sound at all pleasing. But it must be remembered that in the presence of God truth *must* be spoken; and it was certainly true that the woman had been the prime mover in the transgression (cp. 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14).

14 **cursed art thou,** etc. A curse is pronounced on the serpent, and not on those whom he has deceived. The ideas of the literal serpent and of the evil principle he represents are intermingled. The crawling attitude to which the serpent is condemned, and the dust which must therefore mingle with its food, are to be signs of the loathsome and degraded character of evil, and the insidiousness of its attack. So in the next verse the natural antipathy between man and the serpent-race is used to suggest the age-long battle with evil.

belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:
15 and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall [1]bruise thy head, and
16 thou shalt [1]bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire
17 shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in [2]toil shalt thou eat of it all the days

[1] Or, *lie in wait for.*

[2] Or, *sorrow.*

---

15 **and I will put enmity,** etc. This remarkable verse has been called the *Protevangelium*, the first foreshadowing of the Gospel. It implies (1) a continual warfare between the **seed** or descendants of the woman and the power of evil; (2) an ultimate victory for man, though he will suffer grievously in the battle. The Church has rightly seen in this an intimation of the Incarnation, the Passion, and the Triumph of Christ.

it shall bruise thy head, etc. The word *bruise* is difficult of interpretation. The margin "lie in wait for" is not, however, so appropriate to the action of man as it might be to that of the serpent. The meaning apparently is that in the great conflict man will inflict a decisive wound on the serpent, while the serpent will seize every opportunity of wounding man. The subsequent history of mankind is a sufficient commentary on this. Evil has ever dogged man's footsteps, and when the Second Man, the Son of "the second Eve," appeared, He was tempted by the devil, and only won His victory at the cost of the Passion and the Cross.

16 **Unto the woman he said,** etc. This prediction lays upon woman two characteristic sufferings as a memorial of her moral weakness, (1) the pain and danger that attend childbirth, and (2) her subjection to man.

thy desire shall be, etc. Woman's very devotion to man leads to her subordination. Her special gifts of love and motherhood are henceforth to be tinged with bitterness. We may conjecture that if man had not fallen, the two sexes would have been more on an equality, each the complement of the other; man no doubt taking the lead, as the first created, but woman his helper rather than his plaything, his drudge, or his slave.

17 **cursed is the ground for thy sake,** etc. Again, the man himself

of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to 18
thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat 19
of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto
the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust
thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And 20
the man called his wife's name [1]Eve; because she
was the mother of all living. And the LORD God 21
made for Adam and for his wife coats of skins, and clothed
them.

[1] Heb. *Havvah*, that is, *Living*, or *Life*.

---

is not cursed, but that which was meant to be the field of his characteristic work. He was intended to "subdue" the earth, to "dress and keep" the garden. But this high and joyful task is now to be turned into wearisome and unsatisfying toil. The labour of the field will be a battle against nature; the ground will produce hurtful weeds, and man with difficulty will wring from it enough to support his natural life. This connection between the imperfections and cruelties of nature, and the Fall of man, is a difficult and mysterious subject. St. Paul certainly seems to teach that nature shares in the results of man's sin, and like him will be ultimately "redeemed" (Rom. viii. 19-23).

19 **for dust thou art,** etc. See ii. 7 and 17. Man falls under the sentence of death, the separation of body and spirit. It has often been discussed whether man would have died had he never fallen. He was not apparently created immortal, but might have been rendered so by eating the tree of life. If in any sense he had died, death would not have been painful, humiliating, and dark with mystery, but a transition or development into a still higher condition.

20 **Eve**—evidently intended as a proper name. See margin for meaning. She was to be the mother of all the human race. It is often disputed whether we are justified by science in thinking that all mankind descended from one single pair. There is nothing intrinsically impossible in this, and it can hardly be definitely disproved. But even if human life began with a number of individuals, it would still be true that all births come through woman, though in that case we must assume that temptation and fall were an experience common to all the first progenitors of the race.

21 **coats of skins.** It is sometimes said that we have here a suggestion of the origin of *sacrifice* as a Divinely appointed institution. Animals certainly had to die before their skins were taken for clothing; and in primitive times the killing of an animal was closely associated with the idea of a sacrifice.

22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of
us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand,
23 and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: there-
fore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to
24 till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the
man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the
Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to
keep the way of the tree of life.

---

22 **Behold, the man is become as one of us,** etc. This is difficult. "Us" may refer to God Himself, as in i. 26, or possibly to the angels. Man by his sin had thrust himself into a position which he was not intended to have. And now, unless he were debarred from the tree of life, he would become an immortal evil being, like the fallen angels, without possibility of redemption. Death is now a merciful penance and discipline.

24 **the Cherubim.** These angelic beings are frequently mentioned in Scripture. Winged figures representing them were ordered to be placed at the ends of the mercy-seat, overshadowing the Ark of the Covenant (Exod. xxv. 18-20). They are also described as the bearers of the throne or the thunder-chariot of Jehovah (Ps. xviii. 10; Ezek. i., x.). The four-faced cherubim of Ezekiel's vision are probably to be identified with the four "living creatures" of Rev. iv., etc. It may be that they represent the great powers of nature, such as the thunder-storm and the whirlwind, which overawe men and suggest the dreadful majesty of God.

the flame of a sword, etc. This image was no doubt suggested by the lightning. The sword is not a weapon in the hand of the Cherubim, but something distinct from them.

The general meaning of this verse seems to be that man is now expelled from the condition in which he had free communion with God, a life of innocence and free from sorrow, with the prospect of immortality. He has sunk into the lower condition of material life, and nature, with its mystery and its terrors, is a barrier between him and the spiritual world. He is shut in by the *flammantia moenia mundi* (Lucretius).

But, as will be seen later, man is still able to receive communications from God and to approach him by prayer and sacrifice. He is not going to be left to himself, but is to be the subject of Divine education and discipline.

CHAPTER III

Questions

1. Describe carefully the progress of the temptation of the woman by the serpent.

2. What was the curse on the serpent and its significance ?

3. What predictions are given of the effects of the Fall upon the woman and the man ?

4. Why and how was man exiled from the garden of Eden ?

5. What allusions to the contents of this chapter are to be found in the rest of the Bible ?

Subject for Study

The meaning of the Fall.

Ryle, *Genesis*. Note on the Fall.

N. O. Williams, *The Fall and Original Sin*.

Cain, Abel, and Seth (iv.)

And the man knew Eve his wife ; and she conceived, and bare 1

iv. Much perplexity will be avoided in studying this and following chapters if it is remembered that (1) there is no attempt here to write a complete history of the human race ; only typical scenes and characters are selected, such as might illustrate the religious principles of the writer ; (2) these selections were made from various sources, and are not amalgamated into one narrative, as might be done by a modern historian. There is no attempt to avoid apparent inconsistencies and contradictions.

Cain, and said, I have [1]gotten a man with *the help of* the LORD.
2 And again she bare his brother Abel. And Abel was
a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.
3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain
brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the
4 LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his
flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect

1 Heb. *kanah*, to get.

---

1 **I have gotten a man,** etc. The Hebrew words are very obscure, though probably the rendering in the text is the best. Cain is not derived from the Hebrew word *kanah* (margin), but, as in many other cases, there is a play on words of similar sound. The name itself, whatever its precise meaning, suggested "to get."

2 **And Abel was a keeper of sheep,** etc. Abel and Cain are representatives of two primitive human occupations, pastoral and agricultural. In actual history the former generally precedes the latter. Men are shepherds and herdmen before they settle down to tilling the soil.

3 **an offering unto the LORD.** This is the first definite mention of *sacrifice*; the word used is *minchah*, which afterwards became appropriated to the "meal-offering" (Lev. ii.). The religious ideas underlying this primitive institution have been much discussed. Probably the earliest idea was that of a gift to God, in order to gain or keep His favour. That this ought to be done seems to have been a fundamental religious instinct. Thus the thoughts of propitiation and of communion with God were implied from the first, but grew more distinct as men learned more of God and of their own needs.

4 **And the LORD had respect,** etc. We are not told in what way God's attitude towards the two offerers was made clear, nor how the voice of God was heard by Cain, whether as a personal revelation to his conscience, or through the means of an angel or some inspired person. There were evidently more people living than have been described hitherto (see notes on 14 and 17), and even in that early age there may have been "prophets" who spoke with authority from God. Nor again is it stated *why* Abel's offering was accepted and Cain's was not. Various explanations have been suggested, e.g. that a sacrifice which could be accepted for fallen man must involve the shedding of blood, which Cain's did not. But there can be little doubt that we are intended to recognise a difference in the character or

unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his 5
offering he had not respect. And Cain was very
wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD 6
said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why
is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, 7
[1]shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest
not well, sin coucheth at the door: and unto thee
[2]shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

[1] Or, *shall it not be lifted up?* [2] Or, *is its desire, but thou shouldest rule over it.*

---

attitude of the two brothers. It is not so much *what* a man offers, as *how* he offers it. See Heb. xi. 4 and 1 St. John iii. 12. What manner of man Cain was is sufficiently indicated in what follows; that Abel was a good man is stated by our Lord Himself (St. Matt. xxiii. 35).

7 **shalt thou not be accepted?** The meaning is uncertain. The marginal translation refers to Cain's "fallen countenance." If he does well, it will be "lifted up." He will have joy instead of moody discontent and anger.

sin coucheth at the door. This again is obscure. **Sin,** here mentioned for the first time, is like some insidious beast lurking at the door of a man's house ready to spring upon him. A man's evil-doing offers new opportunities for the tempter. He will go from bad to worse. Other interpretations are (1) that "sin" means the punishment of sin, which cannot be evaded; it is, as it were, always waiting for its man, or (2) that it means "sin-offering." If Cain has done wrong, there is the opportunity always close at hand for him to make his peace with God by offering a sacrifice of propitiation. But this is probably a reading of later religious thought into a primitive story.

and unto thee shall be his desire, etc. As the words stand, "his" would refer to Abel. Cain, by doing right and getting free from his own sin, will then rightly claim the position of an elder brother. His anger was no doubt partly due to the fact that it was his younger brother who had been preferred. The phrase is an echo of iii. 16, but probably without any real reference to it. Early writers often repeat a striking or favourite form of words. But it is possible also to substitute "its" and "it" for "his" and "him," making the reference to the sin lurking at the door. By doing right Cain may make himself its master and conquer it.

8 And Cain [1]told Abel his brother. And it came to pass,
when they were in the field, that Cain rose up
9 against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the
LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?
And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper?
10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy
11 brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And
now cursed art thou from the ground, which hath
opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood
12 from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall
not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a

[1] Heb. *said unto.* Many ancient authorities have, *said unto Abel his brother, Let us go into the field.*

---

8 **And Cain told Abel his brother.** There is apparently here some gap in the text, which the LXX and other versions fill up by inserting the words in the margin.

and slew him. The steps leading to the first murder have been clearly traced. First, the feeling of personal resentment and jealousy; then sulky brooding; then resistance to the pleading of the Divine voice; finally a favourable opportunity, and the blow is struck.

It should be noticed that while there is no definite statement that Adam's and Eve's children inherited a disposition to evil or original sin, the selection of this tragedy as the next incident in the history shows pretty plainly what was the belief of the writer. He regarded the whole human race as tainted by the effects of the Fall.

The dialogue which follows (9-15) is written with great literary power; it is one of those early narratives which, whatever their origin or precise historical value, have left an ineffaceable mark on men's thoughts.

9 **am I my brother's keeper?** The insolent tone of this question shows plainly (1) what sort of a man Cain was; (2) the essential characteristic of sin—its profound selfishness. The sinner is for *himself*: God and his brother-man are disregarded.

10 **the voice of thy brother's blood crieth,** etc. It is a very ancient belief that murder cannot be hidden. Blood is pictured here as crying in the ears of God for vengeance. See the beautiful comment on this verse in Heb. xii. 4. The earth herself refuses to be a party to the crime by hiding it (cp. Job xvi. 18).

12 **her strength.** Fruits and harvests are thought of as being the strength of the ground; perhaps because they are the source of man's strength (Ps. civ. 15), and this fact is poetically transferred to the ground itself.

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sin coucheth at the door. This again is obscure. **Sin,** here mentioned for the first time, is like some insidious beast lurking at the door of a man's house ready to spring upon him. A man's evil-doing offers new opportunities for the tempter. He will go from bad to worse. Other interpretations are (1) that "sin" means the punishment of sin, which cannot be evaded; it is, as it were, always waiting for its man, or (2) that it means "sin-offering." If Cain has done wrong, there is the opportunity always close at hand for him to make his peace with God by offering a sacrifice of propitiation. But this is probably a reading of later religious thought into a primitive story.

and unto thee shall be his desire, etc. As the words stand, "his" would refer to Abel. Cain, by doing right and getting free from his own sin, will then rightly claim the position of an elder brother. His anger was no doubt partly due to the fact that it was his younger brother who had been preferred. The phrase is an echo of iii. 16, but probably without any real reference to it. Early writers often repeat a striking or favourite form of words. But it is possible also to substitute "its" and "it" for "his" and "him," making the reference to the sin lurking at the door. By doing right Cain may make himself its master and conquer it.

8 And Cain [1]told Abel his brother. And it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up
9 against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper?
10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy
11 brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now cursed art thou from the ground, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood
12 from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a

[1] Heb. *said unto.* Many ancient authorities have, *said unto Abel his brother, Let us go into the field.*

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8 **And Cain told Abel his brother.** There is apparently here some gap in the text, which the LXX and other versions fill up by inserting the words in the margin.

and slew him. The steps leading to the first murder have been clearly traced. First, the feeling of personal resentment and jealousy; then sulky brooding; then resistance to the pleading of the Divine voice; finally a favourable opportunity, and the blow is struck.

It should be noticed that while there is no definite statement that Adam's and Eve's children inherited a disposition to evil or original sin, the selection of this tragedy as the next incident in the history shows pretty plainly what was the belief of the writer. He regarded the whole human race as tainted by the effects of the Fall.

The dialogue which follows (9-15) is written with great literary power; it is one of those early narratives which, whatever their origin or precise historical value, have left an ineffaceable mark on men's thoughts.

9 **am I my brother's keeper?** The insolent tone of this question shows plainly (1) what sort of a man Cain was; (2) the essential characteristic of sin—its profound selfishness. The sinner is for *himself*: God and his brother-man are disregarded.

10 **the voice of thy brother's blood crieth,** etc. It is a very ancient belief that murder cannot be hidden. Blood is pictured here as crying in the ears of God for vengeance. See the beautiful comment on this verse in Heb. xii. 4. The earth herself refuses to be a party to the crime by hiding it (cp. Job xvi. 18).

12 **her strength.** Fruits and harvests are thought of as being the strength of the ground; perhaps because they are the source of man's strength (Ps. civ. 15), and this fact is poetically transferred to the ground itself.

wanderer shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto 13
the LORD, [1]My punishment is greater [2]than I can
bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day 14
from the face of the ground; and from thy face shall
I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in
the earth; and it shall come to pass, that whosoever
findeth me shall slay me. And the LORD said unto him, 15
Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken
on him sevenfold. And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain,
lest any finding him should smite him.

[1] Or, *mine iniquity.*
[2] Or, *than can be forgiven.*

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13 **My punishment is greater than I can bear.** The alternative translation (margin) is not so likely. Cain is not expressing either repentance or remorse at his deed, but merely his horror at so great a punishment.

14 **from thy face shall I be hid.** This is no expression of piety on Cain's part. It simply reflects the very ancient idea that God's presence is confined to a certain spot or district, and that to be exiled from this means entering into a region of unknown and probably hostile divinities or demons. This local idea of God lingered long in Israel. (Cp. 1 Sam. xxvi. 19.)

whosoever findeth me. If this were a complete history, there would be no one living at that time except Cain's father and mother. But it is plainly assumed here, as in *v.* 17, that there were others, whether we consider them to have been unrecorded children of Adam and Eve or assume that those persons who are mentioned by name are only typical of a greater number. See note at head of this chapter.

15 **vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.** It was in primitive times, before laws gained force, the duty of the kinsmen of a murdered man to avenge his death; and this vengeance tended to be very much greater than the crime. Seven of the family of Cain's murderer will be killed to avenge him, if he is slain.

And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain. This was anciently interpreted as meaning that some personal mark was fixed upon Cain, by which he might be recognised. Much ingenuity has been used in conjecturing what it might be, and "the brand of Cain" has passed into a proverb. But the Hebrew words do not seem to mean that, and to "mark" Cain would be more likely to lead to his murder. The usual explanation now is that in mercy God gave Cain himself a sign, like the rainbow was given to Noah, to assure him that his life would still be protected.

16 And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt
17 in the land of [1]Nod, [2]on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city,
18 after the name of his son, Enoch. And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methushael: and Methushael begat Lamech.
19 And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the
20 one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents and *have*
21 cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of
22 all such as handle the harp and pipe. And Zillah, she also

[1] That is, *Wandering.*
[2] Or, *in front of.*

16-24 This section describes the posterity of Cain, and traces in them the origins of civilisation, settled life, and the arts. It is extremely condensed, does not follow the known historical order of human development, and can only be regarded as a typical résumé. The underlying religious idea seems to be that this early civilisation began without God's direction or approval, and was marked by further sin and violence.

16 **the land of Nod.** The expression is vague (see margin), and suggests unexplored desert, ranged by nomad tribes.

17 **his wife.** On this ancient difficulty see note on *v.* 14.

he builded a city. It is significant that the first city should be ascribed to Cain. The writer may have meant to suggest that cities marked a moral decline from the more primitive pursuits of men—hunting, agriculture, etc. The proverbial line "God made the country and man the town" expresses the same thought.

19 **two wives.** This is the first mention of polygamy, which was a declension from the original law of marriage, though it was long tolerated in the O.T.

20 **such as dwell in tents and have cattle,** i.e. the pastoral and nomad races, so well known in the East, such as the various tribes of Arabs. Historically this style of life preceded the more settled life of towns.

21 **the harp and pipe.** Jubal is represented as the inventor of musical instruments. The two mentioned are among the simplest types of string and wind instruments. They must have appeared at a very early date. Man would not be long before he discovered that

bare Tubal-cain, [1]the forger of every cutting instrument of
[2]brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain was
Naamah. And Lamech said unto his wives: 23

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
Ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech:
For [3]I have slain a man [4]for wounding me,
And a young man for bruising me:
If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, 24
Truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare 25
a son, and called his name [5]Seth: For, *said she*, God [6]hath appointed me another seed instead
of Abel; for Cain slew him. And to Seth, to 26
him also there was born a son; and he called

[1] Or, *an instructor of every artificer.*
[2] Or, *copper*, and so elsewhere.
[3] Or, *I will slay.*
[4] Or, *to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.*
[5] Heb. *Sheth.*
[6] Heb. *shath.*

---

a tightened sinew gave a musical note which varied with its length, or that a hollow reed could be made into a whistle, and that its note again could be modified by the fingers.

22 **the forger of every cutting instrument,** etc. This refers to the discovery of the use of metals, a most important landmark in civilisation. As a matter of history the use of stone for weapons and other instruments came before that of metal. **Brass** is more properly "bronze," a mixture of copper and tin, and the use of it preceded the "Iron age." The prominent thought in this verse seems to be the invention of weapons of war, which leads on to the boastings of Lamech in 23-24.

23 **And Lamech said unto his wives.** This utterance is the first example of Hebrew poetry, and has its characteristic marks of balanced rhythm and parallelism: the second line in each couplet repeating with some variation the thought of the first. This song of Lamech breathes the spirit of war and vengeance. Lamech is boasting to his wives that he either has killed or will kill a man who has done him an injury, and that his revenge will be very great.

a man . . . a young man. One and the same person is meant, poetically repeated (see above).

24 **If Cain shall be avenged.** The reference is clearly to *v.* 15. Lamech boasts that he will exact a far greater penalty than that which was threatened on any one who should kill Cain.

25 **Seth**—as to derivation see note on *v.* 1. The importance of Seth

his name Enosh: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.

CHAPTER IV

Questions

1. What allusions are there to Cain and Abel in the rest of the Bible?

2. What was the punishment of Cain?

3. What is the meaning of the "sign" appointed for Cain?

4. Describe the developments in civilisation ascribed to Cain and his posterity.

5. Quote and comment on the Song of Lamech.

Subjects for Study

1. The names of God in Genesis.
   Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, "God."
   Driver, *Genesis* (Excursus i.).

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is that with him begins a line which is clearly separated from that of Cain, and which will now be alone described. In the posterity of Seth we see the beginnings of the election of a "people of God," separated from the rest of the world, to be the special recipients of God's revelation—a patriarchal Church.

26 **then began men,** etc. This does not mean, of course, that prayer only began then to be made, but that men began to address God by that which was afterwards His Covenant-Name, Jahweh or Jehovah. This has been thought inconsistent with Exod. vi. 3. The statement in Exodus may represent a different tradition, or it may simply mean that until the time of Moses the full significance of the Name was not realised (cp. Exod. iii. 14, 15).

2. Early Religion.

Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, "Early Religion of Babylonia," "Early Religion of Israel."

James, *Essays Catholic and Critical*, "The Emergence of Religion."

The Posterity of Seth (v.)

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that 1
God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and 2
female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name
[1]Adam, in the day when they were created. And 3
Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat *a son* in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth: and the days of Adam after he begat Seth were eight 4
hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters. And all the 5
days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.

[1] Or, *Man.*

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v. This section (with the possible exception of *v.* 29) is derived from the Priestly writing (P), and bears its characteristics of order, and repetition of similar phrases. The priests were the guardians of genealogies, and reproduced them with evident care. The section begins with a little summary, which takes up the first creation-story. **Adam** is apparently used as a proper name, except in *v.* 2, where it seems to be used again in its generic sense of "man."

3 **in his own likeness.** This is sometimes interpreted to mean that Adam's posterity were sinful like himself, inheriting the results of his fall. Or it may simply mean that as the first man was created in the image of God, that likeness was not lost in his descendants. All men inherit the same high position, however much the Divine image may be marred by sin.

5 **nine hundred and thirty years.** The enormous ages here ascribed to the patriarchs have long been a source of perplexity. There is no evidence elsewhere to show that the average age of primitive man was longer than that of modern men. The ages given in the text are

6 And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enosh :
7 and Seth lived after he begat Enosh eight hundred and seven years,
8 and begat sons and daughters : and all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years : and he died.
9 And Enosh lived ninety years, and begat Kenan : and Enosh
10 lived after he begat Kenan eight hundred and fifteen years, and
11 begat sons and daughters : and all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years : and he died.
12 And Kenan lived seventy years, and begat Mahalalel : and
13 Kenan lived after he begat Mehalalel eight hundred and forty
14 years, and begat sons and daughters : and all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years : and he died.
15 And Mahalalel lived sixty and five years, and begat Jared :
16 and Mahalalel lived after he begat Jared eight hundred and thirty
17 years, and begat sons and daughters : and all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred ninety and five years : and he died.
18 And Jared lived an hundred sixty and two years, and begat
19 Enoch : and Jared lived after he begat Enoch eight hundred
20 years, and begat sons and daughters : and all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years : and he died.
21 And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah :
22 and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three

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impossible historically. Moreover, these ages differ very considerably in the ancient texts, Hebrew, Samaritan, and Septuagint, so that in no case can they be used as chronological data. We do not know which text is the most accurate. Some commentators attempt to solve the problem by suggesting that these ages refer not to individuals but to families, or that a "year" means a much shorter period. Others boldly say that this passage is a piece of ancient mythology, inserted by the compiler, and that it is only valuable as illustrating early ideas and the method of compilation adopted.

22 **and Enoch walked with God.** The name of Enoch stands out like an oasis in the midst of this somewhat arid genealogy. He appears as a saint of the patriarchal Church. To "walk with God" was a phrase implying a life of constant communion with God, and therefore a life of obedience to all that was known to be God's will; a life of consecration in which everything was done with reference to God, and which was therefore pleasing to God (Heb. xi. 5). The age

hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days 23
of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch 24
walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

And Methuselah lived an hundred eighty and seven years, and 25
begat Lamech: and Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech 26
seven hundred eighty and two years, and begat sons and daughters:
and all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine 27
years: and he died.

And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat 28
a son: and he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall 29
[1]comfort us for our work and for the toil of our hands,
[2]because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed.
And Lamech lived after he begat Noah five hundred 30
ninety and five years, and begat sons and daughters:
and all the days of Lamech were seven hundred 31
seventy and seven years: and he died.

[1] Heb. *nahem*, to comfort.
[2] Or, which cometh *from the ground*.

assigned to Enoch, much shorter than that of the other patriarchs, may be symbolical. Its years, 365, correspond to the days of the solar year, and may have implied that his was a life perfect and complete. Cp. what is said of the premature death of the righteous in Wisd. iv. 8-14.

24 **and he was not; for God took him.** Of all the other patriarchs it is simply said "he died." The words used of Enoch clearly imply that he departed from this life in some supernatural way, without undergoing "the common doom" of death. (Hence Enoch is spoken of in Heb. xi. 5 as having been "translated," transferred from one form of existence to another by the direct act of God.) It should be noted that this language implies at least the possibility of immortality. The mysterious passing of Elijah (2 Kings ii.) should be compared. Enoch figured largely in later Jewish thought, and his name was attached to an apocryphal writing of the second century B.C. to which St. Jude refers in his epistle (*vv.* 14, 15).

29 **This same shall comfort us,** etc. There is a play (as in iv. 1, 25) on the name Noah, which really is derived from a word meaning "rest." Lamech's prophecy discerns in the birth of Noah some alleviation of the primeval curse on the ground. It may be interpreted of Noah's skill in husbandry (ix. 20): but the more usual explanation is that it refers to the Divine blessing on Noah, the Covenant made with him and the earth, and the promises attached (viii. 21, 22, ix. 1, 9, etc.).

32 And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

CHAPTER V

Questions

1. Why is the line of Seth's descendants traced so carefully?

2. What comment would you make on the ages ascribed to these patriarchs?

3. What do you know of Enoch?

4. What prophecy was made concerning Noah?

The Giants of Old Time (vi. 1-8)

1 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face
2 of the ground, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they

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vi. 1-4 This is a very obscure passage, apparently a fragment of some very early legend. Some have thought that it embodies a different tradition of the Fall (perhaps alluded to in 2 St. Peter i. 4). It has also been described as "unassimilated mythology," i.e. mythology which has not been altogether purified and made the vehicle of spiritual truth, as in the case of the other early legends of Babylonia. At any rate the passage seems to be inserted here to help to explain the monstrous wickedness of the early human race, which brought upon them the destroying Deluge.

2 **the sons of God saw the daughters of men.** The angels are often spoken of in Scripture as "sons of God" (cp. Job i. 6, xxxviii. 7; Ps. xxix. i. (margin)). There is, of course, as we Christians know, only *one* eternal Son of God. The name as applied to the angels is used in a secondary sense, meaning exalted beings (in this sense also used of men, Ps. lxxxii. 6), or beings who are in close attendance on God, to some extent sharers in His counsels, bearers of His messages,

took them wives of all that they chose. And the LORD said, My 3
spirit shall not [1]strive with man for ever, [2]for that he
also is flesh: [3]yet shall his days be an hundred and
twenty years. The [4]Nephilim were in the earth in 4
those days, and also after that, when the sons of God
came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare
children to them: the same were the mighty men
which were of old, the men of renown. And the LORD 5
saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth,
and that every imagination of the thoughts of his
heart was only evil continually. And it repented the 6
LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it
grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will 7

[1] Or, *rule in.* Or, according to many ancient versions, *abide in.*
[2] Or, *in their going astray they are flesh.*
[3] Or, *therefore.*
[4] Or, *giants.* See Num. xiii. 33.

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and agents in His mighty works in nature. It is here apparently asserted that some of these heavenly beings made marriages with earthly women. Similar legends are found in Greek and Roman mythology. The offspring of these marriages were men or "demigods" of superhuman strength, and apparently of unusual wickedness. We know so little about angelic beings, or the possibilities of intercourse with them, that we cannot reject the story as impossible. Nevertheless it appears so strange that other explanations have been proposed, e.g. that the "sons of God" means members of the righteous line of Seth, who intermarried with the ungodly descendants of Cain.

3 **My spirit shall not strive with man for ever,** etc. The meaning of this verse is very doubtful. It may mean (1) there will be limits to God's forbearance with man and the efforts of His spirit to make him more righteous; or (2) there will be narrower limits to human life itself: for man is but **flesh,** i.e. frail and subject to mortality.

So, too, the **hundred and twenty years** may refer (1) to man's life, which will not henceforth be allowed to extend to such long ages, the limit will be 120 years; or (2) to the coming Deluge, before which 120 years' respite will be allowed.

4 **The Nephilim**—commonly rendered "giants." There are traditions among many early peoples of a race of giants in old days. We find several such allusions in O.T. Cp. Deut. ii. 10, 11, 20, 21, iii. 11; 2 Sam. xxi. 18-22, and especially Num. xiii. 33, where gigantic inhabitants of Canaan are described by the spies as "Nephilim," and descended from the Nephilim (perhaps with allusion to this passage). The remainder of this verse is not quite clear, but evidently these

[1]destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping thing, and fowl of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

[1] Heb. *blot out.*

CHAPTER VI. 1-7

Questions

1. What explanations have been suggested for the marriages between " the sons of God " and the daughters of men ?

2. What other traditions about giant races are to be found in Scripture ?

3. What is the meaning of God " repenting " ?

Subject for Study

The possibility of this narrative being a tradition of the Fall.

N. P. Williams, *The Fall and Original Sin.*

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unnatural marriages are regarded as the origin of a monstrous brood of evil-doers.

the men of renown, i.e. men whose names and deeds had passed into song and story. No doubt in the folk-lore of old Israel there were many such legendary giants and heroes.

6 **it repented the LORD.** God cannot change or repent, as is clearly stated in 1 Sam. xv. 29. Nevertheless from the point of view of man He appears to do so (*ib.*, 11, 35), when His favour is taken away and His anger is felt. God's attitude to man is in fact conditioned by man's attitude towards Him (cp. Ps. xviii. 25, 26). In this passage the wickedness of the human race is represented as being so great and so universal that God is described as changing His ancient delight in the goodness of His creation into heartfelt grief. Instead of commanding to increase and multiply, He will destroy that which is so abhorrent to His own nature.

Noah and the Ark (vi. 9-vii. 5)

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, 9
and [1]perfect in his generations: Noah walked with
[1] Or, *blameless.* God. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and 10
Japheth. And the earth was corrupt before God, and 11
the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and, 12
behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon
the earth.

And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me, 13
for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold,
I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher 14
wood; [2]rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt
[2] Heb. *nests.* pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is 15
how thou shalt make it: the length of the ark three

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vi. This narrative of the Deluge, which extends from vi. 13 to ix. 19, is a combination of two stories (J and P). This accounts for various repetitions, lack of sequence, and apparent inconsistencies. For its connection with other early legends and its probable historical origin, see Supplementary Note at end of viii.

vi. 9 **These are the generations of Noah . . . generations.** The first word is *toledoth*, as in ii. 4 (see note); the second means his "times." Noah is described as **righteous** in contrast with the "violence" and injustice of his contemporaries, **perfect** not of course in the full sense, but without obvious faults—"blameless." And, like Enoch, his life was lived as in the presence of God.

12 **for all flesh had corrupted his way,** i.e. all mankind had gone completely astray from the right path of life.

14 **Make thee an ark of gopher wood.** "Gopher" is probably cypress, a light resinous wood, often used by the Phoenicians for ship-building. The "Ark," however, was not a ship: there was no means apparently of guiding or propelling it; it was rather a sort of huge barge, roofed over, which floated on the waters. It had three decks, and these were divided into "nests" (margin) or cabins.

The **pitch** or bitumen was, of course, to render the Ark water-tight, and is found plentifully in Babylonia. The **cubit** is usually estimated at 18 inches, so that the length of the Ark would be 450 feet, about half the length of the present largest Atlantic liners.

hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it
16 thirty cubits. A [1]light shalt thou make to the ark, and to a cubit shalt thou finish it [2]upward; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.
17 And I, behold, I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under
18 heaven; every thing that is in the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives
19 with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they
20 shall be male and female. Of the fowl after their kind, and of the cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive.
21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and gather it
22 to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them. Thus

[1] Or, *roof.*
[2] Or, *from above.*

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16 **A light shalt thou make to the ark,** etc. This has been very variously interpreted; e.g. a *window*, one cubit high, running round the Ark, but this would only give light to one of the decks: a sloping *roof*, rising a cubit at its ridge; a *gangway* a cubit wide, running along the ridge of the roof.

18 **But I will establish my covenant with thee.** This is the first mention of what afterwards appears as one of the principal features of revelation, the establishing of a covenant between God and His people. The promise here made to Noah is developed in ix. (see notes). It must be recognised that a Divine covenant is not like a human agreement between two parties. God's covenants are absolute gifts from Him, by His own will, for the purpose of assuring His chosen people of His favour, and of their united fellowship with Him. They are of the nature of promises, but accompanied by some condition which man is required to keep, and ratified by sacrifice. Three great covenants are mentioned in O.T.—the present one with Noah, that made with Abraham (Gen. xv.), and the covenant of Sinai between God and Israel, of which Moses was the mediator. This last remained in force throughout the O.T. But the prophet Jeremiah foretold a "new covenant" (Jer. xxxi. 31, etc.), which was inaugurated by our Lord Himself at the Last Supper, being ratified by His own Sacrifice of Himself (cp. Heb. viii. 6-13, ix. 15-22, x. 15-18).

did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

vii

And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house 1
into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this
generation. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee seven 2
and seven, the male and his female; and of the beasts that are
not clean two, the male and his female; of the fowl also of the 3
air, seven and seven, male and female: to keep seed alive upon
the face of all the earth. For yet seven days, and I will cause it 4
to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every
living thing that I have made will I [1]destroy from off
the face of the ground. And Noah did according unto 5
all that the LORD commanded him.

[1] Heb. *blot out.*

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vii. 1 **And the LORD said,** etc. Note here a transition to the prophetic narrative J from the priestly one P, marked by the change in the Divine Name.

2 **Of every clean beast,** etc. This distinction between animals that were considered "clean," i.e. fit for food or sacrifice, and those that were not, was considered by the priests of Israel to date only from Moses (Lev. xi.; Deut. xiv.). But this legislation was probably based upon much earlier tradition, as appears to be assumed in this narrative. The distinction was partly hygienic and partly ritual or symbolical, and had the effect, whether designed or not, of sharply separating Israel from other nations. There can be little social intercourse where men will not eat with one another. The distinction of foods was abolished by Christ (St. Mark vii. 19, R.V., and Acts x. 9-16).

seven and seven. The priestly narrative (*v.* 8) only speaks of one pair, though the discrepancy is more apparent than real. Probably a larger number of "clean" animals was required for purposes of sacrifice (viii. 20).

5 **And Noah did according unto all,** etc. Tradition assumed from vi. 3 that the Ark took 120 years to build. Meanwhile, as our Lord said (St. Matt. xxiv. 37-39 and parallels), human life went on gaily and heedlessly, though Noah was a constant witness to the righteousness it was so lacking in. See 2 St. Peter ii. 5; Heb. xi. 7; and Ezek. xiv., where Noah appears as a typically righteous man.

The Deluge (vii. 6-24)

6 And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters
7 was upon the earth. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his
wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the
8 waters of the flood. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not
clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the
9 ground, there went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, male
10 and female, as God commanded Noah. And it came to pass after
the seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.
11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on
the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day were all the
fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven
12 were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and
13 forty nights. In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and
Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the
14 three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; they, and every
beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every
creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after its kind, and
every fowl after its kind, every bird of every [1]sort. [1] Heb.
15 And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and *wing.*

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vii. 11 **all the fountains of the great deep,** etc. The deluge is described as having a twofold origin, from beneath and from above. The **great deep** is a poetical way of describing the vast waters which the Hebrews imagined as surrounding and upholding the earth (cp. 2 St. Peter iii. 5; Ps. xxiv. 2). The **fountains,** i.e. apparently the rivers and ordinary channels by which these waters irrigated the earth, were **broken up,** and the waters rushed over the land. The description would be fitting for a great tidal wave or inundation from the sea (see note on p. 46).

the windows of heaven. Again a poetical way of saying that the waters "above the firmament" (i. 7) were released, and poured without restraint upon the earth. Evidently a long and phenomenal rainfall is described.

The whole passage, taken in connection with Gen. i. and Ps. civ. 7-13, suggests a tremendous reversal of the work of creation. The waters which had been separated from the earth and reduced to order are now allowed again to rage unchecked.

two of all flesh wherein is the breath of life. And they that 16
went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God commanded him: and the LORD shut him in. And the flood 17
was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth. And the 18
waters prevailed, and increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed 19
exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits 20
upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both fowl, and 21
cattle, and beast, and every [1]creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: all in whose 22
nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. [2]And every living thing 23
was [3]destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and creeping thing, and fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only was left, and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon 24
the earth an hundred and fifty days.

[1] Or, *swarming thing that swarmeth.*
[2] Or, *And he destroyed every living thing.*
[3] Heb. *blotted out.*

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19 **all the high mountains.** The description is clearly poetical and hyperbolical. No doubt from the point of view of the dwellers in the plains of Babylonia, the deluge would appear to be universal and cover the whole earth, including the low hills that were usually visible. A deluge covering the globe itself and submerging the highest mountains is impossible, humanly speaking, nor would it be necessary for destroying all life. It has been a common but most misleading error in the past to interpret these stories in a prosy and literal way. They are not the accounts of a scientific observer, but early traditions of dreadful occurrences which have passed through the hands of an imaginative poet. The details are not to be pressed: it is the general impression of awfulness, and the sense of a Divine judgment, which make the permanent value of the story (see note, p. 46).

20 **Fifteen cubits upward,** etc. This apparently means the depth of the water above the tops of the mountains.

24 **an hundred and fifty days.** The apparent discrepancies in the time of the duration of the flood are due, as already stated, to the

CHAPTERS VI. 9–VII

Questions

1. Describe the dimensions and probable appearance of the Ark.

2. What is meant by "clean" and "not clean"?

3. What do you understand by a Covenant?

4. How is the Deluge described? What was probably its real character?

The End of the Deluge (viii.)

1 And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all
the cattle that were with him in the ark: and God made a wind
2 to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged; the fountains
also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the
3 rain from heaven was restrained; and the waters returned from
off the earth continually: and after the end of an hundred and
4 fifty days the waters decreased. And the ark rested in the
seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the
5 mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually
until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of
6 the month, were the tops of the mountains seen. And it came to

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combination of two distinct narratives. It is not very difficult to harmonise them if we assume that the torrential rains lasted 40 days, but that it was 150 days before the flood itself showed signs of abatement.

viii. 4 **the mountains of Ararat.** Ararat is the mountainous region of Armenia north of the Lake of Van, not any particular mountain. The mountain which is now called Ararat is over 16,000 feet high, and its summit is perpetually covered with snow. The narrative does not require us to suppose that the Ark rested at such a height as that.

pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of
the ark which he had made: and he sent forth a raven, and it 7
went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off
the earth. And he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the 8
waters were abated from off the face of the ground; but the dove 9
found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him
to the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth:
and he put forth his hand, and took her, and brought her in unto
him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days; and 10
again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove came 11
in to him at eventide; and, lo, in her mouth [1]an olive
leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were
abated from off the earth. And he stayed yet other 12
seven days; and sent forth the dove; and she returned not
again unto him any more. And it came to pass in the six hundred 13
and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the
waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed
the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the
ground was dried. And in the second month, on the seven and 14
twentieth day of the month, was the earth dry.

[1] Or, *a fresh olive leaf.*

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6 **the window of the ark.** This has not been mentioned before. Probably the compiler only made use of excerpts from his authorities, and many details in the construction of the Ark may have been omitted, as in *v.* 13, the "covering of the ark."

7 **and he sent forth a raven,** etc. The raven was counted an "unclean" bird; it may have found food in the dead bodies floating on the surface of the flood, and returned at intervals to the Ark. The dove, on the contrary, found neither foothold nor food, and returned until the ground became dry.

11 **and, lo, in her mouth an olive leaf.** This showed, of course, that vegetation had begun again to appear above the surface of the waters. This picturesque incident has naturally impressed itself on readers, and the dove with the olive leaf has become a symbol of peace and prosperity.

13 **Noah removed the covering.** We are not told what this covering was. Evidently the "window" was not large enough or not suitably placed for gaining a complete view. The meaning may be that Noah removed part of the roofing of the Ark.

15 And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou,
16 and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring
17 forth with thee every living thing that is with thee of all flesh,
both fowl, and cattle, and every creeping thing that creepeth
upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth,
18 and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went
forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:
19 every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, whatsoever
moveth upon the earth, after their families, went forth out of
20 the ark. And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took
of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt
21 offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled the sweet savour;
and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground
any more for man's [1]sake, for that the imagination
of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I
again smite any more every thing living, as I have

[1] Or, *sake; for the.*

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20 **And Noah builded an altar.** This is the first mention of an altar in Scripture. Both Cain and Abel had offered sacrifice, but no details were given, and the word (see note, p. 25) is quite different from that used here for **burnt-offerings.** The latter was an early type of sacrifice, in which the whole of the victim was burnt on the altar and no sacrificial banquet took place. It has been supposed to symbolise the entire self-oblation of the worshipper, though this was probably a later idea (see next verse).

21 **And the LORD smelled the sweet savour.** This is a very crude and simple way of describing the acceptability of the sacrifice, and shows the early character of the narrative. A primitive idea of sacrifice was that it provided food for the gods, which, as they could not eat in the ordinary way, had to be burnt. The gods were supposed to find satisfaction in the rich smell of the burning meat (κνίσῃ or *nidor*) as it rose heavenwards. This idea occurs frequently in Homer. The image continued to be used long after a more spiritual conception of God had modified the older anthropomorphism. So St. Paul uses it of the accepted sacrifice of Christ, the effect of which is seen in the lives of Christians and their influence on the world (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16).

for man's sake, for that, etc. This means "I will not curse the ground again to punish man for the evil of his nature." The margin means, "I will refrain from cursing the ground, and will be patient with man because his nature tends to evil."

done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and 22
cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall
not cease.

CHAPTER VIII

Questions

1. How is the gradual cessation of the Deluge described ?

2. What Divine promises were made in connection with Noah's sacrifice ?

3. What apparent inconsistencies occur in the narrative of the Deluge ? How are they to be explained ?

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE ON THE DELUGE

The tradition of the Deluge is very widely spread among primitive peoples. Similar stories are found among the early Greeks (the well-known legend of Deucalion and Pyrrha, Ovid, *Met.* i. 313, etc.), the Egyptians, the Syrians, and the Babylonians, and even as far afield as India, America, Australia, and Polynesia. It is difficult in most cases to estimate the value of these legends as bearing on the Biblical story. But it seems clear that there is a close connection between the latter and the Babylonian narratives, which, like that of the Creation, are no doubt early and polytheistic forms of the story in Genesis. In one Babylonian version the place of Noah is occupied by Xisuthros, in another, the more authentic one, by Ut-naphishtim. The Deluge takes place in the valley of the Euphrates : a great ship is constructed in consequence of a Divine warning ; animals as well as men are taken on board ; birds are sent out to discover whether the waters are abated ; and finally a sacrifice well pleasing to the gods is offered.

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22 **While the earth remaineth.** With this great promise the " prophetic " narrative (J) closes. The priestly narrative (ix. 11) agrees. Never again will there be such a tremendous upheaval of nature until the End itself comes. The seasons will not fail in their due order. The promise is expressed in words of solemn beauty.

But here the resemblance ends. There is no rainbow with its message of hope; there is no Covenant; and, most important, there is no religious or moral purpose in the story. The Babylonian deluge is a meaningless thing, and is merely connected with the quarrels of different gods (see Ryle in Cambridge Bible).

The description of the immediate causes of the Deluge in Gen. vii. 11 is not at all improbable; a great tidal wave rushing up the Euphrates valley may have been accompanied by a long and phenomenal rainfall. But whatever may have been the ideas of the writer, it is not necessary to suppose that this Deluge was universal. Such a catastrophe is really inconceivable. But to the limited outlook of the early dwellers in Babylonia, the Deluge did seem to cover the whole earth and to submerge what mountains were known to them. We can only conclude, (1) that the Deluge story does rest on an historical basis; (2) that the account given of its purpose is Divinely revealed truth, conveyed in a poetical and imaginative reconstruction of an early tradition.

The Covenant with Noah (ix. 1-17)

1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be
2 fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air; with all wherewith the ground [1]teemeth, and all the fishes of the sea, into your hand
3 are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you; as the green herb have I given
4 you all. But flesh with the life thereof, *which is* the blood thereof,

[1] Or, *creepeth.*

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ix. 1 **And God blessed Noah,** etc. A repetition of i. 28, which gives the impression of a new start to the world, though with commandments which have not been given previously.

2 **And the fear of you and the dread of you,** etc. This gives a severer tone to the old commission to "have dominion," and is probably explained by the words of *v.* 3.

3 **Every moving thing that liveth,** etc. The permission to eat the flesh of animals is now given, and apparently without any restriction of "clean" or "unclean" (see note on vii. 2). Man will be a hunter, and the beasts will be in "dread" of him.

4 **But flesh with the life thereof,** etc. This important prohibition is often referred to in the later legislation and history (cp. Lev. vii. 26, etc.,

shall ye not eat. And surely your blood, *the blood* of your lives, 5
will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it: and
at the hand of man, even at the hand of every man's brother,
will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by 6
man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he
man. And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth 7
abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

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xvii. 10-14; Deut. xii. 23-25; 1 Sam. xiv. 32, 34). In Hebrew thought the blood was regarded as the actual seat or principle of life, and therefore, even in an animal, too sacred to be used for food. If an animal was killed for food or sacrifice (the two uses were very closely connected), the blood was always regarded as being offered to God; and so it was either allowed to drain away on the ground, or poured out or sprinkled as part of the ritual. The strict Jews to this day observe this rule: their meat has to be killed in such a way that all the blood is removed from the carcase, which would not be the case if the animal were strangled. Even the early Christian Church apparently found it necessary to impose this rule on Gentile converts for fear of scandalising Jewish Christians (Acts xv. 20, 29). The Christian will see a deep religious significance in the command, though it is no longer literally observed. It was by the shedding of Christ's Blood that the world was to be redeemed. Then, and not till then, could blood be used (sacramentally in the Eucharist) as a means of imparting new life to the soul of man. This explains our Lord's words in St. John vi. 53, etc., and the consternation produced among His hearers.

5 **And surely your blood . . . will I require it.** Human life is to be held sacred in a still higher degree. To kill a man will be visited with God's retribution. Even if he is killed by a beast, that beast will be held guilty (cp. Exod. xxi. 28).

even at the hand of every man's brother. It is implied that all men are brethren, and that a murderer will be regarded as a fratricide. So Cain's scornful question (iv. 9) finds its answer.

6 **Whoso sheddeth man's blood,** etc. Murder is to be punished by the death of the murderer. To kill him is not murder, but an act of justice. In primitive times this was regarded as a duty devolving upon the nearest of kin. The Mosaic legislation recognised this custom, but prevented it from being abused by the institution of the "Cities of Refuge."

in the image of God made he man. A re-statement (cp. i. 26, etc.) of

8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,
9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your
10 seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you,
the fowl, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of
11 all that go out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. And
I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be
cut off any more by the waters of the flood; neither shall there
12 any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is
the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and
every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:
13 [1]I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a
14 token of a covenant between me and the earth. And
it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the
15 earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember

[1] Or, *I have set.*

---

the great human prerogative, which sets him on a higher level than the animals. Hence murder and suicide are an insult done to God Himself (cp. 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17, where the body of a Christian is spoken of as a temple in which God Himself dwells).

9 **I establish my covenant with you.** See note on vi. 18. This Covenant is made with Noah and his sons as the representatives of the human race in perpetuity: the animals are also included in it. The promise is that there shall never again be a flood to destroy the earth. The sign is one that all can see—the rainbow. It should be noticed that this Covenant is not, like the later ones, confined to the chosen line. It is universal, and implies a religious truth of the highest value, the care and providence of God for *all* His creatures. It thus prepares the way for universal redemption. A separation was again to be made, and a "Church" set apart from the world, but this was ultimately to be for the sake of *all*. There is no dualism, all nature is God's creation, and all have a share in hope (cp. Rom. viii. 20-23).

13 **I do set my bow in the cloud,** etc. It is not necessary to suppose that the author regarded this as the first creation of the rainbow. The actual words need only mean that attention is directed to the rainbow, and a new meaning is to be attached to it. The rainbow must, of course, have always existed since the creation of the sun and the rain. But now it is to be regarded as a reminder of the mercy and faithfulness of God. What was a natural sign that a storm was passing away becomes an assurance of what could only be known by revelation.

We may perhaps see this further significance. The rainbow is one

my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; 16 and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token 17 of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

CHAPTER IX. 1-17

Questions

1. What commandments were given to Noah after the Deluge?

2. Describe the Covenant with Noah.

3. What new significance was attached to the rainbow?

4. What allusions to Noah and the Deluge are found in other parts of Scripture?

The Prophecy of Noah (ix. 18-29)

And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, 18 and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah: and of these was the whole 19 earth overspread.

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of the most beautiful things in nature; and *beauty* is really inexplicable on any materialistic theory of the world. It is an outstanding sign of the handiwork of God Himself, the Supreme Artist. It serves no material purpose; there is little evidence that the animals are conscious of it. Beauty is God's self-revelation to man, made in "the image of God."

ix. 18 **and Ham is the father of Canaan.** These words appear to

20 And Noah began to be a husbandman, and planted a vineyard:
21 and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was un-
22 covered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw
the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.
23 And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both
their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness
of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw
24 not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine,
and knew what his [1]youngest son had done unto him.
25 And he said,
Cursed be Canaan;
A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.
26 And he said,
Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem;
And let Canaan be [2]his servant.

[1] Or, *younger*.

[2] Or, *their*.

---

have been introduced to explain the position of Canaan in the prophecy of Noah which follows. Some scholars suppose that there was a varying tradition, that in one early account, Canaan, not Ham, was really the second son of Noah, and that the compiler has attempted in this way to harmonise them. But the explanation given on *v.* 25 below seems to be more satisfactory, though the passage is certainly difficult.

20 **planted a vineyard.** This is the first mention of the vine and its product. Armenia is said to be the country where the vine is indigenous, and from whence it may have been introduced elsewhere; and Noah's settlement was probably in that country (Driver). The vine was one of the chief products of Palestine, and while the use of wine is approved in Scripture (cp. Ps. civ. 15), its abuse was one of the constant sins of the Israelites, and is frequently blamed with severity (cp. Isa. xxviii. 1, etc.; Hosea iv. 11; Hab. ii. 15; Prov. xxiii. 29-35).

25 **Cursed be Canaan.** Canaan rather than Ham is cursed, apparently with reference to the inhabitants of Canaan (see note on x. 6), who for their sins were subjugated by Israel and reduced to tribute, but whose religions and the drunkenness and sensuality with which they were connected were a constant snare and danger to their victors. Canaan seems to represent symbolically the bad side of heathenism: Japheth that which has hope and promise.

26 **Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem.** This and the following verse constitute the first definite Messianic prophecy spoken by man.

God enlarge Japheth, 27
[1] Or, *he shall.* And let [1]him dwell in the tents of Shem;
[2] Or, *their.* And let Canaan be [2]his servant.

And Noah lived after the flood three hundred 28
and fifty years. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred 29
and fifty years: and he died.

CHAPTER IX. 18-29

Questions

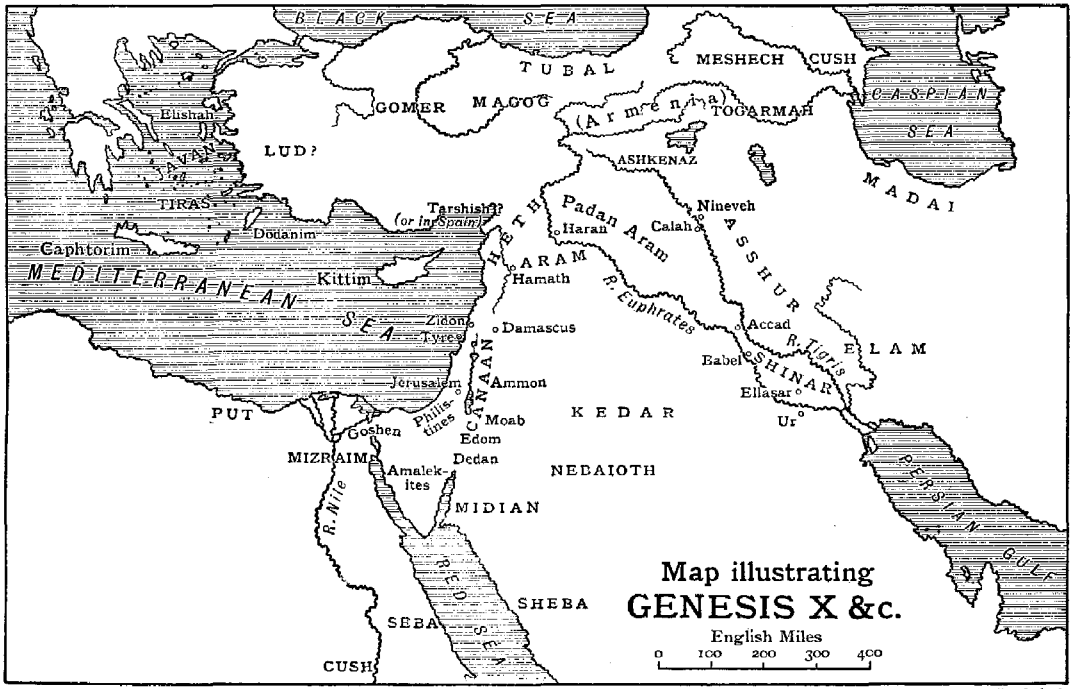
1. What difficulty is there as to the names of the sons of Noah?

2. What predictions were made by Noah with regard to his sons? What is their Messianic bearing?

It is implied that the line of Shem will stand in a special relationship to Jehovah. Thus his line is marked out as the one in which Jehovah, the God of revelation and the Covenants, will be known and worshipped (see xi. below), so preparing for the sacred nation of Israel, and for the Christian Church.

27 **God enlarge Japheth.** See x. 2-4. There is a play on the name Japheth, which is similar in sound to the Hebrew word *yapht*, to enlarge. The Divine name, Elohim, which was common to other races, is used in this blessing, rather than the special covenant name, Jehovah, which it was the privilege of the Shemites to know.

And let him dwell in the tents of Shem. A Jewish tradition makes "him" refer to God, who dwells especially among His chosen people. The words would thus be a prophecy of Tabernacle and Temple in days to come, and of the Incarnation itself. But more probably "him" refers to Japheth, though the explanation is uncertain. It may be a prophecy of future friendliness between Israel and the surrounding nations, and of the share which the "Gentiles" will have ultimately in the blessings of Shem. This is in accordance with the highest teaching of the prophets, and is a foreshadowing of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Christian Church. See especially Isa. xix. 19-25; Zech. viii. 20-23; 1 Kings viii. 41-43; Ps. lxxxvii.



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The Descendants of Noah (x.)

Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem Ham 1
and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood.
The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and 2

x. This chapter presents many difficulties. It is arranged like a genealogy, but the names are those of nations rather than individuals. It appears as an attempt to explain the origins of the different peoples who were known to the Israelites, and show how they all come from one common stock. It has thus a distinct religious value, as showing the real unity of the nations of mankind, and implying that they all come under the rule and purpose of God (cp. Acts xvii. 26). But it is not an exhaustive list even from the point of view of the O.T. Some well-known peoples like Moab and Ammon and Edom are not mentioned at all. Nor can it be described as really an ethnological list, for, to take one instance, the Canaanites were certainly of Semitic race and akin to the Israelites; but they appear here as descended like the Egyptians from Ham. The arrangement, however, is roughly *geographical*. The descendants of Japheth are chiefly the northern peoples and the inhabitants of the western islands; those of Ham the peoples of Canaan and Babylonia, and the regions farther south, while the Shemites occupy a middle position. Some of the names are uncertain, and only those of special interest will be commented on in the notes.

2 **Gomer.** Probably the Cimmerians of Homer (cp. Ezek. xxxviii. 6). They originally inhabited Pontus or Cappadocia, and were driven southwards by the Scythians.

Magog. Gog and Magog are mentioned in Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix., the former apparently as a ruler, and the latter as a people or district (perhaps = *Mat-gog*, "The land of Gog"). They probably are to be identified with the Scythians, whose inroads into Palestine caused great terror in the seventh century B.C. Gog and Magog also appear in Rev. xx. 8 as symbolical of the heathen world in its last great attack upon the kingdom of Christ.

Madai, i.e. the Medes, a race of people inhabiting the mountains between Assyria and the Caspian Sea. (See 2 Kings xvii. 6.)

Javan, i.e. the Ionians, the Greek peoples living on the western coast-lands of Asia Minor.

Tubal and Meshech—usually mentioned together; probably remote peoples dwelling to the north-east of Asia Minor.

3 Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. And the sons of
Gomer; Ashkenaz, and [1]Riphath, and Togarmah.
4 And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim,
5 and [2]Dodanim. Of these were the [3]isles of the nations
divided in their lands, every one after his tongue;
after their families, in their nations.
6 And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and

[1] In 1 Chr. i. 6, *Diphath.*
[2] In 1 Chr. i. 7, *Rodanim.*
[3] Or, *coast lands.*

Tiras—the Thracians, according to Josephus; but usually identified with the Tyrrhenians, the inhabitants of the islands of the Ægean.

3 **And the sons of Gomer,** etc. **Ashkenaz** is generally thought to mean the Armenians; the other two were probably neighbouring peoples, supposed to be offshoots of Gomer, but their identity is uncertain.

4 **And the sons of Javan,** etc. In Ezek. xxvii. 7 **Elishah** is mentioned as bringing "blue and purple," i.e. dyed stuffs of these colours. Both colours were obtained from shellfish found off the coasts of Phoenicia, Greece, and Sicily. Perhaps Greece is the most likely identification.

Tarshish. This place appears later as an important centre of foreign trade. King Solomon's ships visited it regularly (1 Kings x. 22). But it has been located in regions as far distant as Tartessus in Spain and Tarsus in Cilicia, as well as in Africa and India.

Kittim—probably Cyprus.

Dodanim—unknown, unless the margin is the correct spelling, which would identify the name with the island of Rhodes.

5 **the isles of the nations.** This apparently refers not to all the "sons" of Japheth, but to those of Javan, and describes the scattered peoples of the islands and coast-lands round the Eastern Mediterranean.

6 **Cush.** Cp. ii. 13. This usually means the inhabitants of Southern Egypt or of Ethiopia, or it may mean a district east of the Caspian, or a district in Babylonia.

Mizraim—the usual O.T. name of Egypt. It is a dual form, and has been thought to refer to the two kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt.

Put—generally identified with Libya, i.e. Northern Africa west of Egypt; the district of Cyrene.

Canaan. It would seem from *v.* 15 that this refers primarily to the Phoenicians, who occupied the northern coast of Palestine. Neither they nor the Canaanites are connected ethnologically with the Egyptians. There was probably a religious or political reason for classing them with "the sons of Ham."

Put, and Canaan. And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, 7
and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabteca: and the sons of
Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan. And Cush begat Nimrod: 8
he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a 9
mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Like
Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD. And the beginning 10
of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh,

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7 **And the sons of Cush.** The names that follow are difficult to identify. They are probably peoples bordering on the Red Sea, both east and west of it. Both **Seba** and **Sheba** are mentioned in Ps. lxxii. 10; Seba in Isa. xliii. 3, and the "Sabeans" in Isa. xlv. 14. Sheba is frequently mentioned; the queen of Sheba visited Solomon (1 Kings x.). It may have been in Africa or S. Arabia.

8 **And Cush begat Nimrod.** This remarkable little digression describes the foundation of the two great empires of Babylon and Assyria, which the Israelites of later time had good cause to hold in dread. Their origin is connected here with the legendary figure of Nimrod, hero or demi-god, sometimes identified with the Greek Orion, also a "mighty hunter," whose bow and sword were set among the stars. His connection with Cush is difficult, if Cush here means Ethiopia. Many scholars think that it refers to another early people in Babylonia bearing a similar name, the Kasshu or Cassaeans. Many attempts have been made to identify Nimrod with some hero in Babylonian mythology or history, e.g. with Gilgamesh, who is also described on the Babylonian tablets as a great hunter of wild beasts, and the deliverer of his people from the Elamites. Another remarkable theory is that Nimrod is the same as the god Merodach, the tutelary divinity of Babylon, and, according to the creation-mythology, the creator of the world. Whoever he was, his name evidently passed into a proverb (*v.* 9).

9 **a mighty hunter before the LORD.** It is difficult to estimate the force of this phrase. In popular language, the name of God was often introduced simply to give the idea of greatness. Cp. xxiii. 6 (margin), xxxv. 5 (margin); Jonah iii. 3 (margin).

10 **And the beginning of his kingdom,** etc. Nimrod is described as founding his kingdom by building four of the ancient cities of **Shinar,** i.e. Babylonia. **Babel** is the Hebrew form of Babylon itself (see notes on xi. 1-9). **Erech** is the Babylonian Uruch, the ruins of which are now seen at *Warka* on the Euphrates, 100 miles from Babylon. It was connected by legend with the hero Gilgamesh (note on *v.* 8).

11 in the land of Shinar. Out of that land [1]he went forth
into Assyria, and builded Nineveh, and Rehoboth-Ir,
12 and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah
13 (the same is the great city). And Mizraim begat

[1] Or, *went forth Asshur.*

Accad was a district and a city in Northern Babylonia, the capital of Sargon I. (3800 B.C.). **Calneh** is at present unknown.

11 **Out of that land he went forth into Assyria.** Asshur, or Assyria, is included among "the sons of Shem" (*v.* 22). The district is here described as being conquered or colonised by Nimrod, who built five cities there; and it is historically correct that Assyria, though destined for a time to eclipse Babylon, was really founded from it: "politically as well as in its whole civilisation, writing, and religion, Assyria in early times was dependent on Babylonia" (Driver).

Nineveh. One of the greatest cities of antiquity, the capital of the Assyrian empire in its most powerful days. It fell before the Babylonians in 612 B.C.; its siege and destruction are described with terrible vividness by the prophet Nahum. It was here that the prophet Jonah delivered his great message. The ruins of Nineveh are to be seen at *Kouyunjik* on the left bank of the Tigris, opposite *Mosul.*

Rehoboth-Ir, meaning "broad spaces of the city," was probably a suburb of Nineveh.

Calah. Discovered by Layard at *Nimrud,* 20 miles south of Nineveh. Some fine bas-reliefs found there, representing winged and human-headed lions and bulls, are in the British Museum, also the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser II.

12 **Resen**—not yet identified with certainty; perhaps the modern *Selamiyah.*

the same is the great city. This probably refers not to Resen but to Nineveh. Or it may apply to all the four, which, being not far apart, may have been looked upon as one city, which would explain the statement in Jonah iii. 3.

13 **And Mizraim begat,** etc. These are probably the names of obscure African tribes or peoples in Egypt or its vicinity.

Ludim—perhaps the same as the Lud of Isa. lxvi. 19; Ezek. xxvii. 10, xxx. 5 (in this verse associated with Egypt and Ethiopia). **Pathrusim** is no doubt the Pathros of Isa. xi. 11 and other passages, and means Upper Egypt.

Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim, and 14
Pathrusim, and Casluhim (whence went forth [1]the
[1] Heb. *Pelishtim.* Philistines), and Caphtorim.

And Canaan begat Zidon his firstborn, and Heth; 15
and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgashite; and the 16
Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite; and the Arvadite, and 17
the Zemarite, and the Hamathite: and afterward were the 18

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14 **the Philistines** are usually in O.T. said to have come from Caphtor, i.e. Crete, so the words are probably out of order. The Philistines who seized the fertile coast-lands of Palestine in the south-west about the time of Joshua, and who for long disputed the possession of the land (which has derived its name from them) with Israel, were probably a people of Greek extraction, who came from Asia Minor and worked their way southward. The **Casluhim** are unknown.

15-18 **And Canaan begat Zidon his firstborn.** This form of expression shows pretty clearly that this is not genealogy but ethnology. The so-called "sons" are peoples. **Zidon** was the first capital of the Phoenicians until it was eclipsed by the growth and splendour of Tyre. **Heth** means the Hittites, a powerful people, probably of Mongolian type, famous for their cavalry. They established an empire in Northern Syria and beyond, with their capital at Carchemish on the Euphrates, which lasted for many centuries (1800-700 B.C.), until it was overthrown by the Assyrians. There were Hittites, "children of Heth," among the peoples of Canaan in Abraham's time, and indeed the whole country is spoken of as included in "the land of the Hittites" (Josh. i. 4). The **Jebusite** is the Canaanite tribe that occupied the city of Jebus or Jerusalem, and in spite of the victories of Joshua maintained their independence there until the days of David. The **Amorite** is the name of the powerful and warlike Canaanites of the south, sometimes applied to the whole country. They are mentioned as *Amurru* in the Tel-el-Amarna letters. Before Joshua's time they had established themselves under their King Sihon on the east of the Jordan also. The **Girgashite** was another tribe of Canaanites, but nothing is known of them; the **Hivite**—a people dwelling in towns in Central Palestine, who succeeded in making a league with Joshua; the **Arkite** was a Phoenician tribe, north of Zidon; the **Sinite** probably a neighbouring tribe; the **Arvadite**—inhabitants of Arvad, an important seaport in the extreme north of Phoenicia; the **Zemarite**, the modern *Sumura*, in the same locality. Both these towns are mentioned in the Tel-el-Amarna letters. The **Hamathite**: Hamath was the capital of an important kingdom on the Orontes.

19 families of the Canaanite spread abroad. And the border of the Canaanite was from Zidon, as thou goest toward Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah
20 and Zeboiim, unto Lasha. These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, in their nations.

[1] Or, *the brother of Japheth the elder.*

21 And unto Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, [1]the elder brother of Japheth, to
22 him also were children born. The sons of Shem; Elam, and

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19 **And the border of the Canaanite,** etc. This is a rough description of the territory occupied by the various Canaanite peoples. Starting from Zidon, the coast is apparently the limit as far as Gerar, which lies just south of the Palestine country. On the east the line runs from Zidon down to "the cities of the Plain," or Circle, whose destruction is described in xix. (These limits would not include "the Hamathite.") **Lasha** is unknown; tradition identifies it with Callirhoe on the east of the Dead Sea. As the fifth of the cities of the Plain, Bela or Zoar, is not mentioned here, some have thought that it is meant by Lasha. Another theory is that Lasha is the same as Laish in the extreme north, later called Dan, and considered the northern limit of Israelite land ("from Dan to Beersheba").

21 **the children of Eber.** See note on *v.* 24.

the elder brother of Japheth applies, of course, to Shem; although placed last he was really the eldest.

22 **The sons of Shem.** These include three great nations known to the Israelites. For **Asshur,** or Assyria, see above on *v.* 11.

Elam—a powerful and very ancient nation east of the Tigris. Their capital was Susa. Their language was not Semitic, but perhaps at a very early period this district was inhabited by "children of Shem," who were afterwards conquered by the Elamites of history.

Arpachshad is a very obscure name: only of importance here because from this stock the Hebrew race descended (*v.* 24, etc.). It has been conjectured that the name refers to the *Kasdim,* or Chaldeans.

Lud—uncertain, but perhaps the Lydians of Asia Minor, a different race from the Ludim of *v.* 13.

Aram—the usual O.T. name for the Syrians, a powerful race who established an empire of several kingdoms to the north of Palestine, the most important being that whose capital was Damascus. They

Asshur, and Arpachshad, and Lud, and Aram. And the 23
sons of Aram; Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and
Mash. And Arpachshad [1]begat Shelah; and Shelah 24
begat Eber. And unto Eber were born two sons: 25
the name of the one was [2]Peleg; for in his days was
the earth divided; and his brother's name was
Joktan. And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, 26
and Hazarmaveth, and Jerah; and Hadoram, and 27
Uzal, and Diklah; and [3]Obal, and Abimael, and 28
Sheba; and Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab: all 29
these were the sons of Joktan. And their dwell- 30
ing was from Mesha, as thou goest toward Sephar, the

[1] The Sept. reads, *begat Cainan, and Cainan begat Shelah.*
[2] That is, *Division.*
[3] In 1 Chr. i. 22, *Ebal.*

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appear in the period of the Kings of Israel as constant enemies. Though their empire fell in the eighth century B.C. before Assyria, their language, a dialect akin to Hebrew, remained and spread to such an extent that it was gradually adopted by the Hebrews themselves and is known as Aramaic, and was the tongue spoken in the time of Christ.

23 **And the sons of Aram.** These are unidentified. **Uz** is spoken of as the country of Job (Job i. 1; see also Lam. iv. 21).

24 **Eber.** This name, whether of an individual or a tribe, represents the original stock of the Hebrew race, the descent of which is more fully traced in xi. The name signifies "from the other side," and was probably applied to the chosen race, not so much by themselves as by other peoples, because they came across the Euphrates into Canaan.

25 **Peleg**—this reference to the "dividing" of the earth is obscure: perhaps it is the mysterious scattering of the Babel-builders (xi. 1-9).

26-29 **And Joktan begat,** etc. This line of Joktan is intended apparently to include the various tribes of Arabia. These cannot be identified with any certainty. **Sheba** has occurred already in the line of Ham (*v.* 7). Perhaps a different tribe of Sabeans is meant, dwelling in South-West Arabia. **Ophir** occurs frequently as the name of a place especially noted for its fine gold. Solomon traded there (1 Kings ix. 28, x. 11). Here it is evidently located in Arabia, but various other conjectures have been made, placing it in India or Africa. **Havilah** also occurs in *v.* 7 and in xxv. 18. It may be the same as the gold-bearing region of ii. 11.

30 **And their dwelling was from Mesha,** etc. This description of the extent of the Joktanites is obscure. Mesha may be *Musa* on the

31 [1]mountain of the east. These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations.

[1] Or, *hill country.*

32 These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and of these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.

CHAPTER X

Questions

1. On what system and with what purpose are the descendants of Noah apparently arranged ?

2. What is stated about Nimrod ? Discuss the significance of the legend.

3. What is said about the descendants of Canaan ? What difficulties are there in the narrative ?

4. What allusion is there in this chapter to the Greeks, the Hebrews, the Syrians, the Arabians ?

Subject for Study

The early history of Babylonia.

Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, " Babylonia."

Maspero, *Dawn of Civilisation.*

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west coast of Arabia. We cannot identify **Sephar,** the eastern limit. There are mountains both in the south-west and south-east corners of the Arabian peninsula.

The Builders of Babel (xi. 1-9)

And the whole earth was of one [1]language and of one [2]speech. 1
And it came to pass, as they journeyed [3]east, that they 2
found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt
there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us 3
make brick, and burn them throughly. And they
had brick for stone, and [4]slime had they for mortar.
And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, 4
and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven, and let us

[1] Heb. *lip.*
[2] Heb. *words.*
[3] Or, *in the east.*
[4] That is, *bitumen.*

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xi. 1-9 This remarkable passage stands in isolation from its context. Like v. 1-4 it is probably some piece of folk-lore, from an independent source, which the compiler thought worthy of insertion, as offering an explanation of the differing languages of mankind, though this difference is assumed in the preceding chapter (x. 5, 20, 31). The whole story is vague, and is probably only a fragment. Another reason for inserting it was, no doubt, to account for the origin of Babylon, the typical world-city, which throughout Scripture appears as hostile to the kingdom of God.

2 **as they journeyed east.** There is no intimation as to who these people were, nor when this happened, or what connection there may be with the dispersion of the sons of Noah.

a plain in the land of Shinar, i.e. in Babylonia, the valley of the Euphrates.

3 **Go to**—in more modern English "Come!" The use of this imperative as an interjection in *vv.* 3, 4, 7 is one of the peculiar marks of this narrative.

And they had brick for stone, etc. The writer was evidently more accustomed to the use of stone and mortar for building, as in Palestine; whereas in Babylonia clay supplies the natural material, and lime, i.e. bitumen, is used to bind the bricks together.

4 **a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.** This may be only a hyperbolical way of describing a very high tower, or it may imply the presumptuous idea of war against God, and assailing heaven His dwelling-place, as the giants in Greek mythology piled one mountain upon another for the same purpose (Homer, *Odyssey*, xi. 304, etc.). Tradition identifies this tower with that whose ruins, on the mound now called *Birs Nimroud*, are seen on the left bank of the Euphrates

make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face
5 of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see
the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.
6 And the LORD said, Behold, they are one people, and they
have all one language; and this is what they begin to do:
and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they
7 purpose to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound
their language, that they may not understand one another's
8 speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon
the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

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at Borsippa. This was restored by Nebuchadnezzar; inscriptions state that it had been left unfinished by a former king. There was also another great tower in Babylon itself, dedicated to Bel-Merodach, which is described by Herodotus (i. 181). These Babylonian towers were built in the form of a square pyramid, in seven tiers, narrowing as they rose, and crowned by a shrine of the divinity. (See picture in Murray's *Bible Dictionary*.)

let us make us a name. Whether the tower itself was a profane attack on heaven or not, it seems clear that we are to understand that the builders were animated by motives of vainglory. They wished to make themselves famous, and to prevent the dispersal which was part of God's plan for the peopling of the earth.

5 **And the LORD came down,** etc. This is the "anthropomorphism" of a very early age (cp. xviii. 21). God is represented as paying a visit of inspection, just as He is described as "walking in the garden" in iii.

7 **and there confound their language.** The counsels of God cannot be frustrated by man's pride. The confusion of languages effectually prevented co-operation, and the dispersal inevitably took place: those who found themselves speaking the same tongue naturally combined and settled by themselves. By what actual historical processes the different languages of the world arose and developed is wrapt in obscurity. It is not unreasonable to suppose that *v.* 1 is correct in principle, and that there was one original tongue. And all subsequent variations and developments were under the control and will of God. Like the expulsion from Eden, the confusion of tongues was an act of mercy, lest the human race should form one united society in opposition to God. Christians have naturally seen in the miracle of the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 5-11) the beginning of the reversal of

Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because the LORD 9
did there [1]confound the language of all the earth:
and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad
upon the face of all the earth.

[1] Heb. *balal*, to confound.

The Descendants of Shem (xi. 10-32)

These are the generations of Shem. Shem was an hundred 10
years old, and begat Arpachshad two years after the flood: and 11
Shem lived after he begat Arpachshad five hundred years, and
begat sons and daughters.

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this judgment on humanity. The nations hitherto separated by their languages are to be reunited in the Catholic Church (cp. Zeph. iii. 9).

9 **Therefore was the name of it called Babel.** The name really means "gate of God," and the connecting of it with the Hebrew word "to confound" (margin) is here, as in other places, not an etymology, but simply a play upon two words of similar sound; the one suggests the other. Babel (or Babylon) evidently appears here as the beginning, not merely of that great and idolatrous world-power which in later time destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and held the people of God in captivity, but of some organised and centralised rebellion of the world against God. The ruin of the historical Babylon was foretold by the prophets (cp. e.g. Isa. xiv., xlvi.-xlvii.; Jer. l.-li.; Dan. v.), and has been literally fulfilled. Not only did the great empire itself pass away almost without resistance, but the vast and wonderful city, "the golden city," has become heaps of buried ruins, which the very Arabs regard as haunted by evil spirits. But in the N.T. Babylon becomes again the symbol, not only of pagan Rome, but of every world-power that sets itself against God and the Church; and its utter destruction is predicted in the vivid pictures and burning denunciations of Rev. xvii., xviii.

xi. 10 **These are the generations of Shem.** The other descendants of Noah are now dismissed, and attention is concentrated on one particular line of the posterity of Shem, from which was to come the Hebrews and Abraham, the ancestor of the chosen people. The genealogy, which is derived from P, takes up the account given in x. 24, 25, which had stopped at Peleg, and digressed to give the genealogy of the Joktanites.

12 And Arpachshad lived five and thirty years, and begat Shelah :
13 and Arpachshad lived after he begat Shelah four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters.
14 And Shelah lived thirty years, and begat Eber : and Shelah
15 lived after he begat Eber four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters.
16 And Eber lived four and thirty years, and begat Peleg : and
17 Eber lived after he begat Peleg four hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters.
18 And Peleg lived thirty years, and begat Reu : and Peleg lived
19 after he begat Reu two hundred and nine years, and begat sons and daughters.
20 And Reu lived two and thirty years, and begat Serug : and
21 Reu lived after he begat Serug two hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters.
22 And Serug lived thirty years, and begat Nahor : and Serug
23 lived after he begat Nahor two hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.
24 And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah :
25 and Nahor lived after he begat Terah an hundred and nineteen years, and begat sons and daughters.
26 And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.
27 Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah begat Abram,
28 Nahor, and Haran ; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur
29 of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives : the

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14 **Eber.** See notes above on x. 24.

28 **Ur of the Chaldees,** i.e. " town of the Chaldees (or Kasdim)." It is identified with *El-Mukayyar,* once close to the Euphrates, but now some miles from the river, which has altered its course. It was a very important place, and the centre of the worship of the moon-goddess, *Sin.* Excavations are now proceeding (1928) on its site, and its buried ruins are yielding many treasures of antiquity, houses and temples and works of art. The Chaldees were a people of Southern Babylonia : they rose to supremacy in later times, and the name became applied to the Babylonians generally and their empire. Still

name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. And Sarai was barren; she had no child. And Terah 30 took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and 31 Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. And the 32 days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.

CHAPTER XI

Questions

1. Why was the building of Babel interrupted?

2. What is the significance of this story in the light of later history?

3. What do you know of Ur of the Chaldees, and of Haran?

4. Construct a genealogy of the descendants of Terah.

Subject for Study

The religious significance of Babylon in the Bible.

Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, "Babylon."

Collect passages by help of a Concordance.

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later (Dan. v. 7) it denoted a class of priestly astrologers or magicians at the Babylonian court.

29 **Sarai.** It is not stated here who Sarai was, but in xx. 12 she is spoken of by her husband as his half-sister.

31 **to go into the land of Canaan.** No reason is assigned for this

The Call and Obedience of Abram (xii.)

1 Now the LORD said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land

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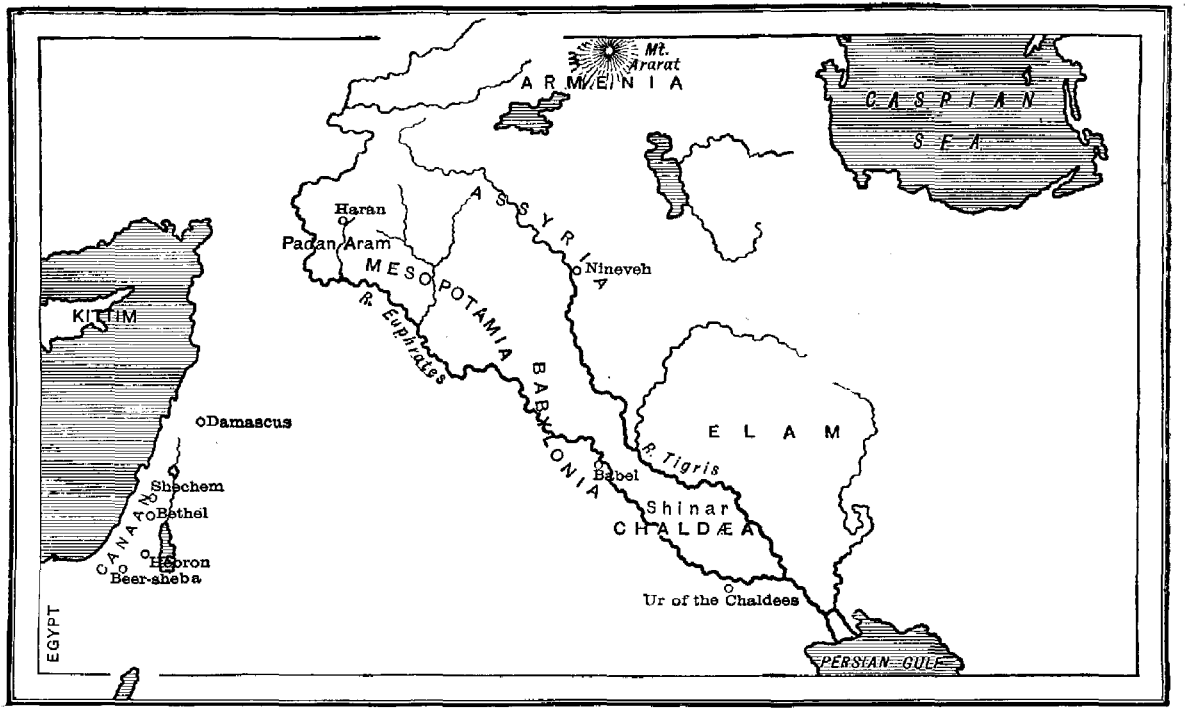
first movement of Terah and his family. Some scholars suppose that this is an attempt to harmonise two traditions as to Abram's original home, Ur of the Chaldees and Haran. But St. Stephen (Acts vii. 2-4), following, no doubt, Jewish tradition, states that this first migration was in obedience to a call from "the God of glory," to Abram himself, a call prior to that of Gen. xii. 1.

Terah is stated in Josh. xxiv. 2 to have been a worshipper of other gods. It seems clear, however, that Abram had either revolted against this idolatry or had received from other members of his family that purer knowledge of God which had been preserved in the line of Shem. Jewish and Mohammedan legends have much to say about the early life of Abram, his persecution by Nimrod, and his protests against idolatry.

Haran, in Northern Mesopotamia, 550 miles from Ur of the Chaldees. It had an important position on the trade-routes between Babylon, Nineveh, and Damascus, and, like Ur, it was a centre of the worship of the moon-goddess. The Romans called it Carrhae, and it was the scene of the disastrous defeat of the Roman armies under Crassus by the Parthians 53 B.C. Nothing now remains of the city but mounds and ruins.

xii. This chapter marks a new stage in the sacred history. Hitherto the separation and preservation of the chosen line has been traced through the mists of prehistoric legend and folklore. We now begin again with a historical individual, the founder of the Church of Israel, whose life is portrayed in a series of vivid and entrancing pictures, a combination indeed of different narratives, but united into a continuous and most attractive whole.

1 **Now the LORD said unto Abram.** This call is a new act of God, in the revelation of Himself and His purpose for mankind. How it came to Abram we are not told; whether it was by a prophet or some external intimation, or whether it was revealed inwardly by some convincing inspiration (cp. xx. 7), it matters not: Abram himself was convinced, and obeyed without hesitation or question (cp. Heb. xi. 8, etc.). This call was given in Haran (*v.* 4), though Jewish tradition told of an earlier call to Abram in Chaldaea (Acts vii. 2-4). It was a summons to make a complete break with the past. Abram must



SKETCH MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE MIGRATION OF ABRAHAM.

2 that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and
I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing:
3 and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee
will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be
4 blessed. So Abram went, as the LORD had spoken unto him;
and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years
5 old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his
wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they
had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran;
and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the

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leave country, family, and home, and his destination was not yet fully disclosed.

2 **and I will make of thee,** etc. The promise is threefold: (1) Abram is to be the founder of a great nation; (2) he is himself to be peculiarly blessed and recognised as such; (3) he is to be a source of blessing to all the world.

3 **in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.** The Messianic bearing of this promise is no doubt intentional, and sets before us the high ideal which the Jewish teachers recognised as the key to the calling of their nation. However narrow and exclusive the Jews in later time might become in their view of national religious privilege, the teaching of the O.T. is that they were called and separated, not for themselves, but for the good of the world. The words **shall . . . be blessed** may be interpreted also "shall bless themselves." This would mean that all nations would be so impressed with the blessedness of Abram that they would desire to share in it themselves (cp. Zech. viii. 20-23). Whichever meaning is adopted, whether of a blessing given to the world through Abram, or of the world's belief and yearning for it, the promise is rightly interpreted of the salvation of the world through Christ.

5 **and the souls that they had gotten,** i.e. all the persons of their households, the slaves, and other followers. The number must have been considerable, for Abram alone was able to muster 318 armed retainers (xiv. 14), so that this journey of Abram's must have been like the migration of a tribe.

to go into the land of Canaan. The route taken from Haran can only be conjectured. The crossing of the Euphrates was the most important and significant step. Perhaps this was done at the ford at Tiphsah. Thence the patriarch's caravan would probably proceed south-west by way of Damascus, which Jewish tradition stated that

land of Canaan they came. And Abram passed through the 6
land unto the place of Shechem, unto the [1]oak of
Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

[1] Or, *terebinth.*

Abram conquered, and enter Palestine by the ancient road on the west of the Jordan. Another possible route would be on the east side of the Jordan, until the river was crossed opposite Shechem. Canaan is on the highroad of commerce between Egypt, Damascus, and the Near East generally. It is a land singularly central among the great ancient civilisations, and at the same time its peculiar natural features make it somewhat secluded and remote. The sea-board has a marked absence of harbours, and the central part of the land is very mountainous and inaccessible. This was the country which God's providence had marked out as a suitable home for His chosen people, a land close both to the desert and to the world, attractive and fruitful, and destined to exert a long-lasting spell over its conquerors. (Cp. Deut. viii. 7-9.)

6 **the place of Shechem.** The word *place* is said to denote probably some early shrine or "holy place." Shechem, the modern *Nablus*, has been described as the most beautiful spot in Central Palestine. It lies in a narrow and luxuriant valley between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim, which rise some 1400 feet above it. The name means "ridge" or "shoulder" (cp. xlviii. 22, margin).

the oak of Moreh. See margin. The terebinth or turpentine tree, which resembles an oak at a distance, is common in Palestine. This particular tree was evidently a well-known one, standing by itself, and perhaps was held sacred by the Canaanites. Trees in the East were often centres of superstition, and were supposed to be the dwelling-places of a divinity, who gave oracles by the whispering of the leaves. Cp. the sacred oak of Dodona in Epirus venerated by the ancient Greeks. See also 2 Sam. v. 24. The name *Moreh* may mean "teaching" or "instruction," and refer to this practice of divination. (Cp. Judg. ix. 37, R.V., margin.)

the Canaanite. Canaan was at this time inhabited by a number of peoples (see xv. 19-21), mostly of kindred origin (with the exception of the Hittites), speaking a Semitic language akin to that of Mesopotamia and Babylonia. Their religion was polytheistic, idolatrous, and superstitious, and their morality was not on a high level (see note on xv. 16), though they possessed a certain amount of civilisation through contact with Babylonia and Egypt. They appear, however, to have shown some friendliness to the patriarchal sojourners, and not to have resented their presence. Perhaps the Canaanites, who were scattered and divided, thought them too powerful to be attacked,

7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed
will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the
8 LORD, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence
unto the mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent,
having Beth-el on the west, and Ai on the east: and there he
builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the
9 LORD. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward
the [1]South.
10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram
went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the
11 famine was sore in the land. And it came to pass,
when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto
Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to
12 look upon: and it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall

[1] Heb. *Negeb*, the southern tract of Judah.

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and recognised them as nomads, always on the move, and not objectionable neighbours while they stayed.

7 **And the LORD appeared.** This is the first of the many recorded "appearances" or Theophanies of Jehovah in O.T., some of which are very remarkable and significant. Christians have usually considered them to have been visible manifestations of the Logos, the second Person of the Trinity, before the Incarnation.

and there builded he an altar. It was a universal practice in ancient religions to erect an altar for sacrifice at any spot which had been hallowed by some manifestation of a divinity. The patriarchs followed this custom. It was sanctioned in the earliest Mosaic code (Exod. xx. 24, 25), but in later times it led to much abuse and to the confusion of the worship of Jehovah with that of the Canaanite gods. The Deuteronomic code forbade any altar except at one central sanctuary, a rule, however, which was persistently disregarded until the latter days of the monarchy.

8 **Beth-el**="house of God," the modern *Beitin* (see xxviii. 19), and **Ai** are both on the central ridge of Palestine, about two miles apart.

9 **the South,** the usual name (see margin) for the wide, somewhat waterless region in the south of Palestine. It was thinly populated, and traversed by wandering tribes. It may have attracted Abram for the pasturage of his cattle more than the mountainous district in the centre of the land.

10 **Abram went down into Egypt.** Egypt was a land of constant

see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my 13 sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake, and that my soul may live because of thee. And it came to pass, that, when 14 Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. And the princes of Pharaoh saw her, and 15 praised her to Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's

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fertility owing to the Nile inundations, and did not as a rule suffer from the famines caused in Palestine by the occasional failure of the rainfall.

11 **thou art a fair woman to look upon.** According to *v.* 4 and xvii. 17, Sarai would now be sixty-five years old. But these particulars are derived from the priestly writing (P), while this incident, as well as the parallel passage in xvii., come from other sources (J and E), which seem to have preserved a different tradition, or at any rate to ignore the question of age. The question need no more be discussed than that of the abiding beauty and attractiveness of Helen in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Moreover, it is a fact that some of the famous women of history preserved their fascination into old age, as it is said of Cleopatra—

> "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety."

13 **Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister.** A half-truth (see xx. 12). Abram's conduct seems cowardly and mean, especially as it aimed at saving himself at the cost of danger to Sarai. But the Bible makes no attempt to represent its characters as perfect; nor does it shrink from showing how the heathen may, in matters of morality and justice, be better, as in this case, than those who had a fuller knowledge of God. It is remarkable how this subterfuge is ascribed on two occasions to Abram, and also to Isaac his son (xxvi.), though it is possible that some duplication has arisen from the use of different authorities by the compiler of Genesis.

15 **Pharaoh**—an official title of the kings of Egypt. It is impossible to say who this Pharaoh was, as the date of Abram is uncertain. He may have been as early as one of the sovereigns of the 12th dynasty, about 2300 B.C. At any rate it must probably have been before the invasion of the Hyksos, who were in possession of Egypt when Jacob and his family went there (xlvi.) The antiquity of Egyptian civilisation is immense. When Abram went there, the pyramids must have been nearly 2000 years old!

16 house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had
sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and menservants, and maidservants,
17 and she-asses, and camels. And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and
his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.
18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast
done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?
19 Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so that I took her to be my
wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.
20 And Pharaoh gave men charge concerning him: and they brought
him on the way, and his wife, and all that he had.

CHAPTER XII

Questions

1. What is the importance of the call of Abram?

2. What promises were given to him? How are they to be explained?

3. Describe Abram's first journey through Canaan.

4. What was the condition of Canaan at this time?

Subject for Study

The characteristic features of Canaan.

G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land.*

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16 **and he had sheep,** etc. This is the list evidently of presents which the Pharaoh bestowed on Abram as the price for taking his supposed sister, and which apparently were not returned when the deceit was discovered. The narrative is evidently very condensed. We are not told how the Pharaoh came to see the connection between the diseases which fell on himself and his household, and his seizure of Sarai. But his words show an honourable indignation. He was more careful of Abram's honour than the patriarch himself was.

Separation of Abram and Lot (xiii.)

And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all 1
that he had, and Lot with him, into the South. And Abram was 2
very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his 3
journeys from the South even to Beth-el, unto the place where
his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Ai;
unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: 4
and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. And Lot also, 5
which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And 6
the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell to-
gether: for their substance was great, so that they could not
dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of 7
Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaan-
ite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said 8
unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee,
and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we are brethren.
Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, 9
from me: if *thou wilt take* the left hand, then I will go to the right;

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xiii. 1 **into the South,** i.e. into the Negeb, as before; which is really, of course, north-east of Egypt.

6 **And the land was not able to bear them.** Another reason for the separation of the two relatives is given in *v.* 7, derived from a different source, but not in the least inconsistent with the first, indeed just what might have been expected in consequence of it.

7 **the Perizzite**—one of the peoples of Canaan (xv. 19); but of uncertain identity. It has been thought that they were the country people who dwelt in villages, not in the walled towns. It is not quite clear why this statement is introduced here. The presence of other people might add to the difficulty of finding forage for the herds and flocks; and also made the quarrels of Abram's and Lot's retainers more dangerous.

9 **Is not the whole land before thee?** Abram's generosity to his kinsman stands out in contrast with his behaviour in Egypt, and is probably a better index to his real character.

10 or if *thou take* the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot
lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the [1]Plain of Jordan,
that it was well watered every where, before the LORD
destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of
11 the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou goest unto Zoar. So
Lot chose him all the Plain of Jordan ; and Lot journeyed east :
12 and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram
dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the
13 Plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom. Now the men of
Sodom were wicked and sinners against the LORD exceedingly.
14 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated
from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where
thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward :
15 for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy

[1] Or, *Circle.*

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10 **And Lot lifted up his eyes,** etc. The spot where this choice was made is somewhat hemmed in by mountains on three sides, but eastwards it offers a splendid prospect of the fertile Jordan valley, stretching as far as the hills of Moab.

the Plain of Jordan, or rather "the Circle," i.e. the broad expanse which widens out in the lower course of the Jordan round the Dead Sea, beginning about 25 miles north of it. The Jordan valley is the most remarkable in the world, falling as it does to a depth of 1300 feet below sea-level. The climate and the productions are sub-tropical.

before the LORD destroyed, etc., as described in xix.

like the garden of the LORD, apparently an allusion to the tradition of the Garden of Eden (cp. Isa. li. 3 ; Ezek. xxviii. 13).

as thou goest unto Zoar, one of the five cities of the Plain. It has been suggested, however, that the true reading is Zoan, which would fit better with the reference to Egypt.

12 **the cities of the Plain,** Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela or Zoar. It has been much discussed where these cities were : whether they were whelmed beneath the Dead Sea, or stood north or south of it. The northern position is the one now generally accepted, and there are traces still of the names in that locality.

13 **sinners against the LORD exceedingly.** See xviii., xix. It is noteworthy that whatever gods these wicked Canaanites worshipped, Jehovah is regarded as supreme over them ; it is to Him that they have to give their account as the universal Judge. His standard of righteousness is eternal and all-embracing.

seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth : 16
so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy
seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the 17
length of it and in the breadth of it ; for unto thee will I give it.

[1] Or, *terebinths.*

And Abram moved his tent, and came and dwelt by 18
the [1]oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built
there an altar unto the LORD.

CHAPTER XIII

Questions

1. Why did Lot and Abram separate ?
2. Describe their respective dwelling-places after the separation.
3. What promise was given to Abram on this occasion ?

Abram's Victory : Melchizedek (xiv.)

And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, 1
Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal

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18 **the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron.** Abram now moves his encampment farther down the central ridge. **Hebron,** a very ancient city, is the highest in Palestine, 3000 feet above the sea, and has always been specially associated since with Abram (cp. xxiii.). It is still venerated by the Mohammedans, and is called *El-Halil,* " the friend," i.e. of God (cp. St. Jas. ii. 23). **Mamre** appears in xiv. 13 as the name of a local chieftain.

xiv. This remarkable chapter was apparently derived from some independent and unknown source, neither J nor E nor P. It presents Abram in a new light as an intrepid warrior, and it brings his history into connection with the contemporary kingdoms of the East, though the identification of the events and persons concerned is still very obscure and a matter of great controversy. It also introduces the great figure of Melchizedek, mysterious and isolated, but destined afterwards to be recognised as a special type of Christ Himself.

1 **Amraphel king of Shinar.** This king has often been identified

2 king of [1]Goiim, that they made war with Bera king of
Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab
king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and
3 the king of Bela (the same is Zoar). All these [2]joined
together in the vale of Siddim (the same is the Salt
4 Sea). Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer,
5 and in the thirteenth year they rebelled. And
in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings

[1] Or, *nations.*
[2] Or, *joined themselves together against.*

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with the famous *Hammurabi*, the 6th king of Babylon, who was not only the conqueror of Elam, but the author of a code of laws, discovered in 1902, and often supposed to have had some influence on the code of Moses. His date is uncertain, but it was probably before 2000 B.C. **Shinar** is Babylonia.

Arioch king of Ellasar. He is perhaps the same as *Eriaku*, king of Larsa on the Lower Euphrates, whose name is found in Babylonian inscriptions.

Chedorlaomer king of Elam. From *vv.* 4 and 9 it is gathered that he was the leader of this expedition. He has been thought to be the *Kudurlachgumal* of some late inscriptions in the British Museum (Driver, *Genesis*). The name is said to mean "servant of *Lagamar*," an Elamite divinity. For *Elam* see p. 59. It must have been somewhat later than this when Hammurabi overcame the Elamites and founded the Babylonian empire.

Tidal king of Goiim. Nothing is known of this king. *Goiim* or "nations" is usually a general name applied to Gentile peoples, who could not be more definitely described.

3 **the vale of Siddim (the same is the Salt Sea).** It appears as if the writer considered that the Salt Sea or Dead Sea occupied now the place of the battle-ground, though he may only mean the valley in which that lake is situated, or some part of it which then was dry but in later times was covered with water. The southern part of the lake is much shallower than the northern. It is called "Salt" from the character of its waters, which is much salter than sea-water; and "Dead" because no fish can live in it.

5 **in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer,** etc. This expedition of the four kings to punish the rebellious vassals was, as will be seen from the map, very circuitous. Crossing the Euphrates and the deserts west of it they descended upon Bashan and the regions afterwards occupied by Ammon and Moab and Edom, as far as the head of the gulf of Akaba; then turning eastwards they crossed the wilder-

that were with him, and smote the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, and the Zuzim in Ham, and the Emim in [1]Shaveh-kiriathaim, and the Horites in their 6
mount Seir, unto El-paran, which is by the wilderness.
And they returned, and came to En-mishpat (the 7
same is Kadesh), and smote all the [2]country of the
Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in
Hazazon-tamar. And there went out the king of Sodom, and the 8
king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of
Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar) ; and they set
the battle in array against them in the vale of Siddim ; against 9
Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar ; four kings

[1] Or, *the plain of Kiriathaim.*
[2] Heb. *field.*

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ness of Paran, and circled in a north-easterly direction to the western shore of the Dead Sea, and finally in its vicinity encountered the forces of the five kings. We can only suppose that all these "fragments of forgotten peoples" had been tributary to the kings of Elam, and had conspired to shake off his yoke, perhaps encouraged by the growing power of Babylon. The **Rephaim, Zuzim** (or Zamzummim), and **Emim** are all spoken of in Deut. ii. and iii. as giant races originally occupying the lands east of Jordan. **Ashteroth-karnaim** was probably in Bashan, east of the Sea of Galilee. **Ham** is unknown, but it may have been the same as Rabbath-Ammon. **Shaveh-kiriathaim** is probably in the territory of Moab.

6 **the Horites** were the race originally inhabiting the mountains of Seir, who were afterwards dispossessed by the Edomites. They are supposed to have been cave-dwellers.

El-paran—usually identified with Elath, on the gulf of Akaba, in later times the seaport of Solomon.

7 **En-mishpat**="the spring of judgment," i.e. a spring which was held sacred as a place where oracles were given. It is identified here with **Kadesh** (="holy place"), the rallying-place afterwards of the Israelites in their desert wanderings. It is in the extreme south of Palestine, and was re-discovered by Rowland in 1844 at *Ain Quadis* ="holy well."

Hazazon-tamar, i.e. Engedi (2 Chron. xx. 2), on the western shore of the Dead Sea, an inaccessible and very remarkable spot, a sort of oasis, with springs, and of great fertility, among the limestone cliffs.

10 against the five. Now the vale of Siddim was full of [1]slime
pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and
they fell there, and they that remained fled to the
11 mountain. And they took all the goods of Sodom and
12 Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. And they
took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his
13 goods, and departed. And there came one that had escaped,
and told Abram the Hebrew: now he dwelt by the oaks of Mamre
the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner; and these
14 were confederate with Abram. And when Abram heard that
his brother was taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born
in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as
15 Dan. And he divided himself against them by night, he and his

[1] That is, *bitumen pits.*

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10 **slime pits.** See xi. 3. Bitumen is hardened petroleum, and is still found in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, or floating on the water, though there are no "pits" of it. In the absence of fuller information it is impossible to explain why the natives of this district were entangled in these pits, while the invaders managed to escape them. The latter perhaps knew of them, and prevented the defeated kings from fleeing in any other direction.

they fell there. The king of Sodom certainly escaped. But disasters to an army are often spoken of as happening to its leaders, as in the case of Pharaoh and his armies at the Red Sea.

13 **the Hebrew,** the first time that this name is used (cp. x. 24, xl. 15).

14 **as far as Dan.** This is the town in the extreme north of Palestine, formerly called Laish, but seized and settled in by the invaders of the tribe of Dan (Judg. xviii.). The use of the name shows that this account was compiled at a much later date than the events it records.

15 **And he divided himself against them by night.** This explains how it was possible for so small a force as Abram's to surprise and discomfit a much larger host. No doubt the retiring invaders, flushed with victory, took no precautions against a sudden night attack, and were thrown into confusion, much the same as the Midianites were surprised by Gideon (Judg. vii.). Cp. also the similar reprisals of David upon the Amalekites (1 Sam. xxx. 9-20).

Hobah. This place is considerably north of Damascus, to **the left** from the point of view of a writer in mid-Palestine, looking east.

servants, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which
is on the [1]left hand of Damascus. And he brought 16
back all the goods, and also brought again his brother
Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the
people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his 17
return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and the kings that
were with him, at the vale of Shaveh (the same is the King's Vale).
And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine : 18

[1] Or, *north.*

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17 **the King's Vale**—probably the same place as that mentioned in 2 Sam. xviii. 18, where Absalom erected his pillar. It was probably near Jerusalem, perhaps the valley of Kidron.

18 **Melchizedek king of Salem.** The name was usually interpreted by the Jews as meaning " king of righteousness " (Heb. vii.). Modern scholars incline to the idea that *Zedek* was the name of a Canaanite god, and so the name means " Zedek is king." But this is hardly consistent with *El Elyon* being the god of Melchizedek's worship. **Salem** is most probably Jerusalem, which appears in the Amarna letters as *Uru-salim*, " city of peace." In these letters (about 1400 B.C.) are included several from the ruler of Jerusalem to the Pharaoh—Amenophis IV.—who speaks of himself in language which has some similarity to that of Heb. vii. 3, " neither my father nor my mother have exalted me in this place; the oracle (or arm) of the mighty king established me in the house of my father." It is uncertain, however, whether " mighty king " refers to God or to the Pharaoh. Sayce interprets it of God, and assumes that this ruler also was a priest-king like Melchizedek.

brought forth bread and wine. From early times this has been interpreted as being part of a sacrifice of thanksgiving offered by Melchizedek, like the " meal offering " (*minchah*) of unleavened cakes, accompanied by a libation of wine. And Christian writers have naturally and rightly seen in it a type of the Eucharist :—

> " King of Salem, Priest Divine,
> Bringing forth Thy Bread and Wine."

More prosaic commentators look upon these gifts of Melchizedek simply as refreshment offered to the weary Abram and his warriors. But even in this case the mention of wine is remarkable, for " bread and water " is the usual phrase to describe the refreshment of a wayfarer (cp. 1 Kings xiii. 8, etc.; 2 Kings vi. 22).

he was priest of God Most High. The combination of the priestly and kingly offices was not uncommon in antiquity (like Vergil's " rex

19 and he was priest of [1]God Most High. And he blessed him,
and said, Blessed be Abram of [1]God Most High,
20 [2]possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be [1]God
Most High, which hath delivered thine enemies into
21 thy hand. And he gave him a tenth of all. And the
king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons,
22 and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of
Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, [1]God Most
23 High, [2]possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread

[1] Heb. *El Elyon.*
[2] Or, *maker.*

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idem hominum Phoebique sacerdos," *Aeneid*, iii. 80). A priestly character seems to be attached to the early kings of Israel; David and Solomon perform priestly acts. In later times the Messiah, under the type of Joshua, was foretold as "a priest upon his throne" (Zech. vi. 13; cp. Jer. xxx. 21). The Maccabaean princes were priests of the family of Aaron. But in Ps. cx. 4, priesthood "after the order of Melchizedek" is promised to the Messiah, i.e. evidently a priesthood transcending that of Aaron, a text on which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has much to say, especially in chap. vii. He sees in Melchizedek the type of an eternal and universal priesthood, which is fulfilled in Christ. The God whom Melchizedek served was called *El Elyon* (margin). This may have been the name of a Canaanite divinity, but he is spoken of not as local but a universal ruler, and in *v.* 22 Abram identifies him with Jehovah Himself. Melchizedek, therefore, was apparently a monotheist, and had either inherited or received by revelation the same truth which Abram believed.

19 **possessor of heaven and earth.** See also margin. To a Jewish writer this would be a description of Jehovah, who was no mere local or national divinity, but creator and lord of the universe.

20 **and blessed be God Most High.** Abram has been declared "blessed" in the previous verse, as having received victory from *El Elyon*. In a different sense God Himself is now called "blessed" as worthy of receiving worship and thanksgiving from the conquerors.

And he gave him a tenth of all, i.e. Abram gave Melchizedek. This is the first mention of the custom of dedicating a tithe, the tenth part of one's goods, to the priesthood, which became an institution in Israel. Heb. vii. 8-10 deduces from this gift of Abram's the essential superiority of the Melchizedek priesthood to that of Aaron.

22 **the LORD, God Most High.** As already noted, Abram here makes the startling identification of his own God with that of Melchizedek. The higher thought of the O.T. was sufficiently liberal to recognise

nor a shoe-latchet nor aught that is thine, lest thou shouldest say,
I have made Abram rich: [1]save only that which 24
the young men have eaten, and the portion of the
men which went with me; Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre,
let them take their portion.

[1] Or, let there be *nothing for me: only that*, etc.

CHAPTER XIV

Questions

1. Describe the alliance and the invasion of the Four Kings.
2. How was Lot rescued?
3. Describe the meeting with Melchizedek.
4. What is the religious importance of the story?
5. What later allusions are there in the Bible to Melchizedek?

Subjects for Study

1. The invasion of the Kings.

   Driver, *Genesis*, additional notes on xiv.

2. Melchizedek.

   Driver, *Genesis.*

   Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible.*

   Westcott, *Epistle to the Hebrews.*

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that all the gods of the Gentiles were not necessarily demons or mere idols, but that under another name even a Canaanite might have held the supreme truth.

24 **the men which went with me.** These three Amorite chieftains and brothers were allies of Abram (*v.* 13) and had accompanied him in his expedition. The Amorites were among those attacked by the invaders (*v.* 7).

The Covenant with Abram (xv.)

1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto
Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy
2 shield, [1]*and* thy exceeding great reward. And Abram
said, O Lord [2]GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I [3]go
childless, and he that shall be possessor of my house
3 is [4]Dammesek Eliezer? And Abram said, Behold,
to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in
4 my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the
LORD came unto him, saying, This man shall not be
thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine
5 own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him
forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and
tell the stars, if thou be able to tell them: and he said

[1] Or, *thy reward shall be exceeding great.*
[2] Heb. *Jehovah,* as in other places where GOD is put in capitals.
[3] Or, *go hence.*
[4] The Chaldee and Syriac have, *Eliezer the Damascene.*

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xv. 1 **the word of the LORD.** In the later books of the O.T. (see also St. Luke iii. 2) this is the usual description of a prophetic message, a communication made by a prophet with authority from God Himself. But here (*vv.* 1 and 4) is the only place where it is used in the Hexateuch. Abram himself is spoken of as a prophet (xx. 7).

in a vision, one of the recognised methods of prophetic instruction (Num. xii. 6). This vision of Jehovah evidently took place by night (*v.* 5): a day intervened, and the concluding revelation was given on the following night (*v.* 17). (Cp. Job iv. 13.)

Fear not. It would be interesting to collect the instances in the Bible where these words preface a message from God. They are words of encouragement and sympathy: man naturally shrinks in dread from the near approach of God. The goodwill of the Divine Speaker is further shown in the words that follow. Jehovah is in the present a **shield** or defence to Abram in his lonely wanderings, and will be his future **reward.**

2 **O Lord GOD**—lit. *Adonai Jehovah.* The Jews usually substituted Adonai for Jehovah in reading, but here, to prevent duplication of the same word, they read Jehovah as Elohim (God).

Dammesek Eliezer. The text is probably corrupt, and the precise meaning is uncertain, though "Eliezer of Damascus" (A.V.) is perhaps

unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; 6
and he counted it to him for righteousness. And he said unto 7
him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the
Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, O 8
Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And 9
he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and
a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years
old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took him all 10
these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each half over

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the best rendering. But the point is clear. Abram had no child, one of the greatest calamities, as the Hebrews thought it; he would have to leave his property to a servant. His life seemed to him purposeless and the Divine promise of reward unmeaning.

6 **And he believed in the LORD,** etc. One of the great texts of the Bible, often dwelt on by the later scribes, and fixed upon by St. Paul as expressing the fundamentally right attitude of man towards God and God's acceptance of it (Rom. iv.; Gal. iii. 6, etc.). "Belief in" means "trust," throwing oneself wholly upon God, in spite of all apparent difficulties or impossibilities. This "belief" or "faith" was the special characteristic of Abram, and the story of his life shows how this was developed and tested and made perfect.

Righteousness is God's own nature, and without righteousness man cannot be accepted by Him. But human righteousness is not attained by efforts (always imperfect) to obey an external law (as St. Paul teaches), but by something deeper, the inward attitude of the soul, which finds its centre and object in God and not in self, and is ready to sacrifice all for God. God accounts a man "righteous" because of this attitude rather than because of the works of righteousness which he performs. He accepts him not for what he does, but for what he *is*, and for what he is on the way to become.

8 **O Lord GOD, whereby shall I know,** etc. In answer to this appeal Abram is instructed to prepare as for the formal making of a covenant, i.e. a solemn agreement ratified by a sacrifice (see, however, note on vi. 18 for the difference between Divine and human covenants). Abram prepares the sacrificial victims, probably according to the established ritual of the time. In a human covenant the two parties would then walk between the severed bodies of the victims (see Jer. xxxiv. 18), which probably meant that they invoked on themselves the same fate as the victims if they broke the covenant.

11 against the other: but the birds divided he not. And the birds
of prey came down upon the carcases, and Abram drove them
12 away. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon
13 Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And
he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a
stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and
14 they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation,
whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they
15 come out with great substance. But thou shalt go to thy fathers in
16 peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. And in the fourth
generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the
17 Amorite is not yet full. And it came to pass, that, when the sun

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11 **the birds of prey,** etc. Abram's action in watching over his sacrifice and driving away the birds which would have rendered it futile, may be regarded as a symbol of the attacks made on his descendants by the Egyptians, which were averted by God's protection and the faith of Moses.

12 **an horror of great darkness,** etc. This mysterious statement seems to describe the conditions of the prophetic trance into which Abram fell. The heavy announcement of the sufferings of his descendants in Egypt cast as it were its shadow on the soul of the prophet before the actual words were spoken. For similar descriptions by prophets of the dread which fell upon them, in connection with revelations of future woe, we may compare Isa. xxi. 3, 4; Hab. iii. 16; Job iv. 13, 14.

13 **they shall afflict them four hundred years.** This is a general statement in round numbers about the exile of Israel in Egypt. The total length of their stay in Egypt is given in Exod. xii. 40 as 430 years. They were not, of course, "afflicted" during the whole of this time (see Exod. i.), but the entire period is regarded as being one of exile and delay of the promises of God.

14 **will I judge,** i.e. by the plagues of Egypt, as recorded in Exod. vii.-xii.

with great substance. See Exod. xii. 35, 36; Ps. cv. 37.

16 **in the fourth generation.** For these four generations see Exod. vi. 16-20. To harmonise this with *v.* 13 it is necessary to assume that a "generation" is counted as a century.

went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces. In that day the 18
LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have
I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river,
the river Euphrates: the Kenite, and the Kenizzite, and the 19
Kadmonite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Rephaim, 20
and the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Girgashite, and the 21
Jebusite.

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the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full. Some light is thrown by this on the mysteries of God's moral government of the world. Punishment for sin seems often long delayed, and men wonder whether God is just after all. But God takes a longer view than we can, and waits, no doubt in mercy, in case the sinner may repent. The **Amorites** here evidently include all the population of Canaan, described in more detail in *vv.* 19-21. Their **iniquity** was not merely idolatry, but such moral offences as even natural conscience would condemn (cp. Rom. i. 18-25, ii. 14, 15). The sins of the Canaanites were largely against purity (Lev. xviii. 24-30; and see also Deut. xviii. 9-12).

17 **a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch.** The **furnace** (=the *oven* of St. Matt. vi. 30) would be an oven of clay, conical in shape, which was used for baking. It was heated by burning wood or twigs inside it, which, of course, would produce a cloud of smoke from the hole at the top. This twofold appearance of smoke and flame appears also as a sign of God's presence in the pillar of cloud and fire which accompanied the Israelites on their journeys. The movement of this furnace and torch between the pieces of the sacrificial victims signified that Jehovah Himself was ratifying the covenant. It is not said that Abram in his vision walked himself between the pieces: probably he did not, as God Himself alone is the author of a Divine covenant. It is His gift, and not a mere agreement as between equals. So in *v.* 18 it is Jehovah who makes the covenant.

18 **the river of Egypt.** This usually means the brook *Wady el Arish*, which was the ancient border between Palestine and Egypt. Here, however, it is probably the Nile itself. The empire of Solomon was the nearest approach to the literal fulfilment of this promise (1 Kings iv. 21).

19-21 **the Kenite,** etc. The nations of Canaan are variously enumerated, and are not easily distinguished in all cases. The **Kenites** (*Kain*) were a nomadic tribe, chiefly in the south of Palestine. It has been suggested that they were travelling smiths or tinkers, like the later Gypsies (Sayce). They were generally in friendship with the Israelites. The **Kenizzites** were also a people in the south, near to

CHAPTER XV

Questions

1. Describe the occasion of which it is said that Abram's belief was "counted to him for righteousness."

2. What do you understand by that statement?

3. Describe the making of the Covenant with Abram.

4. What predictions accompanied the Covenant?

Subject for Study

The Faith of Abraham.

Mozley, *Lectures on the Old Testament.*

Church, *Discipline of the Christian Character.*

The Birth of Ishmael (xvi.)

1 Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an
2 handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said

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the Edomites, and apparently akin to them. The **Kadmonites** were probably a people on the east of Palestine, perhaps "the children of the east" of Judg. vi. 33. For the **Perizzites** and **Rephaim** see notes on xiii. 7 and xiv. 5, and for the **Hittites, Amorites, Girgashites,** and **Jebusites**, note on x. 15-18. The **Canaanite** is a more general and vague expression, sometimes applied to the whole population of Canaan.

xvi. The incidents of this chapter belong to a social condition which has long passed away, and which would be quite inconsistent with a Christian standard. Slavery and polygamy were recognised usages; neither Abram nor Sarai had risen above them. They were tolerated for the time being, for God's revelation is slow and progressive, dealing with men as they are and only gradually leading them to a higher morality.

1 **an handmaid,** a female slave in personal attendance on the chieftain's

unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing; go in, I pray thee, unto my handmaid; it may be that I shall [1]obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I gave my handmaid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her that which is good in thine eyes. And Sarai dealt hardly with her, and she fled from her face. And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And

[1] Heb. *be builded by her.*

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wife, and recognised as her own property. Sarai proposes to give this maid to her husband as a second wife that their child may be adopted as the heir. It was a human attempt to fulfil the Divine promise.

4 her mistress was despised in her eyes. Hagar began "to give herself airs," as superior to her mistress. The evils of polygamy, such as rivalry and cruelty, are abundantly illustrated in the narrative that follows.

7 the angel of the LORD. This is the first place where this expression is found in O.T. It occurs frequently afterwards. This angel appears as the intermediary between God and man. He may be regarded as either (1) a created spirit who represents Jehovah and speaks with authority for Him, but not to be identified with Him; or (2) as a personal manifestation of Jehovah Himself. The latter view has generally been taken by Christian writers, who regard "the angel of the LORD" as the Logos, or Son of God, before His Incarnation. The angel certainly speaks sometimes as if he were Jehovah, and demands acts of worship as in Exod. iii. 2-6; Josh. v. 13-15.

This visitation of the angel to Hagar is described with much feeling; the providence and pity of God which he expresses stand out in relief against the spite of Sarai and the weakness of Abram (cp. xxi. 17-19).

in the way to Shur. This place has not been identified, but it was

he said, Hagar, Sarai's handmaid, whence camest thou? and whither goest thou? And she said, I flee from the face of my
9 mistress Sarai. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return
10 to thy mistress, and submit thyself unto her hands. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will greatly multiply thy seed, that it shall not be numbered
11 for multitude. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son; and thou shalt call his name [1]Ishmael, because the LORD hath heard thy affliction. And
12 he shall be *as* a wild-ass among men; his hand *shall be* against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell [2]in the presence of all his
13 brethren. And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, [3]Thou art [4]a God that seeth: for she

[1] That is, *God heareth.*
[2] Or, *over against.* Or, *to the east of.*
[3] Or, *Thou God seest me.*
[4] Heb. *El roi,* that is, *God of seeing.*

apparently on the way to Egypt; and perhaps close to the frontier (cp. xx. 1, xxv. 18). Hagar was trying to return to her own country.

12 **as a wild-ass among men.** The wild-ass of Scripture (see Job xxxix. 5-8 and Hosea viii. 9) is probably the Syrian onager, found in herds in the wilderness, swift and untameable. Ishmael and his descendants were to be men of the desert, free, and having no alliance or social intercourse with more civilised people; living at random by forage and pillage, always more or less at war with their neighbours, like the Bedawin of more recent times.

in the presence of all his brethren. This is somewhat meaningless: one of the marginal translations must be adopted. The Ishmaelites were "against" their brethren, in perpetual hostility; or it may mean simply that their dwelling-place was "to the east" of Palestine.

13 **Thou art a God that seeth.** Hagar realises a new truth about God. His presence is not confined to any particular locality, or "holy place." He is in the wide desert also, seeing and caring for the desolate wayfarer.

Have I even here, etc. The meaning is rather obscure. The text has been thought to be corrupt, and it has been suggested that Hagar means that after seeing God, in the person of His angel, she still lives, though it was commonly thought that such an experience meant death. In this case the name given to the well might mean "the well of one who lives after seeing (God)." But this is only a conjectural emendation. The marginal meaning of *Beer-lahai-roi* gives good sense, and is generally adopted.

said, Have I even here looked after him that seeth me?
Wherefore the well was called [1]Beer-lahai-roi; 14
behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered. And 15
Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called the
name of his son, which Hagar bare, Ishmael. And 16
Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar
bare Ishmael to Abram.

[1] That is, *The well of the living one who seeth me.*

CHAPTER XVI

Questions

1. What is meant by "the angel of the LORD"?
2. What were the promises made to Hagar?
3. Explain Beer-lahai-roi.

The Covenant-sign of Circumcision (xvii.)

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD 1
appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am God Almighty;
walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my 2

xvii. This narrative is derived from the priestly document (P), and has been thought to be an independent account of the Divine Covenant with Abram which has already been described in xv. It appears, however, to belong to a later period in Abram's life, and it may refer to a further revelation to him, in which the former covenant was renewed, with the change of names and the institution of the Covenant-mark of circumcision.

1 **God Almighty,** or *El-Shaddai*. This is the name by which, according to P, Jehovah was known to the patriarchs (see Exod. vi. 2, 3) before He revealed His Name to Moses. But see note on iv. 26. The original meaning of *Shaddai* is very obscure: it is apparently derived from a verb meaning to "treat with violence" or "overpower" (see Driver, *Genesis*, Excursus i.); "Almighty" in its general sense is probably a sufficiently exact translation.

walk before me, and be thou perfect. See note on vi. 9. Abram, as

covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceed-
3 ingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him,
4 saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou
5 shalt be the father of a multitude of nations. Neither shall
thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be
Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made
6 thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make
7 nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I
will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy
seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting
8 covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And
I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy
sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession;
9 and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, And as
for thee, thou shalt keep my covenant, thou, and thy seed after
10 thee throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which
ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every
11 male among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall be circum-

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the man of faith, is to live his whole life as in the presence of God, and with constant reference to Him. His life is to be *perfect*, i.e. thoroughly consistent, blameless.

5 **thy name shall be Abraham.** Abram (shortened from Abiram) means "high father": no etymology can be given for Abraham, and we can only ascertain the sense of the change from the context.

7-8 **an everlasting covenant... an everlasting possession.** The Hebrew word does not mean necessarily that which has no end, but rather something extending over a vast and undefined period of time. As a matter of fact the covenant of circumcision was superseded by the "new covenant," of which Baptism is the outward sign; and the descendants of Abraham have long lost the possession of Canaan. No argument for their future restoration to it can be fairly based on this promise.

10 **every male among you shall be circumcised.** This was no new rite, and the practice must have been well known to Abraham. Herodotus speaks of it as performed by the Egyptians, and states that the Ethiopians, Phoenicians, and the people of Palestine derived it from this source. It is found to-day among many primitive and savage peoples. The reasons for it may have been both hygienic and religious. Here, in commanding it to Abraham and his descendants,

cised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of a covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old 12
shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy 13
house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male who is not 14
circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt 15
not call her name Sarai, but [1]Sarah shall her name be.
[1] That is, *Princess.*
And I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee 16
a son of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of* nations; kings of peoples shall be of her. Then 17
Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and

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an old tribal custom is given a new meaning and importance as a sign of a covenant. It probably also symbolised the sanctification of natural life, and the need of purity. Our Lord submitted to it as part of the discipline of the Law which He came to fulfil. The early Christian Church had to decide the question whether it was necessarily to be continued in the case of Gentile converts, as was urged by the stricter converts from Judaism. St. Paul was the protagonist in the conflict for Gentile liberty. See Acts xv. and Galatians generally; also Col. ii. 8-15.

14 **cut off from his people.** This does not necessarily mean the penalty of death, but exclusion from the family, and therefore from its Divine privileges and hopes.

15 **Sarai . . . Sarah.** In this case again the exact force of the change of name is uncertain. Sarah is certainly "princess," a title of greater dignity, but it is not known what her original name means.

17 **and laughed.** This laughter may have been like that of Sarah's (xviii. 12), an expression of unbelief in what seemed a natural impossibility. But St. John viii. 56 suggests that it may have been the laughter of joy at so great a promise, entailing so much in the future. The birth of Christ was implicit in the birth of a son to Abraham and Sarah.

18 shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? And Abraham said
19 unto God, Oh that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name [1]Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant
20 for his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great
21 nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which
22 Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.
23 And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.
24 And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was cir-
25 cumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his
26 foreskin. In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and
27 Ishmael his son. And all the men of his house, those born in the house, and those bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

[1] From the Heb. word meaning *to laugh.*

CHAPTER XVII

Questions

1. What further additions are made by this narrative to the Covenant with Abram?

2. What new promise was made on this occasion?

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18 **Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!** Whether or not Abraham believed the promise of a son to Sarah, he was anxious that God's blessing and protection might be given to his son Ishmael. This is promised (*v.* 20), but Ishmael will not be the son of the Covenant nor the ancestor of the chosen line.

Angel-visitings : Abraham's Intercession (xviii.)

And the LORD appeared unto him by the [1]oaks of Mamre, as 1
he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and 2
he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men
stood over again him: and when he saw them, he
ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself to the
earth, and said, [2]My lord, if now I have found favour 3
in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy
servant: let now a little water be fetched, and wash 4

[1] Or, *terebinths.*

[2] Or, *O Lord.*

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xviii. This chapter is derived from J, and gives a further account of the promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah, and of the origin of the name "Isaac." It is described by Driver as "one of the most graphically and finely written narratives in the O.T." Abraham is visited by three unknown guests, whom he entertains with characteristic hospitality and courtesy. At first he evidently regards them as ordinary men, but gradually the spokesman of the three is recognised as Jehovah Himself: the other two being apparently attendant angels, who proceed afterwards to carry out the Divine judgment on Sodom. Thus the event is really a "Theophany." This chapter was for long read in the Church as a lesson for Trinity Sunday, but it must not be supposed that these three wayfarers either were or were thought to be the Three Persons of the Godhead, though we may see in them one of the suggestions in the O.T. that God in His essential nature is "social" and not merely a bare unity. We may more correctly say here that the One who speaks to Abraham is the Logos, or Word, afterwards revealed in Jesus Christ, the other two being His attendants and ministers.

1 **the oaks of Mamre.** See notes on xii. 6 and xiii. 18.

3 **My lord,** etc. This title (*Adoni*) does not imply any idea of the Divine character of the visitant, though with different vowel points it might be read as *Adonai*, and have the higher meaning. But probably here it is only an expression of respect which Abraham addresses to the one who appears to be the leader of the three. Abraham's words and acts are such as might still be used by an Arab chieftain to unexpected guests. He shows eagerness and respect (*v.* 2); he speaks of the visit as conferring a favour on himself (*v.* 3); he provides water to wash the desert dust from the sandalled and weary feet (*v.* 4); he hurries to get such of the best food as might be prepared at once;

your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch
a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your heart; after that ye
shall pass on: [1]forasmuch as ye are come to your
servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.
And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah,
and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead
it, and make cakes. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched
a calf tender and good, and gave it unto the servant; and he
hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf
which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by
them under the tree, and they did eat. And they said unto him,
Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.

[1] Or, *for therefore.*

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and to show further respect stands himself by his guests at their improvised meal (*vv.* 6-8). Patriarchal kindness and simplicity stand out in the whole narrative. Though Abraham has many servants he busies himself in selecting the calf; it is Sarah apparently herself who is charged with baking the bread, and Abraham places with his own hands the food before the visitors. (See Heb. xiii. 2.)

6 **make cakes.** This is still a usual method of bread-making in the East. Cakes or rolls are made simply of flour and water and a little oil, and are baked on the embers of a fire or on hot stones. The **three measures** would be equal to an "ephah," rather a large amount, but probably it was the usual amount to prepare at once. (See St. Matt. xiii. 33.)

7 **a calf.** Meat was not usually eaten at ordinary meals. Abraham treats the coming of the guests as if it were a special festival (cp. St. Luke xv. 23). Meat newly killed is quite tender, and can be cooked at once. Here it would probably be cut in slices and grilled over the fire.

8 **butter**—more properly, curdled milk, which is still a favourite refreshment in the East.

and they did eat. The question might be raised as to how we can conceive of heavenly beings receiving food. The only parallel that might be quoted is that of our Lord Himself eating with His disciples after His Resurrection, which was done for evidential purposes, to prove the reality of His Body (St. Luke xxiv. 41-3; Acts x. 41). We can only assume that the Three had the power of assuming for the time being material bodies: the appearance was not merely that of phantoms.

And he said, I will certainly return unto thee when the season 10
[1]cometh round; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have
a son. And Sarah heard in the tent door, which was
behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, 11
and well stricken in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the
manner of women. And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, 12
After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old
also? And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah 13
laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is 14
any thing too [2]hard for the LORD? At the set time
I will return unto thee, when the season [3]cometh
round, and Sarah shall have a son. Then Sarah 15
denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid.
And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

[1] Heb. *liveth*, or, *reviveth.*

[2] Or, *wonderful.*

[3] Heb. *liveth*, or, *reviveth.*

And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward 16
Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on
the way. And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that 17
which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great 18
and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be
blessed in him? For I have [4]known him, to the end 19
that he may command his children and his household
after him, that they may keep the way of the LORD,

[4] See Amos iii. 2.

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12 **And Sarah laughed within herself.** Whatever may be thought of Abraham's laughter in the previous narrative, it is clear that Sarah's was that of unbelief and derision. Sarah, with Eastern reserve, had not come forward to welcome the guests, but remained hidden. She took good care, however, to hear what was being said. She was startled at her thoughts being read by the Stranger, and apparently came out of the tent in confusion to deny that she had done anything so discourteous as to laugh at the words of a guest, especially when He spoke with such mysterious authority.

19 **For I have known him,** etc. This verse (incorrectly translated in A.V.) is of the highest importance as showing the meaning of God's dealings with Abraham, and, by implication, the purpose of the whole course of O.T. revelation. To "know" means personal selection and call of the individual for some special work or purpose of God. Abraham has been "known" in this sense in order that his family may be in the world as the people of God, devoted to obedience and to righteous-

to do justice and judgement; to the end that the LORD may
20 bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. And
the LORD said, [1]Because the cry of Sodom and Go-
morrah is great, and [1]because their sin is very grievous;
21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done
altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me;
22 and if not, I will know. And the men turned from thence, and
went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.
23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou consume the

[1] Or, *Verily.*

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ness. This is to be the condition of the fulfilment of the great promises to Abraham. For this reason too the coming judgment on the wicked cities is to be made known to him beforehand. It is to be a lesson imprinted on the conscience of him and his household that God hates and does really punish evil.

20 **the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah.** The precise meaning is not quite clear, but it probably means the report spread abroad about the wickedness of these cities. God is represented, in anthropomorphic language, as having heard this dreadful rumour, and to be about to ascertain personally whether it is true or not.

22 **And the men,** i.e., as we see from the following narrative, the two attendant angels. The speaker, who is Jehovah Himself, remains, and listens to the prayer of Abraham.

23 **And Abraham drew near, and said.** Abraham has now fully recognised his Divine Visitor, and ventures on what is one of the most remarkable instances in the Bible of intercessory prayer. Though his prayer, in its actual results, appears to be only partly successful, it was really successful in bringing out, as it does, the mercy and justice of God, and the readiness of God to hear such prayer, however daring it may seem.

Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? This is one of the great problems of the O.T. The future life with its rewards and retributions had not yet been revealed, and this present life seemed to old Israel to be the only stage where the age-long conflict between righteousness and wickedness was worked out. So it is debated with agonies of suspense and doubt whether God does really discriminate between the good and the evil, and why they appear often to suffer the same fate, or why even the wicked may prosper after all and the righteous suffer. This is the great burden of the Book of Job. See especially Job xxi., and cp. Ps. lxxiii.

righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous 24
within the city: wilt thou consume and not spare the place for
the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to 25
do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so
the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from thee:
shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the LORD said, 26
If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare
all the place for their sake. And Abraham answered and said, 27
Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which
am but dust and ashes: peradventure there shall lack five of the 28
fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five?
And he said, I will not destroy it, if I find there forty and five.
And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there 29
shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for the
forty's sake. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I 30
will speak: peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And
he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. And he said, 31
Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord:
peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said,
I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake. And he said, Oh let 32
not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: per-
adventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not
destroy it for the ten's sake. And the LORD went his way, as 33
soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham
returned unto his place.

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25 **shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?** We can scarcely exaggerate the solemnity and the importance of this question. It is the cry of human conscience to God. Man cannot help demanding that what he knows in himself to be good and right must be good and right also to God, or else God is not a moral being, and no relations with Him are really possible. Conscience in man must be the witness to the nature and character of God. If it be not so, the end is despair. It should be noticed also that Abraham has grasped the great truth of the omnipotence and universal rule of Jehovah. He is no mere limited or local divinity, such as the heathen imagined. The moral government of the world belongs to Him and Him alone.

CHAPTER XVIII

Questions

1. What is probably to be understood by the appearance of the " three men " to Abraham ?

2. What reason is given here for the Divine choice of Abraham and his family ?

3. What do you think is the religious importance of the story of Abraham's intercession for Sodom ?

Sin and Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (xix.)

1 And the two angels came to Sodom at even ; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom : and Lot saw them, and rose up to meet them ;
2 and he bowed himself with his face to the earth ; and he said,

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xix. 1 **the two angels.** Previously these heavenly messengers have been simply spoken of as " men " (as they appeared to be), and they are still called so below. But their real character is here disclosed by the narrator.

Lot sat in the gate of Sodom. We have heard nothing more of Lot since his separation from Abraham (xiii. 11, etc.). He had chosen for his own gain to live in a corrupt and wicked city, though Jewish tradition represents him as personally untouched by the evil and sorrowing over it (2 Peter ii. 7, 8). His courteous reception of the strangers, his hospitality, and his eagerness to protect them show a spirit similar to that of Abraham, and justify his deliverance in answer to Abraham's prayer.

The **gate** was a regular place of concourse and business in ancient walled cities. It would be an arched passage through the wall, and provided with seats. Lot's sitting there seems to point to his prominence and importance in the city, but the dislike felt towards him comes out in *v.* 9.

Behold now, my lords, turn aside, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your way. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. And he urged them greatly; and 3 they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat. But before they lay down, the men of the city, *even* the men of 4 Sodom, compassed the house round, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; and they called unto Lot, and said 5 unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot went 6 out unto them to the door, and shut the door after him. And he 7 said, I pray you, my brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, 8 I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; [1]forasmuch as they are come under the shadow of my roof. And 9 they said, Stand back. And they said, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and drew near to break the door. But 10 the men put forth their hand, and brought Lot into the house

[1] Or, *for therefore.*

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2 **we will abide in the street.** This would not mean what it does to us. The **street** was the open space in the middle of the city. In the climate of the Jordan valley there would be little hardship in staying out all night if the inhabitants were friendly.

4 **the men of Sodom,** etc. The outrageous conduct of the Sodomites was not only an offence against the natural laws of purity, but also against the sacred obligation of hospitality to strangers. (Similar conduct on the part of the Benjamites of Gibeah (Judg. xix.) roused all Israel to fury.) Judging from Lot's shocking proposal (*v.* 8), it would seem that it was this latter offence which weighed most heavily with him. At any cost he must, he thought, protect those who had the shelter of his roof and had partaken of his food. "Sodom" and "Sodomite" become henceforth in the O.T. the proverbial description of utterly shameless and unnatural sin. For the causes of the moral ruin of Sodom see Ezek. xvi. 49.

11 to them, and shut to the door. And they smote the men that were
at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great:
12 so that they wearied themselves to find the door. And the men
said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy
sons, and thy daughters, and whomsoever thou hast in the city;
13 bring them out of the place: for we will destroy this place,
because the cry of them is waxen great before the LORD; and the
14 LORD hath sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out, and spake
unto his sons in law, which [1]married his daughters,
and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD
will destroy the city. But he seemed unto his sons
15 in law as one that mocked. And when the morning arose, then
the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy
two daughters which are here; lest thou be consumed in the
16 [2]iniquity of the city. But he lingered; and the
men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand
of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters;
the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth,
17 and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they
had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life;
look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the
[3]Plain; escape to the mountains, lest thou be con-
18 sumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, [4]my
19 lord: behold now, thy servant hath found grace in
thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which
thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I
cannot escape to the mountain, lest [5]evil overtake me,
20 and I die: behold now, this city is near to flee unto,

[1] Or, *were to marry.*

[2] Or, *punishment.*

[3] See ch. xiii. 10.

[4] Or, *O Lord.*

[5] Or, *the evil.*

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11 **And they smote the men . . . with blindness.** For similar inflictions see 2 Kings vi. 18 and Acts xiii. 11.

16 **the LORD being merciful unto him.** It has been thought that this implies that Jehovah Himself had now joined the two angels, as in the visit to Abraham (see note on *v.* 24). In any case it is a beautiful allusion to the character of Jehovah, His patience and pity towards those who would hardly allow themselves to be saved.

20 **this city is near to flee unto.** The city, Zoar, also called Bela (xiv. 2), must have been at the foot of the hills of Moab, which rise to

and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have 21
accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow the city of which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape 22
thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither.
Therefore the name of the city was called [1]Zoar. The 23
sun was risen upon the earth when Lot came unto
Zoar. Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon 24
Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of
heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all 25
the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the
ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she 26
became a pillar of salt. And Abraham gat up early in the morn- 27

[1] That is, *Little*, ver. 20. See ch. xiv. 8.

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the east of the Dead Sea. It is alluded to also as a place of refuge in Isa. xv. 5. Ancient tradition identified it with a Zoara at the south end of the Dead Sea. But this is very uncertain. (See note xiii. 12.)

24 **Then the LORD rained . . . brimstone and fire.** What happened on that fateful morning in the Lower Jordan valley is described with awe-inspiring brevity. The rain of fire and brimstone might very well fit a volcanic eruption such as those which overwhelmed Herculaneum and Pompeii in A.D. 79 and Martinique in 1902. But there is no trace of volcanoes in this district, and we must probably look for the explanation of the calamity in the hint already given in xiv. of the number of pits or wells of petroleum in the valley. A shock of earthquake might easily cause a tremendous explosion of this inflammable matter, producing dense volumes of smoke and the appearance of a deluge of fire from the sky. (See Driver, *Genesis*, and G. Adam Smith's *Historical Geography*, chap. xxiii.)

The double use of "the LORD" (Jehovah) in this verse is curious, and it is adduced by St. Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho* as one of the O.T. intimations of the plurality of the Godhead: Jehovah the Logos, the Person who appeared to Abraham, is acting on behalf of the Jehovah in "heaven," i.e. the Father.

26 **she became a pillar of salt.** This striking statement has been explained by supposing that the woman, lingering too long, was overtaken by the fiery cloud of burning oil, and her body was found encrusted with solid bitumen. But it should also be noticed that there are cliffs of rock-salt at the south-west of the Dead Sea, and these weather into extraordinary shapes. Outstanding pillars have been noted by travellers which seemed to have almost a human form.

28 ing to the place where he had stood before the LORD: and he
looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of
the Plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the land went up as
the smoke of a furnace.
29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain,
that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst
of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot
dwelt.
30 And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and
his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and
31 he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. And the firstborn
said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man
in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth:
32 come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him,

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However the text is explained, the fate of Lot's wife was no doubt due to some regret at leaving her home, or some lack of faith in the Divine command. So our Lord uses it for one of His most arresting allusions (St. Luke xvii. 32). Cp. also Wisd. x. 7: "A standing pillar of salt is a monument of an unbelieving soul."

28 **and he looked toward Sodom,** etc. The Dead Sea can be distinguished from the heights near Hebron, and the heavy pall of smoke still hanging over the burnt-up cities would at once strike the eye.

29 **God remembered Abraham,** i.e. Abraham's great intercession had not been in vain; even though the ten righteous could not be found, and the cities had to be destroyed, the righteous did not suffer with the wicked. Lot and his daughters were saved.

30-38 Modern commentators refuse to take this story literally, but regard it as a piece of folk-lore which attempted to explain, with reference to the sound of the names (*vv.* 37-38) the disreputable origin of the Moabites and Ammonites, the relations but inveterate enemies of Israel.

30 **he feared to dwell in Zoar.** The reason is unrecorded: perhaps he could not trust the promise (*v.* 21), but was afraid that after all the same destruction might come upon Zoar. This picture of Lot, stripped of all his rich possessions (xiii. 5), reduced to the condition of primitive man, living in a cave, is very significant, though the writer does not draw the moral. Lot had chosen worldly advantage at the cost of living in a hotbed of sin and corruption, and in the end he loses everything and disappears from our view in destitution and disgrace.

that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their 33
father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay
with her father; and he knew not when she lay down, nor when
she arose. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn 34
said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father:
let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and
lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they 35
made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger
arose, and lay with him; and he knew not when she lay down,
nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with 36
child by their father. And the firstborn bare a son, and called 37
his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this
day. And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name 38
Ben-ammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon
unto this day.

CHAPTER XIX

Questions

1. Describe the escape of Lot from Sodom.

2. What was the probable nature of the disaster that fell on the Cities of the Plain?

3. Estimate the character of Lot.

4. What is said in Scripture about Lot's wife?

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37 **Moab**—the word resembled in sound *Me-ab*, i.e. "from a father." The actual etymology of Moab is unknown.

38 **Ben-ammi**, i.e. "son of my people," or "my kindred." More probably the Ammonites took their name from a god, *Ammi*, which appears in combination in several proper names.

In both these cases, as in other examples, the meaning of a name is not really derived from etymology, but merely suggested by the sound of the word.

Subject for Study

The position of the Cities of the Plain.

Driver, *Genesis*, additional notes on xiv. and xix.

Abraham and Abimelech (xx.)

1 And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the land of the
South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned
2 in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister:
3 and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. But God
came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him,
Behold, thou art but a dead man, because of the woman which
4 thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. Now Abimelech had

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xx. This passage is very similar to xiv. 10-20 and xxvi. 6-11. On all three occasions the wife is represented as a sister. Hence it has been thought that these three stories are all variants of one tradition. But the details are so different that this identification is difficult. It is not really safe to assume (as is often done by modern writers) that two similar events cannot have happened in one lifetime, or that, as in xxvi., the son could not have imitated his father.

1 **from thence,** i.e. probably from Hebron. But the passage is not continuous with xix. and is derived from an independent source, the narrative called E.

the land of the South—Kadesh—Shur. See notes on xii. 9, xiv. 7, xvi. 7.

Gerar—anciently identified with a place south of Gaza. As in xxvi. Abimelech, king of Gerar, is called (by an anachronism) king of the Philistines (see also xxi. 34). Another suggestion, which would suit the locality described, is that this Gerar is the *Wady Gerur*, south-west of Kadesh.

3 **for she is a man's wife.** Though the Decalogue had not yet been given, adultery is throughout this passage spoken of as a most serious offence. It is a sin "against God" (*v.* 6), a "great sin" (*v.* 9), and this is clearly recognised by Abimelech and his court, though they were heathen.

not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay even a righteous nation? Said he not himself unto me, She is my sister? 5 and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and the innocency of my hands have I done this. And 6 God said unto him in the dream, Yea, I know that in the integrity of thy heart thou hast done this, and I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. Now therefore restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he 7 shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine. And Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all 8 his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid. Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said 9 unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and wherein have I sinned against thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What 10 sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? And Abraham 11 said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. And moreover she is 12 indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife: and it came to pass, 13

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7 **he is a prophet.** This is the first occurrence of the word (*nabhi*) which figures so largely in the O.T. It literally means "to pour forth." A prophet is not primarily a foreteller of the future, but one who pours forth oracles from God. He is one who stands in special and intimate relations with God, receives messages from Him and declares them with authority. Hence, as in this passage, his intercession with God was deemed to be especially powerful.

11 **Because I thought,** etc. Abraham had thoroughly misjudged his heathen neighbours. They stand in strong contrast to the men of Sodom. Indeed they compare very favourably with Abraham himself. Abimelech respects his conscience, and appeals to it (*v.* 5). His reproof of Abraham is vigorous: he even shows some contempt for a husband and wife who could prevaricate, and run the risk of great sin both for themselves and for others, in order to ensure their own personal safety.

12 **she is indeed my sister.** Cp. xii. 13.

when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my
14 brother. And Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and menservants and womenservants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored
15 him Sarah his wife. And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is
16 before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee. And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, [1]it is for thee a covering of the eyes to all that are with thee; and [2]in respect of all thou art righted.
17 And Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare
18 children. For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife.

[1] Or, *he.*
[2] Or, *before all* men.

CHAPTER XX

Questions

1. What evidences of Canaanite morality are seen in this story of Abimelech?

2. Explain "prophet"; "covering of the eyes."

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13 **when God caused me to wander.** Here it has been noted that the verb is in the plural (as in some cases elsewhere) corresponding with the plural noun *Elohim*. (See notes on i. 1, 26.)

16 **I have given thy brother,** etc. There is a touch of satire in calling Abraham Sarah's brother. Abimelech had already given Abraham a large gift (*v.* 14) as a compensation to an injured husband. He also apparently gives an additional gift of money as a compensation to a blood-relation.

pieces of silver. There was no coined money, and the standard was simply of weight. The ordinary unit was the *shekel* (="weight"). The present-day value is really impossible to estimate (£135-£140 has been suggested). The price of a slave was thirty pieces of silver (Exod. xxi. 32), so Abimelech's gift was certainly munificent.

it is for thee a covering of the eyes. Gifts or bribes are often spoken

Isaac and Ishmael (xxi. 1-21)

And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did 1
unto Sarah as he had spoken. And Sarah conceived, and bare 2
Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had
spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was 3
born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. And Abraham 4
circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had
commanded him. And Abraham was an hundred years old, 5
when his son Isaac was born unto him. And Sarah said, God hath 6
[1]made me to laugh; every one that heareth will laugh
with me. And she said, Who would have said unto 7
Abraham, that Sarah should give children suck? for
I have borne him a son in his old age.

[1] Or, *prepared laughter for me.*

And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a 8
great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw 9
the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had borne unto

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of as "covering the eyes," i.e. they make the recipients ignore, or blind themselves to, the facts which the money is meant to atone for. (Cp. 1 Sam. xii. 3; Job ix. 24.) Abimelech's money will blot out the recollection of the indignity which Sarah has received.

xxi. 6 **God hath made me to laugh.** Sarah's first laughter had been that of unbelief and derision (xviii. 12-15). Now she recognises the work of God, who has given her cause to laugh for joy, a joy in which all who hear of it will join.

8 **and Abraham made a great feast.** It is still the custom in the East thus to celebrate the first great natural change in the bringing up of a child. The period seems to have lasted much longer than with us, even extending to three or four years (2 Macc. vii. 27).

9 **mocking.** It is impossible to say exactly what it was that roused Sarah's anger. The word *might* mean "laughing," though not necessarily in mockery. But more probably it simply means "playing." Sarah was made jealous at the sight, resenting any sort of equality between the two children. St. Paul (Gal. iv.) makes use of a Jewish tradition that Ishmael actually "persecuted" Isaac.

10 Abraham, [1]mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast
out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this
bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with
11 Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight on
12 account of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be
grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bond-
woman; in all that Sarah saith unto thee, hearken unto her voice;
13 for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the
14 bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. And
Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a
[2]bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it
on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away:
and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.
15 And the water in the bottle was spent, and she cast the child
16 under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over
against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said,

[1] Or, *playing.*

[2] Or, *skin.*

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10 **Cast out this bondwoman,** etc. The cruelty and heartlessness of this proceeding seems evident enough to us, though probably in that state of society which allowed slavery and polygamy it might not appear extraordinary. Nevertheless according to custom Ishmael ought to have been counted among the legitimate sons of Abraham (as in the case of Jacob's wives), and Abraham evidently was much attached to him and felt bitterly the prospect of sending him and his mother adrift (*v.* 11).

12 **Let it not be grievous in thy sight,** etc. We can only explain this as a Divine utterance on the grounds (1) that revelation is progressive, and men are only gradually taught in the O.T. the great principles of right conduct; (2) that God was using here, as elsewhere, the limited and imperfect ways of men for the working out of His own providence and purposes. The casting out of Hagar and Ishmael emphasised the calling and separation of Isaac and his descendants as the people of God. St. Paul in Gal. iv. sees in this story an implicit allegory of the contrast between the bondage of the Law of Moses and the liberty of Christians who are "the children of promise."

14 **and she departed,** etc. This pathetic and vivid description of the wandering and destitution of Hagar, like that in xvi., points the contrast between the cruelty of men and the all-seeing care and pity of God.

Let me not look upon the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept. And God heard the 17
voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift 18
up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of 19
water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad, and he grew; and he 20
dwelt in the wilderness, and [1]became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and 21
his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

[1] Or, *became, as he grew up, an archer.*

Abraham's Covenant with Abimelech (xxi. 22-34)

And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phicol 22
the captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest: now therefore swear unto me here by 23
God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with [2]my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned. And Abraham said, I will swear. And 24

[2] Or, *my offspring, nor with my posterity.*

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17 **And God heard**—the name "Ishmael" means "God heareth."

20 **and became an archer.** The Ishmaelites in later days were distinguished by their skill in archery (cp. Isa. xxi. 17).

21 **the wilderness of Paran**—the region to the south-west of Edom, mentioned in Num. x., xii., xiii. as passed through by the Israelites on their journey from Mt. Sinai northwards towards Canaan.

out of the land of Egypt. Hagar herself was an Egyptian. It was customary for parents to make the first overtures for the marriage of their children.

22 **Abimelech**—no doubt the Abimelech of xx., who now appears as so impressed by the marks of God's blessing upon Abraham that he desires to make a perpetual alliance with him. There is perhaps

25 Abraham reproved Abimelech because of the well of water, which
26 Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. And Abimelech
said, I know not who hath done this thing: neither didst thou
27 tell me, neither yet heard I of it, but to-day. And Abraham took
sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech; and they two
28 made a covenant. And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the
29 flock by themselves. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What
mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves?
30 And he said, These seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand,
that it may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well.
31 Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba; because there they
32 sware both of them. So they made a covenant at Beer-sheba:
and Abimelech rose up, and Phicol the captain of his host, and
33 they returned into the land of the Philistines. And *Abraham*
planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and called there on the

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an intimation in this narrative of the future calling of the Gentiles into the people of God. It was the first beginnings of the fulfilment of the promise of xii. 3. (Cp. Zech. viii. 23.)

25 **the well of water**—this is the well of Beer-sheba, round the possession of which the story centres, and which was thought to have derived its name from this event. There is a duplicate account in xxvi. 28-33, which ascribes the digging of the well and the compact with Abimelech to Isaac.

28 **seven ewe lambs.** These were in addition to the covenant gifts of *v.* 27, and specially symbolised Abraham's right to the well, as having digged it.

31 **Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba,** i.e. "well of the oath," though another possible derivation is "well of seven," in allusion perhaps to the seven lambs of witness. Beer-sheba was counted the extreme southern limit of Canaan, and was considered a "holy place," with a shrine which Amos denounces (Amos v. 5, viii. 14). There are still several wells there, some of which have recently been reopened.

32 **the land of the Philistines,** i.e. the district which in later days was occupied by the Philistines.

33 **the LORD, the everlasting God** (*El-olam*). Perhaps this was the name of God among the people of Abimelech. Cp. the identification of Jehovah with *El-elyon* (xiv.).

name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. And Abraham sojourned 34
in the land of the Philistines many days.

CHAPTER XXI

Questions

1. Why was the name Isaac given to the son of Abraham and Sarah ?

2. What was the subsequent fate of Ishmael ?

3. How does St. Paul use the story of Hagar and Ishmael ?

4. Where is Beer-sheba ? What account is given here of the origin of the name ?

The Great Test of Abraham's Faith (xxii. 1-19)

And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove 1
Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham ; and he said, Here am I.

xxii. 1 **God did prove Abraham.** Abraham's characteristic faith is now put to the hardest possible test. He is bidden to do what not only contradicts his strongest human affections, but even appears to run contrary to the promises of God Himself. Nevertheless his complete trust in God triumphs and is rewarded. See notes below on *vv.* 2, 14, 15. The word " tempt " in A.V. is used in the older sense of " test " ; God never tempts men to evil, or with evil intent ; but He tries and strengthens a man's character by allowing him to undergo suffering and adversity, or by calling him to some decision which will show of what stuff he is made. Such moral testing is the inevitable discipline of human free-will, and the means of making progress, for

" Life is not as idle ore,
But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom
To shape and use." (*In Memoriam*, cxviii.)

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will
3 tell thee of. And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and
4 went unto the place of which God had told him. On the third
5 day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come
6 again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering,

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2 **the land of Moriah.** The district is unknown, but later ages identified this mountain spoken of with the eastern hill of Jerusalem on which the Temple stood (see 2 Chron. iii. 1).

offer him there for a burnt offering. Whatever personal anguish may have torn the heart of Abraham, he would probably not regard this dreadful command as outrageous and impossible. The sacrifice of the first-born was a widespread custom in the heathen world, and must have been familiar to him. It was a perversion of the right human instinct that the best of everything must be given to God, that no sacrifice can be too great to obtain His pardon and favour. (Cp. Micah vi. 6-7.) Under the Law of Moses all the first-born of man and beast were consecrated to Jehovah (Exod. xiii., xxii. 29, xxxiv. 19-20; Num. xviii. 15-17), though all except animals suitable for sacrifice were to be "redeemed." This institution certainly seems to point to a prehistoric practice of even human sacrifice.

The sequel of Abraham's sacrifice here showed that actual human sacrifice was not in accordance with God's will; and the prophets denounced it, though under the idolatrous kings of later time it was re-introduced, as an importation from heathen cults. See also Jephthah's vow and sacrifice (Judg. xi.).

It might seem inconceivable to us that such could ever be a Divine command; but we must remember that here, as elsewhere, God's revelation was gradual and progressive. It made use of current ideas and standards in order to lead men to higher ideas of God.

Abraham obeys the command in silence, without delay. No mention is made of his own feelings. (Cp. Wisd. x. 5.)

5 **and come again to you.** Either we must assume that Abraham said what he knew was false, or else that his faith was strong enough

and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and they went both of them together. And 7 Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And 8 Abraham said, God will [1]provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God 9 had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, 10 and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD 11 called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon 12 the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and 13 looked, and [2]behold, behind *him* a ram caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering

[1] Heb. *see for himself.*

[2] Or, according to many ancient authorities, *behold a* (Heb. *one*) *ram caught.*

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to believe that in some way Isaac would be preserved. This is the view taken in Heb. xi. 17-19.

8 **God will provide himself the lamb.** This again may be the expression of faith, but in any case it implies absolute surrender to the will of God. The words have naturally been recognised as an unconscious prophecy of the Sacrifice of Christ. Cp. the words of St. John Baptist (St. John i. 29 and 1 St. Peter i. 19-20). There is no allusion in the passage to any protest or struggle on the part of Isaac, though he must have understood for what purpose he was bound and laid on the altar. This further points the typical character of the sacrifice; the victim, like Christ Himself, was a willing one. (Cp. St. John x. 17-18.)

12 **for now I know that thou fearest God.** Abraham has not failed in the supreme test of faith and devotion to God. His willingness is accepted without the act of sacrifice. God's approval would seem to imply that He recognised the *motive* even in such sacrifices as the heathen offered, hideous and displeasing though they were in themselves.

14 in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of
that place [1]Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day,
In the mount of the LORD [2]it shall be provided.
15 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham a
16 second time out of heaven, and said, By myself
have I sworn, saith the LORD, because thou hast
done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son,
17 thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and
in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven,
and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall
18 possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the
nations of the earth [3]be blessed; because thou hast
19 obeyed my voice. So Abraham returned unto his
young men, and they rose up and went together to
Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.

[1] That is, *The* LORD *will see*, or, *provide.*
[2] Or, *he shall be seen.*
[3] Or, *bless themselves.*

Genealogy of Nahor (xxii. 20-24)

20 And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she also hath borne children unto

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13 in the stead of his son. Here again the typical character of the event is seen. God designed to substitute the great Sacrifice of His only Son (really a Sacrifice of Himself) for all the vain and imperfect sacrifices by which the ancient world recognised its guilt and its need of propitiation.

14 as it is said to this day. This is evidently a current proverb relating to the sacrifices offered in the Temple, "the mount of the LORD." It may have simply meant to those who used it that in the Temple God's eyes are specially open (see margin) to the needs of His people, and He will provide an answer to their prayers (cp. 1 Kings viii. 30-53). But a deeper meaning lies hidden in the saying. At Jerusalem God would provide the all-sufficient Sacrifice of His Son.

16 By myself have I sworn. As God had previously condescended to employ the ritual of a human covenant to assure Abraham of His promises (xv.), so here He employs the most solemn human way of attesting truth. Men swear by the Name of God; God swears by Himself. (See Heb. vi. 13-18.) This oath of God to Abraham is alluded to in the *Benedictus* (St. Luke i. 73, etc.) as finding its fulfilment in the Incarnation.

thy brother Nahor; Uz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and 21
Kemuel the father of Aram; and Chesed, and Hazo, and 22
Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel. And Bethuel begat Rebekah: 23
these eight did Milcah bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother. And 24
his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she also bare Tebah,
and Gaham, and Tahash, and Maacah.

CHAPTER XXII

Questions

1. Why did not Abraham regard the command to sacrifice Isaac as impossible?

2. Draw out the *typical* significance of the sacrifice of Isaac. Are there any hints in Scripture that this significance was recognised?

3. What references are there elsewhere in Scripture to the "oath" of Jehovah?

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xxii. 20 **thy brother Nahor.** Cp. xi. 27-29. This genealogy is introduced here evidently to prepare for the coming alliances between Isaac and Jacob and the family of their kindred in Syria. There is no explanation of the migration of Nahor from Ur of the Chaldees to the district north-east of Palestine.

It has been thought that the names of these children of Nahor really represent tribes rather than individuals.

21 **Uz**—**Buz** are the names of districts near Edom. See, e.g., Job i. 1, xxxii. 2.

Aram—the usual name for Syria. But see x. 23.

23 **Rebekah:** in this case an individual is clearly meant. There is no tribe or district known of this name, and Rebekah, the bride of Isaac in xxiv., and the mother of Jacob and Esau, is a very definite personality.

Death and Burial of Sarah (xxiii.)

1 And the life of Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty
2 years: these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died
in Kiriath-arba (the same is Hebron), in the land of Canaan: and
3 Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her. And
Abraham rose up from before his dead, and spake unto the children
4 of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give
me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my
5 dead out of my sight. And the children of Heth
6 answered Abraham, saying unto him, Hear us, my
lord: thou art [1]a mighty prince among us: in the

[1] Heb. *a prince of God.*

xxiii. This incident of the purchase of a family burying-place from the inhabitants of Canaan again illustrates the faith of Abraham. To buy a grave in a foreign land to which he would have no right of access, except by favour of the Canaanites, might seem a futile proceeding. But the possession of the field at Machpelah and its cave was a sign that the land would ultimately belong to his descendants. He bought it, doubtless, in hope of the fulfilment of the promise. A similar act of faith is recorded of Jeremiah, who bought with legal formalities a field during the siege of Jerusalem though the land was actually in the possession of the invading Chaldeans (Jer. xxxii.).

1 **an hundred and seven and twenty years.** The only instance in Scripture of the age of a woman being stated at her death. This passage is from P, the priestly document, in which such matters were carefully recorded.

2 **Kiriath-arba.** This name is explained in Josh. xiv. 15 as meaning "the city of Arba," a local chieftain of the giant race of the Anakim. But it more probably meant originally "city of four," perhaps in allusion to some confederacy of four families or tribes.

3 **the children of Heth.** Cp. x. 15. These were the Hittites. Perhaps a branch of the great Hittite nation of the north of Palestine had settled at Hebron. But the name Hittite seems to have been used later as a general term for the Canaanites (cp. Josh. i. 4). The inhabitants of Hebron are called Amorites in Josh. x. 5.

6 **a mighty prince.** See margin. The addition "of God" is often used in O.T. to convey the idea of extraordinary greatness or power, as, e.g., in Ps. lxxx. 10, "cedars of God" (R.V.).

choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold
from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.
And Abraham rose up, and bowed himself to the people of the 7
land, even to the children of Heth. And he communed with 8
them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out
of my sight, hear me, and intreat for me to Ephron the son of
Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, 9
which is in the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to
me in the midst of you for a possession of a buryingplace. Now 10
Ephron was sitting in the midst of the children of Heth: and
Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the
children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city,
saying, Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave 11
that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my
people give I it thee: bury thy dead. And Abraham bowed 12
himself down before the people of the land. And he spake unto 13
Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if
thou wilt, I pray thee, hear me: I will give the price of the field;
take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. And Ephron 14
answered Abraham, saying unto him, My lord, hearken unto me: 15
a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that

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in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead. This interview, which is dramatically described, illustrates the unchanging ways of Oriental ceremony and politeness. So, too, the actual sale (8-16) is conducted in the style still usual in the East—the deprecation at first of any price and the offer of the property as a gift, then the suggestion that the price is of no importance; all done leisurely and with ceremony, leading by degrees to the transaction on which both parties have already made up their minds—all this is quite in character.

9 **the cave of Machpelah.** See note on 17. Machpelah was the name of the district rather than of the actual cave, though the LXX and the Vulgate translate Machpelah as meaning "a double cave."

10 **in the audience of the children of Heth,** etc. In the absence of lawyers, and in a time when memory rather than written documents was relied on, the presence of witnesses and of as large a number as possible was all-important.

15 **four hundred shekels of silver.** See xx. 16. The value has been estimated at about £55.

16 betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead. And Abraham
hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the
silver, which he had named in the audience of the children of Heth,
four hundred shekels of silver, current *money* with the merchant.
17 So the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before
Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees
that were in the field, that were in all the border thereof round
18 about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession in the
presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the
19 gate of his city. And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife
in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre (the same is
20 Hebron), in the land of Canaan. And the field, and the cave that
is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a
buryingplace by the children of Heth.

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16 **current money with the merchant.** The phrase seems to imply that the money was not a mere weight of silver, but such pieces of silver, either in bars or rings, as were commonly used in commercial transactions before the days of coined money.

17 **made sure.** The cave of Machpelah is not mentioned in Scripture after Genesis, but without doubt the tradition was continuous, and the spot was always venerated. It was enclosed with massive walls, perhaps as far back as the days of the early kings. In the time of the Crusades a church was erected above it, of which there are still remains. It is counted one of the most sacred places of Mohammedanism, and a mosque now covers it, which is guarded with the greatest jealousy. King Edward VII., when Prince of Wales, with his suite (including Dean Stanley), was allowed, in 1862, to enter the upper shrine, but not the actual burial cave beneath, which has probably not been entered for many centuries, and even the way into it is a matter of dispute. The upper building has cenotaphs of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah, which are supposed to stand above the place where the bodies actually lie beneath. There is also a tomb of Joseph, whose body, according to a later tradition, was transferred there from its original resting-place at Shechem. The Mohammedans regard these tombs of the patriarchs with great terror, and imagine that the wrath of the dead, especially, curiously enough, of Isaac, would break out upon any intruder. There is no reasonable doubt that the bones of the patriarchs and their wives do still rest beneath the floor of the mosque; the actual mummy of Jacob may

CHAPTER XXIII

Questions

1. Who were the children of Heth ?

2. What is the importance of Abraham's purchase of a burying-place ?

3. What do you know of the subsequent history of the cave of Machpelah ?

Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah (xxiv.)

And Abraham was old, *and* well stricken in age : and the LORD 1
had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto 2
his servant, the elder of his house, that ruled over all that he had,
Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh : and I will make thee 3
swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth,

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still be there intact, as in Egyptian tombs. See Stanley, *Lectures on the Jewish Church*, App. I.

xxiv. This picturesque and beautiful narrative (derived from J) describes the steps taken to secure a bride for Isaac from his father's kin, and so prevent any admixture between the sacred family and the surrounding Canaanites (cp. xxvi. 34, 35). "This chapter gives one of the most vivid descriptions of the unchanging features of Oriental life to be found in O.T." (Ryle).

2 **his servant.** It is generally assumed that this was the Eliezer of xv. 2, a trusted servant who acted as steward over the large household and possessions of Abraham.

thy hand under my thigh. Cp. xlvii. 29. This was evidently a traditional sign of a very solemn oath. It is said that a similar custom is found among the aborigines of Australia.

3 **the LORD, the God of heaven,** etc. In the most definite language Abraham here asserts that Jehovah is the universal Lord, no mere

that thou shalt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the
4 Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my
country, and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.
5 And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will
not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring
6 thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? And
Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my
7 son thither again. The LORD, the God of heaven, that took me
from my father's house, and from the land of my nativity, and
that spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy
seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and
8 thou shalt take a wife for my son from thence. And if the woman
be not willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this
my oath; only thou shalt not bring my son thither again.
9 And the servant put his hand under the thigh of
Abraham his master, and sware to him concern-
10 ing this matter. And the servant took ten camels,
of the camels of his master, and departed;
[1]having all goodly things of his master's in his hand:
and he arose, and went to [2]Mesopotamia, unto the
11 city of Nahor. And he made the camels to kneel
down without the city by the well of water at the
time of evening, the time that women go out to draw
12 water. And he said, O LORD, the God of my master

[1] Or, *for all the goods of his master were in his hand.*
[2] Heb. *Aram-naharaim,* that is, *Aram of the two rivers.*

tribal deity (cp. xviii. 25). This belief is the key to the patriarch's insistence that a wife must not be taken from the Canaanites. He was not actuated by mere clannishness or exclusiveness. He regarded his faith in Jehovah as a sacred trust to be preserved in his family at all costs. A marriage with the Canaanites would mean a mixture of religions.

6 **Beware,** etc. This warning, repeated in *v.* 8, points, no doubt, to Abraham's firm faith that Canaan was to be the future home of his family. He had been called to separate himself definitely from the early settlements of his race, and there must be no looking back. (Cp. Heb. xi. 15.)

10 **Mesopotamia,** i.e. "the land between the rivers," is the usual Greek rendering of *Aram-naharaim* (margin)—the dual form of the

Abraham, send me, I pray thee, good speed this day, and
shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand 13
by the fountain of water; and the daughters of the men
of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to 14
pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy
pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say,
Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she
that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall
I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master. And it 15
came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah
came out, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife
of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.
And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither 16
had any man known her: and she went down to the fountain,
and filled her pitcher, and came up. And the servant ran to meet 17
her, and said, Give me to drink, I pray thee, a little water of thy
pitcher. And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let 18
down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when 19
she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw for thy camels
also, until they have done drinking. And she hasted, and emptied 20
her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw,
and drew for all his camels. And the man looked stedfastly on 21

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word points either as usually understood to the Euphrates and the Tigris, or perhaps here the Euphrates and its tributary the Khabour, which enclose the district called Paddan-aram, in which Haran is situated, **the city of Nahor** (xxvii. 43, etc.).

12 **I pray thee,** etc. This is one of the earliest examples of devout prayer to the unseen Jehovah. The servant does not seek any method of divination, and he is not given any outward vision. He simply recognises the omnipresence and the good-will of his master's God, and invokes His guidance in silent prayer (*v.* 45).

14 **and let it come to pass,** etc. The test which the man ventures to suggest in his prayer was no arbitrary one. For a girl to offer not merely to draw water for a wayfarer, but to undertake the somewhat laborious task of drawing for ten thirsty camels, would mark her out as a woman of character and of unusual good nature. Cp. the description of a good woman in Prov. xxxi. 26, " the law of kindness is on her tongue."

her; holding his peace, to know whether the LORD had made his
22 journey prosperous or not. And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden ring of [1]half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her
23 hands of ten shekels weight of gold; and said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee. Is there
24 room in thy father's house for us to lodge in? And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah,
25 which she bare unto Nahor. She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.
26 And the man bowed his head, and worshipped the LORD. And he
27 said, Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who hath not forsaken his mercy and his truth toward my master: as for me, the LORD hath led me in the way to the house of my
28 master's brethren. And the damsel ran, and told her mother's
29 house according to these words. And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man,
30 unto the fountain. And it came to pass, when he saw the ring, and the bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels
31 at the fountain. And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house,
32 and room for the camels. And the man came into the house, and he ungirded the camels; and he gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the men's feet that
33 were with him. And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said,

[1] Heb. *a beka.* See Ex. xxxviii. 26.

22 **a golden ring.** It appears from *v.* 47 that this was a nose-ring, a favourite decoration with Eastern women. This and the bracelets were valuable presents, and we see from *v.* 30 how they impressed Laban.

31 **thou blessed of the LORD.** Laban, like Abraham, was a worshipper of Jehovah, though in a primitive and idolatrous way, as appears from the allusions to his "teraphim" in xxxi. He does not appear as a very pleasant character: his effusive hospitality was called out by the splendour of the stranger's gifts, and he is seen in his later dealings with Jacob as sly and grasping.

Speak on. And he said, I am Abraham's servant. And the 34
LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: 35
and he hath given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and
menservants and maidservants, and camels and asses. And 36
Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was
old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath. And my 37
master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife for my
son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell:
but thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and 38
take a wife for my son. And I said unto my master, Peradventure 39
the woman will not follow me. And he said unto me, The LORD, 40
before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper
thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred,
and of my father's house: then shalt thou be clear from my oath, 41
when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give her not to thee,
thou shalt be clear from my oath. And I came this day unto the 42
fountain, and said, O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if
now thou do prosper my way which I go: behold, I stand by the 43
fountain of water; and let it come to pass, that the maiden which
cometh forth to draw, to whom I shall say, Give me, I pray thee,
a little water of thy pitcher to drink; and she shall say to me, 44
Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the
same be the woman whom the LORD hath appointed for my
master's son. And before I had done speaking in mine heart, 45
behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder;
and she went down unto the fountain, and drew: and I said unto
her, Let me drink, I pray thee. And she made haste, and 46
let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I
will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made
the camels drink also. And I asked her, and said, Whose 47
daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel,
Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the ring
upon her nose, and the bracelets upon her hands. And I bowed 48
my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the
God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way
to take my master's brother's daughter for his son. And now 49
if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if

not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.
50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing pro-
ceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.
51 Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be
52 thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken. And it came
to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he
53 bowed himself down to the earth unto the LORD. And the
servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and
raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother
54 and to her mother precious things. And they did eat and drink,
he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and
they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto
55 my master. And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel
abide with us *a few* days, at the least ten; after that she shall go.
56 And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath
prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master.
57 And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth.
58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with
59 this man? And she said, I will go. And they sent away
Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and

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49 **that I may turn,** etc. Probably a colloquial phrase meaning "that I may be able to decide what to do next."

50 **Bethuel**—the father of Laban and Rebekah here appears for the first time. The officious Laban takes the lead. His father seems superseded.

we cannot speak unto thee bad or good, i.e. we have no power either to refuse or consent; the matter has been decided for us: it is a clear case of Divine guidance and appointment. Rebekah is apparently not asked, though in *v.* 58 the decision is left to her whether she will start at once or stay longer with her family.

53 **And the servant brought forth jewels,** etc. Marriage gifts were anciently given to the bride's family, and were of obligation: probably a relic of an earlier custom still in which the bride was actually bought of her parents. Abraham's servant has come provided with such presents. The bride has her share, but her brother and mother—again her father is left out—instead of paying a dowry, are themselves enriched.

59 **her nurse**—her name was Deborah (xxxv. 8).

his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Our 60
sister, be thou *the mother* of thousands of ten thousands, and let
thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them. And 61
Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels,
and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went
his way. And Isaac came [1]from the way of Beer- 62
lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the land of the South.
And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the 63
eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and,
behold, there were camels coming. And Rebekah lifted up her 64
eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. And 65
she said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the
field to meet us? And the servant said, It is my master: and
she took her veil, and covered herself. And the servant told 66
Isaac all the things that he had done. And Isaac brought her 67
into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became
his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his
mother's death.

[1] The Sept. has, *through the wilderness.*

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60 **And they blessed Rebekah.** This poetical blessing invokes upon Rebekah the characteristic temporal gifts which were desired in that early age—a numerous family (cp. Ps. xlv. 16) and victory over enemies. The **gate** was the key of a fortified city; hence to "speak with one's enemies in the gate" is to fight with them for its possession; to "possess the gate" is to prove oneself the master.

62 **Beer-lahai-roi . . . the South.** See notes on xvi. 14 and xii. 9, and cp. xxv. 11.

63 **to meditate**—the meaning of the word is uncertain. It occurs in the Psalms, and may refer to prayer or to sorrowful thought (cp. *v.* 67).

64 **she lighted off the camel.** This was a usual sign of respect (see Josh. xv. 18; 1 Sam. xxv. 23). With the same motive the bride veils herself in *v.* 65. This is still an Eastern custom: it was usual among ancient peoples—cp. the Latin *nubo*, to veil oneself. The bridal veil indeed still is used, though probably the motive is somewhat different.

67 **his mother Sarah's tent.** There is no mention of Abraham, and it is generally thought that he had died during the absence of his servant, though his death is not recorded till later.

and he loved her. Isaac and Rebekah are the great O.T. example

CHAPTER XXIV

Questions

1. Where was a wife for Isaac sought, and why ?

2. Describe the prayer of Abraham's servant and its fulfilment.

3. How does this chapter illustrate patriarchal family life and customs ?

Abraham's Descendants and his Death (xxv. 1-18)

1 And Abraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah.
2 And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian,

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of faithful monogamy, and as such are commemorated in the marriage service.

xxv. 1 **Keturah.** Nothing further is known of this second wife. Probably the passage is not in chronological order, for the death of Abraham seems to be assumed in the previous chapter. The children of Keturah appears rather to be the names of tribes than of individuals (cp. the plural form in *v.* 3). They represent various Arab tribes to the east of Palestine, who were believed to be connected with the Israelites through a common ancestor. Keturah (whose name means "frankincense") cannot have been one of the Canaanite women : Jewish tradition made her one of Abraham's household servants. In 1 Chron. i. 32 she is called "Abraham's concubine," i.e. on the same level as Hagar. See also *v.* 6 below.

2 **Midian**—the name of a very numerous and well-known Eastern people. They dwelt mostly on the east of the gulf of Akaba, but in Exod. ii. 15, iii. 1 some of them appear in the Sinaitic peninsula. In Num. xxii. they are associated with the Moabites. Their great appearance in O.T. history is in Judg. vi.-viii., where their raids into Palestine are graphically described, and their dramatic discomfiture and total rout by the hero Gideon, events that became proverbial in later times. (Cp. Isa. ix. 4 ; Ps. lxxxiii. 11.)

Shuah—perhaps the tribe of the friend of Job, "Bildad the Shuhite."

and Ishbak, and Shuah. And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. 3
And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and
Leummim. And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and 4
Hanoch, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of
Keturah. And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. But 5
unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham 6
gave gifts; and he sent them away from Isaac his son, while he
yet lived, eastward, unto the east country. And these are the 7
days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred
threescore and fifteen years. And Abraham gave up the ghost, 8
and died in a good old age, an old man, and full *of years*; and was
gathered to his people. And Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried 9
him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of
Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; the field which Abra- 10
ham purchased of the children of Heth: there was Abraham buried,
and Sarah his wife. And it came to pass after the death of 11
Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son; and Isaac dwelt by
Beer-lahai-roi.

Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom 12

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3 **Sheba, and Dedan.** See x. 7.

4 **Ephah.** See Isa. lx. 6.

6 **the concubines.** This apparently means Hagar and Keturah—no others are recorded. Ishmael must therefore have shared ultimately in their "gifts," in spite of the mean treatment of his mother and himself in xxi.

9 **And Isaac and Ishmael his sons.** In pleasing relief to the story of the exile of Ishmael, we find him and his favoured half-brother reunited, at least for the moment, in paying the last offices to their father:

> "There let them linger for a little while—
> Those brothers sunder'd long and far away,—
> Merging in sacred tears what space they may,
> The heavenly laughter and the mocking smile."
>
> J. ALEXANDER.

The funeral of an Arab sheik is attended by a great concourse, the women arranged in circles, who chant a dirge, varied with outbursts of shrieking, and the men standing apart.

Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham:
13 and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names,
according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth;
14 and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, and Mishma, and Dumah,
15 and Massa; Hadad, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah:
16 these are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their
villages, and by their encampments; twelve princes according to
17 their nations. And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an
hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost
18 and died; and was gathered unto his people. And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: he [1]abode [2]in the presence of all his brethren.

[1] Or, *settled.* Heb. *fell.*
[2] Or, *over against.*

CHAPTER XXV. 1-18

Questions

What is stated here about the other descendants of Abraham? How are we to understand it?

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13 **the sons of Ishmael.** These names again represent tribes rather than individuals, which dwelt to the north-east of the descendants of Keturah. Some of them cannot now be identified.

Nebaioth; and Kedar. Cp. Isa. lx. 7. Kedar is mentioned several times in O.T.: as tent-dwellers in Cant. i. 5, as unpleasant neighbours in Ps. cxx. 5, and as spoiled by the Babylonians in Jer. xlix. 28, etc.

14 **Dumah.** Cp. Isa. xxi. 11.

15 **Jetur.** Cp. 1 Chron. v. 19; generally identified with the Ituraeans.

16 **by their villages, and by their encampments.** Some of these tribesmen were settled in villages (cp. Isa. xlii. 11): others were simply nomads, dwelling in tents.

18 **Havilah unto Shur.** See x. 29, xvi. 7. **Assyria**—as this is quite in the wrong direction, some corruption in the text is probable.

in the presence of all his brethren. See note on xvi. 12.

Jacob and Esau (xxv. 19-34)

And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac: and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the [1]Syrian of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the [1]Syrian, to be his wife. And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, [2]wherefore do I live? And she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said unto her,

19 20 21 22 23

[1] Heb. *Aramean.*

[2] Or, *wherefore am I thus?*

Two nations are in thy womb,
And two peoples shall be separated even from thy bowels:
And the one people shall be stronger than the other people;
And the elder shall serve the younger.

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xxv. 20 **Paddan-aram,** probably="the field of Aram," the district east of the Euphrates, in which Haran was situated.

21 **the LORD was intreated of him,** i.e. answered his prayer. The continuance of Abraham's family, like its beginning in Isaac, was supernatural, the gift of God's grace.

22 **wherefore do I live?** The words of Rebekah are somewhat obscure, but they express her anguish and fear for the future.

And she went to inquire of the LORD. This must allude to some recognised method of divination. But the method is unknown. There may have been some person who had the gift of prophecy, to whom Rebekah had recourse. This gift may have been exercised through dreams or visions, at some shrine of Jehovah.

23 **And the LORD said unto her.** The Divine oracle is given as usual in a poetical form, as chanted by the prophet or soothsayer. It falls into parallels, as in Hebrew poetry generally. It foretells that the two children who are to be born will be the ancestors of two nations, the Israelites and the Edomites, and hints that the prenatal struggle which had distressed Rebekah is an omen of future strife between the two, and of the ultimate victory of the younger, i.e. Israel. Cp. Isaac's prophecy in xxvii. with the notes on *v.* 40.

24 And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there
25 were twins in her womb. And the first came forth [1]red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called
26 his name Esau. And after that came forth his brother, and his hand had hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called [2]Jacob: and Isaac was threescore
27 years old when she bare them. And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field;
28 and Jacob was a [3]plain man, dwelling in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison:

[1] Or, *ruddy.*
[2] That is, *One that takes by the heel,* or *supplants.*
[3] Or, *quiet*; or, *harmless.* Heb. *perfect.*

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25 **red**—referring probably to the complexion rather than to the hair.

Esau—the etymology is uncertain, though the name was apparently given because of the hairiness of the infant.

26 **his name was called Jacob.** See margin. The name implies a crafty and overreaching disposition, seen, it was thought, in the first gesture of the infant, and illustrated afterwards in Jacob's conduct towards Esau, and indeed in the history of his descendants in all ages. Our Lord speaks of Nathaniel as an Israelite who was free from this sort of "guile" (St. John i. 47). Jacob's name was changed later to the more honourable one of "Israel" (xxxii. 28).

27 **a cunning hunter,** i.e. skilful, the older meaning of the word, connected with "ken," to know.

a plain man. The margin illustrates the meaning, though the literal Hebrew meaning "perfect" is difficult to explain. It may be used in the general sense of well-conducted; Jacob was one who stayed at home and discharged his duties in an orderly manner, unlike the restless and roving Esau. Cp. Tennyson's description of Telemachus in *Ulysses*:—

> "Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
> Of common duties, decent not to fail
> In offices of tenderness."

But beneath the surface Jacob had his ambitions and was waiting for his opportunity. Perhaps he knew of the mysterious oracle which had preceded his birth.

29 **And Jacob sod pottage.** "Sod" is the old English past tense of the verb "seethe," to boil. This "pottage" was a porridge of boiled red lentils (*v.* 34), such as is still a common food in the East.

and Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob sod pottage: and 29
Esau came in from the field, and he was faint: and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with 30
[1]that same red *pottage*; for I am faint: therefore was his name called [2]Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this 31
day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at 32
the point to die: and what profit shall the birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me [3]this day; 33
and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; 34
and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: so Esau despised his birthright.

[1] Heb. *the red* pottage, *this red* pottage.
[2] That is, *Red.*
[3] Or, *first of all.*

CHAPTER XXV. 19-34

Questions

1. What prediction was made about the sons of Rebekah? How was it fulfilled?

2. What was the "birthright"?

3. How is the selling of the birthright alluded to elsewhere in Scripture?

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31 **Sell me this day thy birthright.** On this conduct of Jacob's see notes on xxvii. He took advantage of his brother's hunger and his heedless, unthinking, passionate disposition to drive a bargain with him for the possession of the birthright. The birthright usually carried with it the headship of the family, a larger portion of the inheritance, and in early times the family priesthood. But in the family of Abraham the birthright was peculiarly sacred, owing to the Divine call of that family, its privileges, and its consecration to a great purpose of God. Jacob may have realised something of this, but Esau certainly did not.

34 **so Esau despised his birthright.** See the remarkable comment on this in Heb. xii. 16, 17, where Esau is described as "profane," i.e. as one who puts no difference between what is sacred and what is common. He was led by the passion of the moment, and preferred the gratifying

Isaac and Abimelech (xxvi.)

1 And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that
was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech
2 king of the Philistines unto Gerar. And the LORD appeared unto
him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which
3 I shall tell thee of: sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee,
and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give
all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I sware unto
4 Abraham thy father; and I will multiply thy seed as the stars
of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these lands; and in thy
seed shall all the nations of the earth [1]be blessed;
5 because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my
charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.
6 And Isaac dwelt in Gerar: and the men of the place asked him
7 of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say,

[1] Or, *bless themselves.*

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of his hunger to a higher and more spiritual privilege. Afterwards "he sought it (the birthright) diligently with tears" (xxvii. 38), but found "no place of repentance," i.e. no chance of changing his mind. Esau's act, the result of his own character, was one of those irrevocable decisions which alter a man's destiny, though done in a moment.

xxvi. The incidents of this chapter, which are practically all that is recorded of the life of Isaac, bear a considerable resemblance to events in Abraham's life (xx., xxi.). The latter were derived from E, while this narrative comes from J. It is possible, therefore, that we have here different traditions of the same event: but, as previously remarked, it is not safe to assume that father and son could not have had much the same experiences.

1 **Abimelech king of the Philistines.** If the incidents are different, this must probably have been a successor of Abraham's Abimelech. The title may well have been hereditary. There were no Philistines in Canaan at this time, so the name is used by anticipation by the later compiler to describe the district as *he* knew it.

5 **my commandments,** etc. This accumulation of words appropriate to a written law, which Abraham did not possess, evidently dates from a later period, and is in the style of Deuteronomy. The later scribes delighted in such expressions of reverence for the Law, as we see in the repetitions of Ps. cxix.

My wife; lest, *said he*, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah: because she was fair to look upon. And it came to pass, 8 when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife. And Abimelech called Isaac, 9 and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her. And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done 10 unto us? one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us. And 11 Abimelech charged all the people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death. And Isaac sowed in 12 that land, and found in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him. And the man waxed great, and grew more and 13 more until he became very great: and he had possessions of flocks, 14 and possessions of herds, and a great household: and the Philistines envied him. Now all the wells which his father's servants 15 had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth. And Abimelech said 16

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8 **Isaac was sporting,** etc. Curiously enough the word is the same that is used in xxi. 9 of Ishmael's "mockery" (see note). Here it probably refers to the natural caresses which a husband might give to a wife.

10 **guiltiness.** As in the previous incident, the sin of adultery was evidently regarded very seriously by the people of Gerar, and as a crime that might bring retribution on the whole community. Isaac appears in this story even more unfavourably than Abraham. Rebekah could not in any sense be described as a "sister." And he expresses quite bluntly his own selfish cowardice.

12 **And Isaac sowed in that land.** The first mention of agriculture among the patriarchs. Isaac, in accordance with his character, tends to cease from the roving, pastoral life, and to settle down in some favourable locality where he can combine successful farming with the tendance of his herds and flocks.

15 **the Philistines had stopped them.** In the waterless district of the south of Palestine wells were an absolute necessity for cattle, and the rival herdmen took the most effective method of ruining Isaac or driving him out.

unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.
17 And Isaac departed thence, and encamped in the valley of Gerar,
18 and dwelt there. And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had
19 called them. And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and
20 found there a well of [1]springing water. And the herdmen of Gerar strove with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well
21 [2]Esek; because they contended with him. And they digged another well, and they strove for that also:
22 and he called the name of it [3]Sitnah. And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it [4]Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

[1] Heb. *living.*
[2] That is, *Contention.*
[3] That is, *Enmity.*
[4] That is, *Broad places*, or, *Room.*

23 And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. And the LORD
24 appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless
25 thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a
26 well. Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath
27 his friend, and Phicol the captain of his host. And Isaac said unto him, Wherefore are ye come unto me, seeing ye hate me, and have
28 sent me away from you? And they said, We saw plainly that the

17 **the valley of Gerar.** The ruins of Gerar, south of Gaza, are on the east bank of a long valley running up to Beer-sheba. These valleys, or *wadys* as they are now called, are usually more or less dry in the summer; but by digging in the bed of the stream, water can be obtained.

26 **Then Abimelech went to him.** Cp. the similar meeting in xxi. 22, etc., where also the king is accompanied by a Phicol, his commander-in-chief. Ahuzzath is a new figure: the king's *friend* was apparently something of a regular office, chief counsellor or prime minister (cp. 2 Sam. xv. 37; 1 Kings iv. 5).

28 **We saw plainly that the LORD was with thee.** The Canaanites

LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there now be an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; that thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched 29
thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the LORD. And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. And they 30
rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another: and 31
Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. And 32
it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him,

We have found water. And he called it [1]Shibah: 33
therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.

[1] See ch. xxi. 31.

And when Esau was forty years old he took to wife Judith 34
the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath
the daughter of Elon the Hittite: and they were [2]a 35
grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

[2] Heb. *bitterness of spirit.*

CHAPTER XXVI

Questions

1. What do you understand by the references to the "Philistines" in this chapter?

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recognise Jehovah, not necessarily as their own God, or as universal Lord, but as the tutelary God of Isaac who had shown His power and favour in the evident prosperity of His servant.

29 **nothing but good.** This scarcely agrees with the conduct of the jealous herdmen who had destroyed Isaac's wells. Abimelech and his officers intend, for politic reasons, to disown their actions. Isaac was too powerful to make an enemy of.

33 **And he called it Shibah,** etc. This is a second account of the origin of the name of the famous well (cp. xxi. 31), and certainly suggests that the two stories may refer to the same event.

34 **he took to wife,** etc. Esau again shows his heedlessness of the religious sacredness and separation of his family. But see xxviii. 6-9. On the question of what is meant by Hittite see note on xxiii. 3.

2. Compare this incident of Isaac's denial of his wife with the two previous parallels.

3. Describe the controversy about the wells of water between Isaac's men and the "Philistines."

4. What Covenant was made between Isaac and Abimelech ?

Isaac blesses Jacob and Esau (xxvii. 1-45)

1 And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were
dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his elder son, and said
2 unto him, My son : and he said unto him, Here am I. And he
said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death.
3 Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy
4 bow, and go out to the field, and take me venison ; and make me
savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat ;
5 that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebekah heard
when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field
6 to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto
Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau
7 thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury

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xxvii. On the subject of this dramatic chapter see note on p. 142.

4 **that my soul may bless thee.** Isaac probably knew nothing of the sale of the birthright ; and he ignores the early oracle of Jehovah (xxv. 23). He evidently regards Esau as entitled to the special blessing of the first-born. Great importance was attached to this, as it was held to be of the nature of prophecy, or even "sacramental," as conferring the gifts it foretold (cp. *v.* 37). It was a blessing "before the LORD" (*v.* 7), i.e. with religious sanctions (cp. Heb. xi. 20). It may seem strange that Isaac should require a tasty meal before he gave this sacred utterance. But prophets are human, and man's body and soul strangely interact. It seems that prophecy was often assisted by something that influenced the prophets' emotions or feelings, especially music (which the professional prophets cultivated). (See 1 Sam. x. 5 ; 2 Kings iii. 15.)

meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that 8
which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from 9
thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: and thou shalt bring it 10
to thy father, that he may eat, so that he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau 11
my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. My father 12–
peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a
[1] Or, *mocker.* [1]deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not
a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me 13
be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and 14
his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. And 15
Rebekah took the goodly raiment of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger
son: and she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his 16
hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: and she gave the savoury 17
meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. And he came unto his father, and said, My father: 18
and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? And Jacob 19
said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac said unto his 20
son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God sent me good speed. And 21
Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And 22
Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his 23

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15 **the goodly raiment.** This probably only means the best clothes suitable for a festal occasion, though it has been thought that they were the garments of the family priesthood, which would belong to Esau as first-born son, and which his mother would naturally be taking care of, rather than his wives. The clothes were evidently perfumed (*v.* 27).

24 brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. And he said, Art thou
25 my very son Esau? And he said, I am. And he said, Bring it
near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may
bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and
26 he brought him wine, and he drank. And his father Isaac said
27 unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came
came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his
raiment, and blessed him, and said,

See, the smell of my son
Is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed:
28 And God give thee of the dew of heaven,
And of the fatness of the earth,
And plenty of corn and wine:
29 Let peoples 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 every one that blesseth thee.

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28 **And God give thee,** etc. The blessing invokes (1) temporal gifts of plenty and prosperity; (2) lordship over other nations; (3) supremacy among all members of the same family; (4) Divine favour which all men must acknowledge.

the dew of heaven. One of the greatest blessings in a dry and frequently rainless climate. The plenteous dews of the East cool the air and refresh vegetation.

plenty of corn and wine. A proverbial summary of the wealth of the tiller of the soil—"oil" is often added. The word used here for wine is translated by Driver "must," i.e. the new wine only partly fermented, which would be drunk at the harvest and vintage festivities.

29 **Let peoples serve thee**—referring to the future victories of Jacob's descendants over foreign nations, as fulfilled in the reigns of David and Solomon.

thy mother's sons, perhaps meaning the kindred peoples of Moab, Ammon, and Edom.

Cursed be every one, etc. The rhythmical blessing now rises to its highest thought, and seems to embrace the world, and thus has a

And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing 30
Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of
Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.
And he also made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father; 31
and he said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's
venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said 32
unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy first-
born, Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, 33
Who then is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and
I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him?
yea, *and* he shall be blessed. When Esau heard the words of his 34
father, he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and said
unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. And he 35
said, Thy brother came with guile, and hath taken away thy
blessing. And he said, Is not he rightly named 36
[1] See ch. xxv. 26. [1]Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times:
he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he
hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not
reserved a blessing for me? And Isaac answered and said unto 37
Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have
I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I
sustained him: and what then shall I do for thee, my son? And 38
Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father?
bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his
voice, and wept. And Isaac his father answered and said 39
unto him,

Behold, [2]of the fatness of the earth shall be thy
[2] Or, *away from.* dwelling,
And [2]of the dew of heaven from above;

Messianic bearing. Israel is the chosen of God, and on their attitude to him will depend the happiness of all men.

34 **an exceeding great and bitter cry.** Cp. Heb. xii. 17. These are not tears of penitence. Esau is not seeking "repentance" as commonly understood, but the blessing which he has lost, not merely through the duplicity of Jacob, but (though he does not realise it) through his own heedlessness.

39,40 **Behold of the fatness of the earth,** etc. The marginal transla-

40 And by thy sword shalt thou live, and thou shalt serve thy
brother;
And it shall come to pass when thou shalt break loose,
That thou shalt shake his yoke from off thy neck.
41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father
blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning
for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.
42 And the words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah; and
she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him,
Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself,
43 *purposing* to kill thee. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice;
44 and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; and tarry
45 with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; until
thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which
thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from
thence: why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?

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tion "away from" is generally preferred as giving the contrast to *v.* 28, and being more appropriate to the wild and mountainous country of Edom, inhabited by Esau's descendants. But on the other hand Edom is said to have had very fertile valleys and plenty of upland pasturage, and later Esau himself appears as very prosperous. So it is possible to retain the rendering "of" and regard it as really a supplementary blessing giving the descendants of Esau some share after all in the riches of the earth, although this was supplemented by raid and forage, living "by the sword."

40 **thou shalt serve thy brother.** The Edomites were subjugated by David (2 Sam. viii.; cp. Ps. lx. 8, 9), and remained tributary to Israel for some two centuries.

thou shalt shake his yoke, etc. The Edomites had a chequered history. They revolted in the reign of Jehoram of Judah (2 Kings viii. 20-22) and were again crushed by Amaziah (2 Chron. xxv. 11-14). Throughout the later history they showed bitter hostility against the Jews, rejoicing in their calamities (see the prophet Obadiah and Ps. cxxxvii.); and their very name became proverbial as the enemies of the people of God (cp. Isa. lxiii. 1-6). The Maccabaean princes crushed and humiliated them; but their final triumph came when Antipater, who was of Edomite descent, and his family of the Herods became rulers of Palestine in the first century B.C.

45 **bereaved of you both,** because Esau's own life would be in danger

CHAPTER XXVII. 1-45

Questions

1. What do you gather as to the character of Jacob from his conduct about his father's blessing ?

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by the custom of the blood-feud, by which another member of the same family was bound to kill the murderer. He would have to escape from the " avenger of blood " (2 Sam. xiv. 7).

The conduct of Rebekah and Jacob in this episode appears peculiarly mean and despicable, and tends to divert the reader's sympathy to Esau. All that can be said for Jacob is first that he was influenced by his mother, and secondly that his determination to get both birthright and blessing shows that he valued what Esau had despised, and believed perhaps that they were intended by God for himself. But if so he endeavoured to work out the Divine purpose by falsehood and cruel deceit, doing evil that good might come. It is remarkable that the writer of the narrative, while describing with singular vividness and pathos the infirmity of Isaac, the guile of Jacob, and the anguish of Esau, makes no moral comment on the matter, and writes no word of blame for Jacob. Possibly he may have felt that the events were Divinely overruled, and that God's purpose for Jacob had in some way to be accomplished. But it should also be noted that he leaves the history to tell its own story of the retribution which fell upon Jacob. He was henceforth a wanderer, and apparently never saw father or mother again. He toiled for Laban and got little thanks; he was cheated in his wife and in his wages. Undutiful children, Reuben, Simon, Levi, wrong him; all his sons cause him years of sorrow by their treatment of Joseph, whom he mourns for as dead. He confesses before Pharaoh that his days have been " few and evil." Even in his death he has to lie beside Leah, and not by his first love, Rachel. Throughout he has to suffer, as he had made others suffer, and learn by painful experience that God is master of his destiny, and not he himself.

" Many have been the troubles of my life ;
Sins in the field and sorrows in the tent ;
In mine own household, anguish and despair,
And gall and wormwood mingled with my love."

CLOUGH.

2. What special importance attached to this blessing ?

3. Compare the blessings given to Jacob and Esau in the light of later history.

Jacob's Exile and his Vision (xxvii. 46–xxviii.)

46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of
the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of
xxviii Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good shall
1 my life do me? And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and
charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of
2 the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house
of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence
of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.
3 And [1]God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, [1] Heb. *El Shaddai.*
and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a company
4 of peoples; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and
to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land of thy
5 sojournings, which God gave unto Abraham. And Isaac sent

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xxvii. 46–xxviii. 9 This passage is derived from P and makes no reference to the events of the last chapter. It suggests different reasons for Jacob leaving his home, though these are not necessarily inconsistent with the fear of Esau's vengeance. Rebekah may well have suggested a different reason to Isaac from that which she gave to Jacob for the latter being sent away.

46 **the daughters of Heth,** i.e. the Hittite wives whom Esau had married. The Canaanite women were no doubt attractive, and Rebekah professes to be terrified lest Jacob should follow his brother's example.

xxviii. 1 **and blessed him.** This may be simply a different account of the blessing already given to Jacob: or the compiler may have wished to suggest, by combining the two narratives, that Isaac acquiesced in the inevitable, and again gave Jacob his blessing before he left home.

away Jacob: and he went to Paddan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the [1]Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother. Now Esau saw that Isaac had 6
blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; and that Jacob obeyed his father and his 7
mother, and was gone to Paddan-aram: and Esau saw that the 8
daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; and Esau went 9
unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife.

And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. 10
And he lighted upon [2]a certain place, and tarried there 11
all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and 12
behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to

[1] Heb. *Aramean.*

[2] Heb. *the place.*

6-9 **Now Esau saw,** etc. This somewhat wordy description of Esau's further marriage is in the characteristic style of P, which abounds in repetitions and precise and formal statements.

9 **Mahalath.** She would be therefore Esau's cousin. There seems some uncertainty about the tradition, for in xxxvi. 3 she is called Basemath.

10 **went toward Haran.** Jacob was apparently unaccompanied; no one else is spoken of, though it seems unlikely that the son of so great a person as Isaac should have undertaken so long a journey without some attendants. The first part of his journey would probably be up a river valley in a north-east direction. Then he would scale the heights of Hebron, and continue along the high ridge of the country past Jerusalem until he arrived at Bethel, a distance of some sixty difficult miles. Bethel (the modern *Beitin*) had already been visited by Abraham (xii.), and was probably recognised as a "holy place." It lies some ten miles north of Jerusalem, and is surrounded by wild and desolate scenery, which seems to have influenced the wanderer's dreams.

12 **behold a ladder set up on the earth.** Bethel is very rocky, and close to it is a hill with terraces of stone, which seem like steps, and may have suggested something of the dreamer's vision of a ladder.

heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending
13 on it. And, behold, the LORD stood [1]above it, and said, I am the LORD, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest,
14 to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt [2]spread abroad to the west, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all
15 the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done
16 that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew
17 it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of
18 heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the

[1] Or, *beside him.*

[2] Heb. *break forth.*

Clearly the dream implied that there was real intercourse between the natural and the spiritual world. God's messengers were coming down and returning, the bearers, as it has been well suggested, of gifts and holy influences to men, and also of the prayers and aspirations of men towards God. The incident is remarkably commented on by our Lord Himself in St. John i. 51. He interprets the ladder as being "the Son of Man," i.e. by the mystery of the Incarnation there is to be henceforth a permanent communion between God and man, of which the angels will be the ministers and messengers.

13 **the LORD stood above it.** The margin suggests still more vividly the nearness of Jehovah to His servant. He stood either by the side of the ladder or beside the dreamer, repeated the great promise to Abraham, and assured Jacob of protection and of the certainty of His purpose.

16 **and I knew it not.** Jacob speaks from the point of view of early religion, which thought of God as limited to certain places or districts. He is astonished and awestruck to have a proof of Jehovah's presence far away from the shrine or altar where he had been accustomed to worship Him, and in a land of strangers. This incident marks a distinct stage of progress in the religious training of Jacob. He feels the omnipresence and the continual guidance of Jehovah, in contrast perhaps with his own petty ways of self-will and deceit, by which he had tried to do for himself what God would do in His own time.

stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar,
and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of 19
that place [1]Beth-el: but the name of the city was
Luz at the first. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, 20
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 to my father's house in peace, 21
[2]then shall the LORD be my God, and this stone, 22
which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house:
and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give
the tenth unto thee.

[1] That is, *The house of God.*

[2] Or, *and the LORD will be my God, then this stone,* etc.

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18 **and set it up for a pillar.** Another touch of primitive religion. The word used for pillar is regularly employed to describe the Canaanite stones, or "menhirs," which were set upright by the altars. They were forbidden in Deut. xvi. 22, but their use lasted long. It seems a general instinct of religion to erect something pointing heavenwards. We see it even in the towers and spires of churches.

poured oil upon the top of it. This again was a frequent practice. The oil was a symbol of consecration to God. Sacred stones figure in many religions.

19 **Beth-el**—"house of God"—originally distinct from the city of Luz, though that came to be called by the same name. Jacob's sleeping-place was evidently some distance from Luz. He may have feared to seek a shelter within the city, lest the inhabitants should be unfriendly. Bethel in later days became a centre of the idolatrous worship of Jehovah (1 Kings xii. 29-33; Amos vii. 13).

20 **And Jacob vowed a vow,** etc. The first instance of a religious vow in the Bible. It was a definite act of self-dedication on the part of Jacob, and it is unnecessary to press the literal sense of the words, as if Jacob were making a bargain with God (see also the variant translation in the margin). The words are best understood as a childlike acceptance of God's promised protection, and an effort to respond to it.

22 **this stone . . . shall be God's house.** No doubt primitive superstition regarded the deity as being actually resident in the sacred stone, or tree, or other object. But it is scarcely fair to charge Jacob with this; it would be strangely inconsistent with the exalted revelation of God which had just been made to him.

I will surely give the tenth. The custom, evidently a very early one, of dedicating to God a tithe of one's substance has already been men-

CHAPTERS XXVII. 46–XXVIII

Questions

1. Why was Jacob sent away from his home ?

2. Describe Jacob's vision at Beth-el. What do you think was its meaning and importance ?

3. How was Jacob himself affected by this vision ?

Subject for Study

The later history of Beth-el.

Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible.*

Collect references by help of a Concordance.

Jacob, Rachel, and Leah (xxix. 1-30)

1 Then Jacob [1]went on his journey, and came to the land of the
2 children of the east. And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, three flocks of sheep lying

[1] Heb. *lifted up his feet.*

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tioned in the case of Abraham and Melchizedek. The practice of paying tithes at Bethel is alluded to by Amos (iv. 4). The Northern Israelites evidently paid them there instead of Jerusalem, as their centre of worship.

xxix. This picturesque chapter, like the earlier description of the quest for Rebekah, is singularly beautiful and full of human interest. It seems faithfully to reflect the pastoral life of early days, still much the same in the East now as it was then. Jacob shows himself here in a very favourable light: he is ready, courteous, full of affection, and capable of a sincere passion. But he begins to suffer already the retribution which was part of his spiritual education.

1 **the children of the east.** Cp. Judg. vi. 3, 33. This is a general

there by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and the stone upon the well's mouth was great. And 3 thither were all the flocks 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 in its place. And Jacob said unto 4 them, My brethren, whence be ye? And they said, Of Haran are we. And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? 5 And they said, We know him. And he said unto them, Is it well 6 with him? And they said, It is well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep. And he said, Lo, it is yet high 7 day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them. And they said, We 8 cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep. While 9 he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she kept them. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel 10

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description of the scattered and wandering peoples to the north-east of Palestine, beyond Jordan. Jacob must have crossed the Jordan, traversed the wide Syrian desert between that and the Euphrates, a distance of more than 300 miles, and then crossed the great river itself, before finding himself in the neighbourhood of Haran.

2 **for out of that well they watered,** etc. The description from this point to the end of *v.* 3 is of what usually happened, not of what was actually being done when Jacob arrived. It was a local custom apparently that the well was only to be opened when all the flocks were gathered together; an individual flock had to wait until the others came (see *vv.* 7-8).

the stone upon the well's mouth was great. This perhaps suggests the reason for the custom mentioned above. The stone was so heavy that it required several shepherds to move it (but see *v.* 10); or at any rate it saved trouble if it were only taken off once a day.

7 **it is yet high day,** etc. Jacob cannot understand this custom of waiting by the well. There is a good deal of the day still left for feeding the flocks. Why not, he asks, give those that are there water at once, and then drive them back to the pasturage? Probably some flocks had been brought to the well early, so as to get the first place when the stone was removed. But this to the practical Jacob is a great waste of time. With rustic conservatism, the shepherds simply answer that they always do it that way!

the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his
11 mother's brother. And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his
12 voice, and wept. And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son: and she ran and told
13 her father. And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told
14 Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a
15 month. And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me,
16 what shall thy wages be? And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was
17 Rachel. And Leah's eyes were tender; but Rachel was beautiful
18 and well favoured. And Jacob loved Rachel; and he said, I will
19 serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should
20 give her to another man: abide with me. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few
21 days, for the love he had to her. And Jacob said unto Laban,

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10 **Jacob went near, and rolled the stone.** Jacob not only shows his courtesy to Rachel, but also his own strength. He is able to move the stone himself, in spite of the shepherds.

17 **And Leah's eyes were tender.** Leah was evidently plain, and lacked the large, dark eyes which are the special beauty of Eastern women. Her eyes were apparently weak and unattractive.

18 **I will serve thee seven years.** It was customary to make large presents to the parents of a bride. Jacob could not do this. He had, strangely enough, left his father's house unattended and without any of the wealth such as Abraham had sent to win Rebekah, so he offered his labour for seven years as the marriage-price of the maiden. She was probably only a little girl when he met her at the well and fell in love with her; and seven years may have been the time thought suitable to wait for her marriage. There is a touch of exquisite purity

Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and 22 made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took 23 Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. And Laban gave Zilpah his handmaid unto his daughter 24 Leah for an handmaid. And it came to pass in the morning that, 25 behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? And Laban said, It is not so done 26 in our place, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfil the 27 week of this one, and we will give thee the other also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him 28 Rachel his daughter to wife. And Laban gave to Rachel his 29 daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her handmaid. And he 30 went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

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and romance about this service of Jacob. The gifted writer knows how to put it in a single phrase.

25 **What is this thou hast done unto me?** Jacob is made to feel the bitterness of disappointment and of being overreached by a crafty relation. The suffering he had inflicted on Isaac and Esau comes home to him. The trick played on him by Laban is all the more cruel as the sequel to seven years' romantic devotion.

27 **Fulfil the week,** etc. The marriage festivities lasted a week. These must not be interrupted. After that Jacob may have his first love on condition of another seven years' service. The feelings of Leah and Rachel do not seem to have been consulted at all. Laban was playing merely his own game, to secure the services of so strong and skilled a helper for a longer period, and incidentally to provide for both his daughters. Polygamy was evidently considered a matter of course in Laban's household, though Jacob had had an example of a better sort of marriage in the faithfulness of his own parents to one another. The marriage of two sisters to one man is forbidden in Lev. xviii. 18.

CHAPTER XXIX. 1-30

Questions

1. Describe the circumstances of the meeting of Jacob and Rachel.

2. How has Laban appeared in the previous history ?

3. Why did Laban deceive Jacob ?

Jacob's Children (xxix. 31–xxx. 24)

31 And the LORD saw that Leah was hated, and he opened her
32 womb : but Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben : for she said, Because the LORD [1]hath looked upon my affliction ; for now my
33 husband will love me. And she conceived again, and bare a son ; and said, Because the LORD [2]hath heard that I am hated, he hath therefore given me this *son* also : and she called his name [3]Simeon. And she
34 conceived again, and bare a son ; and said, Now this time will my husband be [4]joined unto me, because I have borne him three sons : therefore was his name
35 called Levi. And she conceived again, and bare a son : and she said, This time will I [5]praise the LORD : therefore she called his name [6]Judah ; and she left bearing.

[1] Heb. *raah beonyi.*
[2] Heb. *shama.*
[3] Heb. *Shimeon.*
[4] From the root *lavah.*
[5] From the Heb. *hodah.*
[6] Heb. *Jehudah.*

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xxix. 32 **she called his name Reuben.** There is something very pathetic in these outbursts of the unloved wife. Each child brings a new hope of love from the husband, and each apparently in vain. The names of the children are really of uncertain etymology. As usual the explanations given of them are based on sound and suggestion only. Reuben, which *may* mean simply " behold a son," is thought to sound like the words *ra'ah beonyi*, " looked upon my affliction." So, too,

xxx

And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel 1
envied her sister; and she said unto Jacob, Give me children, or
else I die. And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and 2
he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the
fruit of the womb? And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go 3
in unto her; that she may bear upon my knees, and I also may
[1]obtain children by her. And she gave him Bilhah 4
her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her.
And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. And 5
Rachel said, God hath [2]judged me, and hath also 6
heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore
called she his name Dan. And Bilhah Rachel's hand- 7
maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son.
And Rachel said, With [3]mighty wrestlings have I 8
[4]wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed: and
she called his name Naphtali. When Leah saw that 9
she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her handmaid,
and gave her to Jacob to wife. And Zilpah Leah's 10
handmaid bare Jacob a son. And Leah said, [5]For- 11
tunate! and she called his name [6]Gad. And Zilpah 12
Leah's handmaid bare Jacob a second son. And 13

[1] Heb. *be builded by her.*
[2] Heb. *dan*, he judged.
[3] Heb. *wrestlings of God.*
[4] Heb. *niphtal*, he wrestled.
[5] Heb. *With fortune!* Another reading is, *Fortune is come.*
[6] That is, *Fortune.*

Simeon suggests the word "hear" (see margin), Levi "joining," and Judah "praise."

xxx. 3 **bear upon my knees.** A metaphorical expression, meaning that Rachel will acknowledge a child of Bilhah's as her own. Probably the phrase arose from the primitive custom of a parent recognising a child as his own by having it placed upon his knees.

6 **God hath judged me,** i.e. has heard my cause and decided in my favour.

8 **With mighty wrestlings.** See margin and note on xxiii. 6.

11 **Fortunate!** There was an ancient Babylonian and Canaanite divinity called Gad, who was the god of "luck" or "fortune." The later Isaiah reproves the apostate Jews for worshipping him (Isa. lxv. 11). It has been thought that the real etymology of other of the names of Jacob's sons is to be found in the names of early divinities. The family of Laban were Jehovah-worshippers, but they clung also to the older idolatries (see xxxi. 19, etc.).

Leah said, [1]Happy am I! for the daughters will [2]call
14 me happy: and she called his name Asher. And
Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found
[3]mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his
mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me,
15 I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes. And she said
unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken
away my husband? and wouldest thou take away
my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall
16 lie with thee to-night for thy son's mandrakes. And Jacob came
from the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him,
and said, Thou must come in unto me; for I have surely hired
thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night.
17 And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare
18 Jacob a fifth son. And Leah said, God hath given
me my [4]hire, because I gave my handmaid to my
19 husband: and she called his name Issachar. And
20 Leah conceived again, and bare a sixth son to Jacob. And
Leah said, God hath endowed me with a good dowry; now will

[1] Heb. *With my happiness.*
[2] Heb. *asher*, to call happy.
[3] Or, *love-apples.*
[4] Heb. *sachar.*

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13 **the daughters will call me happy.** A general expression for the other women of her acquaintance (cp. Cant. vi. 9). To have a large family was esteemed the greatest honour for a woman, and to be childless the greatest reproach. Hence Rachel's outburst in *v.* 1.

14 **mandrakes**—or love-apples, so-called because they were used as a philtre or love-charm. The plant has a tuberous root, said to be shaped something like a human body, and bears fruit like a large yellow plum. Other superstitions were connected with it. It was believed to utter a shriek when it was pulled up, and to pull it up brought death to the doer. Reuben merely gathered the fruit. What Rachel wanted the mandrakes for is not clear. She was sure of her husband's love and did not need charms.

18 **Issachar**—the first part of the word means "man," the second "hire" (see margin). Leah attaches a second meaning to the word: not only has she hired her husband by giving Rachel the mandrakes, God has given her her "hire" or reward for allowing Zilpah also to be Jacob's wife.

my husband [1]dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun. And 21
afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah. And God remembered Rachel, and 22
God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And 23
she conceived, and bare a son: and said, God hath taken away my reproach: and she called his name Joseph, 24
saying, The LORD [2]add to me another son.

[1] Heb. *zabal*, he dwelt.
[2] Heb. *joseph*.

Jacob's Wages (XXX. 25-43)

And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob 25
said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. Give me my wives and my children 26
for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service wherewith I have served thee. And Laban said unto 27
him, If now I have found favour in thine eyes, *tarry*: *for* I have divined that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake. And he 28
said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it. And he said unto 29
him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle hath fared with me. For it was little which thou hadst before 30
I came, and it hath [3]increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee [4]whithersoever I turned: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also? And he said, What shall I give thee? And 31
Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me aught: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed thy flock and keep it. I 32

[3] Heb. *broken forth*.
[4] Heb. *at my foot*.

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24 **and she called his name Joseph.** Again a double meaning is extracted from the name. *Asaph* means to take away, *yasaph* to add. Both words have a similar sound. The other son foretold was the fatal Benjamin (XXXV. 16-18).

31 **if thou wilt do this thing for me,** etc. Hitherto apparently Jacob had received no personal wages for his service beyond the keep of himself and his family. He now proposes a scheme which Laban thinks he will make little out of and accepts at once, namely that his wages shall consist of all the abnormally coloured animals that may

will pass through all thy flock to-day, removing from thence every speckled and spotted one, and every black one among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and *of such* shall
33 be my hire. So shall my righteousness answer for me hereafter, when thou shalt come concerning my hire that is before thee: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and black among the sheep, that *if found* with me shall be counted
34 stolen. And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according
35 to thy word. And he removed that day the he-goats that were ringstraked and spotted, and all the she-goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white in it, and all the black ones
36 among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons; and he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob
37 fed the rest of Laban's flocks. And Jacob took him rods of fresh [1]poplar, and of the almond and of the plane tree; and peeled white strakes in them, and

[1] Or, *storax tree.*

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in the future be born, black sheep, or "spotted and speckled" goats (which were usually black). To ensure the fair carrying out of this arrangement, Jacob offers to remove and hand over at once to Laban all such animals as were already among the flocks, so that he might start his breeding with no "balance in hand."

33 **So shall my righteousness answer for me.** Jacob means that as proof of his honesty he is willing that if in the future Laban finds in Jacob's private flock any animal of the ordinary colour, he may at once escheat these as stolen property.

35 **And he removed that day.** Laban himself sorts out the flock to begin with, hands over the existing abnormalities to his sons, and sends them away to a safe distance (*v.* 36), so that Jacob might claim none of them as part of his wages.

ringstraked—streaked with rings of a different colour.

37 **And Jacob took him rods,** etc. Jacob now proceeds to make use of his skill in breeding in order to produce a large number of these variegated sheep and goats. It was evidently believed that the colour of the progeny could be influenced by external objects, and this is probably correct. At any rate it turned out so in Jacob's experiment. The white streaks cut in the bark of Jacob's rods, and placed before the eyes of the ewes in the watering-places which they frequented daily, produced the desired effect (*v.* 39).

made the white appear which was in the rods. And he set the 38
rods which he had peeled over against the flocks in the gutters in
the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink; and they
conceived when they came to drink. And the flocks conceived 39
before the rods, and the flocks brought forth ringstraked, speckled,
and spotted. And Jacob separated the lambs, and set the faces 40
of the flocks toward the ringstraked and all the black in the flock
of Laban; and he put his own droves apart, and put them not
unto Laban's flock. And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger 41
of the flock did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes
of the flock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the
rods; but when the flock were feeble, he put them not in: so 42
the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. And the 43
man increased exceedingly, and had large flocks, and maid-
servants and menservants, and camels and asses.

CHAPTERS XXIX. 31–XXX

Questions

1. Classify the children of Jacob under the names of their mothers.

2. Illustrate from this chapter or elsewhere the way in which names are explained in these early narratives.

3. What proposal did Jacob make as to his wages?

4. How did he make the arrangement profitable?

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40 **And Jacob separated the lambs,** etc. The verse is obscure, but it probably means that, in addition to the device of the rods, Jacob now put his parti-coloured lambs and kids in front of the other ewes, and further influenced them in this way to produce similar offspring.

41 **the stronger of the flock,** etc. Jacob also endeavours not only to get a great number of variegated animals, but to ensure that these shall be exceptionally good. He only plays his trick of the rods on the strongest ewes.

43 **camels and asses.** Jacob would be able to buy these animals from traders in exchange for some of his now numerous flocks.

Jacob leaves Laban (xxxi. 1-21)

1 And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath
taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our
2 father's hath he gotten all this [1]glory. And Jacob
beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was
3 not toward him as beforetime. And the LORD said
unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kin-
4 dred; and I will be with thee. And Jacob sent and called Rachel
5 and Leah to the field unto his flock, and said unto them, I see your
father's countenance, that it is not toward me as beforetime; but
6 the God of my father hath been with me. And ye know that with
7 all my power I have served your father. And your father hath
deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered
8 him not to hurt me. If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy
wages; then all the flock bare speckled: and if he said thus, The
ringstraked shall be thy wages; then bare all the flock ring-
9 straked. Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father,
10 and given them to me. And it came to pass at the time that the
flock conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream,
and, behold, the he-goats which leaped upon the flock were ring-
11 straked, speckled, and grisled. And the angel of God said unto
12 me in the dream, Jacob: and I said, Here am I. And he said,
Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the he-goats which leap

[1] Or, *wealth.*

xxxi. 7 **changed my wages ten times.** Ten here, no doubt, is a general term for a considerable number. In the previous account it was Jacob that fixed what the wages were to be, and there is no mention of Laban changing them. This account is taken from a different source (E) and represents another view of the matter. It is quite possible, however, that Laban, finding that Jacob's arrangement was turning out so profitable for him, tried to alter or limit it, as in *v.* 8.

10 **I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream.** Jacob's dream is woven out of the details of the breeding operations, just as his earlier dream out of the ladder-like stones of Bethel; but with the familiar scenes mingles the same Divine voice he had heard there. He is assured that the success of his schemes is by God's will and appointment, and it is now time for him to fulfil his vow at Bethel.

upon the flock are ringstraked, speckled, and grisled: for I
have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. I am the God of 13
Beth-el, where thou anointedst a pillar, where thou vowedst
a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land,
and return unto the land of thy nativity. And Rachel and 14
Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or
inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not counted 15
of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath also quite
devoured [1]our money. For all the riches which God 16
hath taken away from our father, that is ours and our
children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said
unto thee, do. Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives 17
upon the camels; and he carried away all his cattle, 18
and all his substance which he had gathered, the
cattle of his getting, which he had gathered in Paddan-
aram, for to go to Isaac his father unto the land
of Canaan. Now Laban was gone to shear his sheep: 19
and Rachel stole the [2]teraphim that were her father's.

[1] Or, *the price paid for us.*

[2] See vv. 30, 34, Judg. xvii. 5, 1 Sam. xix. 13, and Hos. iii. 4.

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12 **grisled,** i.e. piebald: black with patches of white.

15 **quite devoured our money.** Probably the margin gives the correct meaning. Instead of paying marriage-gifts for his wives, Jacob had worked for Laban without wages: but in any case the wife would feel that she ought to have some share in what the husband had earned (cp. xxiv. 53). But Laban had tried to seize *all* the fruits of Jacob's labours.

16 **all the riches which God hath taken away,** i.e. the flocks which Jacob had acquired by his successful breeding. Rachel and Leah wish to secure these for themselves and their children, which can only be done by going away from Laban altogether.

19 **and Rachel stole the teraphim.** These were apparently small figures of household gods, perhaps of ancestors, like the Roman Lares and Penates, which were placed by the hearth or carried on the person. Sometimes they were of larger size, as in 1 Sam. xix. 13, etc. This domestic idolatry no doubt ran back to very ancient times, and was obstinately cherished among the more superstitious Israelites, though the prophets denounce it as a deadly sin. See marginal references and also 1 Sam. xv. 23 (R.V.). Rachel's theft was no doubt perpetrated with what she thought a religious purpose. She was changing her home,

20 And Jacob [1]stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in
21 that he told him not that he fled. So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over [2]the River, and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead.

[1] Heb. *stole the heart of Laban the Aramean.*
[2] That is, the Euphrates.

The Covenant between Jacob and Laban (xxxi. 22–xxxii. 2)

22 And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled.
23 And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and he overtook him in the mountain of Gilead.
24 And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream of the night, and said unto him, Take heed to thyself that thou speak not to Jacob
25 either good or bad. And Laban came up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountain: and Laban with his
26 brethren pitched in the mountain of Gilead. And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters as captives of the sword?
27 Wherefore didst thou flee secretly, and [3]steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth and with songs, with tabret

[3] Heb. *didst steal me.*

---

and wished to carry with her into another land the tutelary deities belonging to her family, which all her life she had been accustomed to reverence.

20 **stole away unawares.** The marginal translation means that Jacob outwitted Laban, "heart" being used for "understanding."

23 **seven days' journey.** This can hardly be regarded as exact, as the distance is over 300 miles from Haran to the heights of Gilead, the north-eastern portion of Canaan beyond Jordan.

24 **either good or bad**—evidently a common phrase (cp. xxiv. 50). Laban is neither to conciliate nor blame Jacob. The matter has passed out of his hands altogether, as it was in answer to a Divine call that Jacob was returning to his own country.

25 **in the mountain**—the expression is indefinite; perhaps some word has dropped out of the text.

26 **as captives of the sword,** i.e. just as if they were prisoners who had been captured in some armed raid.

and with harp; and hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my 28
daughters? now hast thou done foolishly. It is in the power of 29
my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto
me yesternight, saying, Take heed to thyself that thou speak not
to Jacob either good or bad. And now, *though* thou wouldest 30
needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house,
yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods? And Jacob answered 31
and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Lest thou
shouldest take thy daughters from me by force. With whom- 32
soever thou findest thy gods, he shall not live: before our brethren
discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For
Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them. And Laban went 33
into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the
two maidservants; but he found them not. And he went out of
Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had 34
taken the teraphim, and put them in the camel's furniture, and
sat upon them. And Laban felt about all the tent, but found
them not. And she said to her father, Let not my lord be angry 35
that I cannot rise up before thee; for the manner of women is
upon me. And he searched, but found not the teraphim. And 36
Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered
and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that
thou hast hotly pursued after me? Whereas thou hast felt 37
about all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household

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31 **Lest thou shouldest take thy daughters from me.** Jacob excuses his stealthy departure on the ground that Laban, had he known of it, would have forcibly prevented Leah and Rachel from accompanying him.

34 **the camel's furniture,** i.e. the wicker-work saddle, provided with cushions and protected by an awning, on which the women sat while travelling on the uncomfortable camel's back. The teraphim were evidently small and could be easily concealed under the arched saddle and the flowing garments of Rachel.

37 **what hast thou found,** etc. Jacob, still knowing nothing of Rachel's theft, assumes that Laban characteristically is making a rude and unnecessary search of the tents to see if he can find anything to claim as his own property. His indignation bursts out with the hidden

stuff? Set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that
38 they may judge betwixt us two. This twenty years have I been
with thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young,
39 and the rams of thy flocks have I not eaten. That which was
torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of
my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by
40 night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and
41 the frost by night; and my sleep fled from mine eyes. These
twenty years have I been in thy house; I served thee fourteen
years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy flock: and
42 thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my
father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac, had been with
me, surely now hadst thou sent me away empty. God hath seen
mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee
43 yesternight. And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, The
daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children,
and the flocks are my flocks, and all that thou seest is mine: and
what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their
44 children which they have borne? And now come, let us make
a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and
45 thee. And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. And
46 Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took

grievances of years, Laban's ingratitude and meanness, his own unrewarded toil and sufferings.

42 **the Fear of Isaac.** The "fear of God" is a usual O.T. phrase for religion; but it is very uncommon to have, as here, the word "Fear" as an equivalent to "God." We must regard it as a poetical variation for "the God of Isaac," the object of Isaac's lifelong reverence.

43 **The daughters are my daughters,** etc. Laban is not exactly claiming the families and the flocks for himself, but affecting solicitude for them. They have passed out of his keeping, and he implies that all he can do for the wives and children is to bind Jacob over to treat them well.

46 **his brethren**—here, as in *v.* 23, this seems to be a general expression for the men of his family who accompanied him, whether relations or dependents.

made an heap. There was probably some well-known cairn, with a pillar or obelisk beside it, that stood on the frontier of Israelite territory

stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there by the heap.
And Laban called it [1]Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it [2]Galeed. And Laban said, This heap is witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed: and [3]Mizpah, for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are [4]absent one from another. If thou shalt afflict my daughters, and if thou shalt take wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee. And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold the pillar, which I have set betwixt me and thee. This heap be witness, and the pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the [5]God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the Fear of his father Isaac. And Jacob offered a sacrifice in the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mountain. And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and

46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 [Ch. xxxii. 1 in Heb.]

[1] That is, *The heap of witness*, in Aramaic.
[2] That is, *The heap of witness*, in Hebrew.
[3] That is, *The watch-tower.*
[4] Heb. *hidden.*
[5] Or, *gods.*

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east of Jordan: this narrative records the tradition of its erection. Its personal origin had passed into its being regarded as a tribal landmark between Israel and the kindred peoples farther east.

they did eat there. See below on *v.* 54.

49 **Mizpah**="watch-tower": several places bore this name. Perhaps here the cairn is meant to be identified with the Mizpah of Gilead (Judg. xi. 11). The explanation given in the text is an invocation to Jehovah to keep watch between the two parties that they do not transgress the covenant when they are "hidden" (margin) from each other. It is a mistaken interpretation that has caused "Mizpah" to be inscribed on rings and brooches as a memento of absent friends. Here it was rather a case of absent enemies or rivals.

54 **they did eat bread.** Here, as probably also in *v.* 46, the allusion is to the sacrificial banquet, a "peace-offering," of which both the contracting parties partook, in the first instance to cement friendship, and here to ratify their covenant.

xxxii
1 his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place. And Jacob went on his
2 way, and the angels of God met him. And Jacob said when he saw them, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place [1]Mahanaim.

[1] That is, *Two hosts*, or, *companies*.

CHAPTERS XXXI.–XXXII. 2

Questions

1. What is the meaning of "teraphim"? How are they alluded to elsewhere in Scripture?

2. Describe the meeting of Laban and Jacob.

3. What complaints did Jacob make against Laban?

4. Describe the Covenant between Jacob and Laban.

Jacob's Message to Esau (xxxii. 3-21)

3 And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto
4 the land of Seir, the field of Edom. And he commanded them,

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xxxii. 1 **the angels of God met him.** This apparition of angels is introduced abruptly, without explanation. No doubt Jacob recognised (perhaps this too was in a dream) the same heavenly visitants as he had seen at Beth-el, and would see in them a further proof of God's protection.

2 **Mahanaim.** The dual form of the word seems to imply that Jacob saw two armies of angels, perhaps "ascending and descending" as before, or arrayed on his right hand and his left. Another suggestion is that one company was that of the angels, the other that of his own encampment. The site of Mahanaim is uncertain, but it was an important place in later history. It was the headquarters of the rival kingdom of Ishbosheth (2 Sam. ii.), and afterwards of David himself during the rebellion of Absalom (*ib.* xvii.).

3 the land of Seir. Esau is represented as already settled in

saying, Thus shall ye say unto my lord Esau; Thus saith thy servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now: and I have oxen, and asses *and* flocks, and menservants and maid- 5
servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight. And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We 6
came to thy brother Esau, and moreover he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid 7
and was distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and the herds, and the camels, into two companies; and he said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then 8
the company which is left shall escape. And Jacob said, O God of 9
my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, O LORD, which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will do thee good: [1]I am not worthy of the least of 10
all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two companies. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, 11
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 12
thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude. And he lodged there that night; 13

[1] Heb. *I am less than all*, etc.

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the home of his descendants the Edomites, "Mount Seir," or the "rugged mountain." It is a mountainous plateau south of the Dead Sea, of about 100 miles square and over 5000 feet above the sea in its highest part. Its capital was the famous rock-fortress of Sela or Petra on the east of the Arabah. The prevailing colour of the rocks is red ("edom"), "a dull crimson" (Stanley, see *Sinai and Palestine*).

7 **two companies**—perhaps suggested by the two hosts (the same word) of angels, to which there is no doubt an allusion.

9 **And Jacob said,** etc. Jacob feels that he is approaching the crisis of his fortunes. He has dealt successfully with Laban at last, but Esau is a very different proposition. A body of 400 armed raiders would make short work of all his prosperity, if so be that Esau still cherishes the ancient quarrel. Jacob betakes himself to prayer, a prayer which is humble and appealing, and marked by his characteristic love of retrospect (cp. xlviii.).

and took of that which he had with him a present for Esau his
14 brother; two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hun-
15 dred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milch camels and their colts,
16 forty kine and ten bulls, twenty she-asses and ten foals. And he
delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself;
and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space
17 betwixt drove and drove. And he commanded the foremost,
saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee,
saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose
18 are these before thee? then thou shalt say, *They be* thy servant
Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, he
19 also is behind us. And he commanded also the second, and the
third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner
20 shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him; and ye shall say,
Moreover, behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said,
I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and
afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept me.
21 So the present passed over before him: and he himself lodged
that night in the company.

Jacob's Wrestling (xxxii. 22-32)

22 And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two
handmaids, and his eleven children, and passed over the ford of
23 Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the stream, and

---

13 **a present for Esau his brother.** The word for "present," *minchah*, "offering," implies more than a complimentary gift; it is of the nature of a propitiation. The amount of the gift seems enormous, and shows what wealth Jacob must have attained. The animals fall into five classes, probably all separate droves, ending with the most valuable. Arriving separately they would impress Esau more than if they all came together, and give him time to consider them.

22 **the ford of Jabbok.** This river, now called the *Zerka*, rises near Rabbath-Ammon, and flows with a circuitous course into the Jordan, dividing the northern and southern parts of Gilead. The latter part of its course, where Jacob probably crossed on this journey

sent over that he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there 24
wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And 25
when he saw that he prevailed not against
him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and
the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he
wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, 26
for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not
let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said 27
unto him, What is thy name? And he said,
Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be 28
called no more Jacob, but [1]Israel: for [2]thou
hast [3]striven with God and with men, and
hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and 29

[1] That is, *He who striveth with God*, or, *God striveth.*
[2] The Sept. and Vulgate have, *thou hast had power with God, and thou shalt prevail against men.*
[3] Or, *had power with.*

southwards, is through a deep gorge. It is easy to ford, but by night, when Jacob spent his solitary vigil by its banks, it must have seemed dark, lonely, and weird, and provided a fit setting for the strange experience that befell him.

24 **there wrestled a man with him.** Who this mysterious Antagonist was, and how the conflict began, is left untold. Hosea (xii. 4) speaks of him as an angel. The sequel suggests that he was One greater still. Jacob, full of anxious thought and dread of the morrow, and the retribution it might bring, was no doubt spending the night in earnest prayer. He must have felt that some spiritual crisis was upon him; perhaps a "horror of great darkness," as with Abraham, encompassed him. In his agonised struggle he became conscious of some personal power opposing him. He may have thought perhaps at first that it was the divinity or *djinn* of the river, but at any rate he must have felt that his fortunes depended on the issue of the wrestling, and he indomitably persevered. (Cp. the strange episode in Borrow's *Lavengro*, chap. lxxxiv.)

25 **he touched the hollow of his thigh.** The unseen Antagonist, unable to throw Jacob, renders him lame by spraining his thigh. Even so, Jacob retains his hold, and as the first grey of dawn appears in the east, the Antagonist himself prays to be released.

26 **I will not let thee go.** Clearly by this time Jacob has realised to some extent who the mysterious Wrestler is, and he demands a blessing before he will relinquish the struggle. Cp. C. Wesley's great hymn, "Come, O thou Traveller unknown," and F. W. Robertson's sermon on this text.

28 **Israel.** The meaning of this new name, henceforth through all

said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed
30 him there. And Jacob called the name of the place [1]Peniel: for, *said he,* I have seen God face to face, and
31 my life is preserved. And the sun rose upon him as
32 he passed over Penuel, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.

[1] That is, *The face of God.*

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time.the name of the people of God, is probably that given first in the margin: "He who striveth with God." It commemorated Jacob's victory in the struggle, and was a prophecy of the steadfastness of his descendants. Such victory is not won by overreaching and supplanting others, but by the faith that perseveres with God.

thou hast striven with God and with men. The strife with God had been accomplished in the lonely wrestling; he had already prevailed over the wiles and plots of Laban, and he was presently to prevail over the old enmity of his brother Esau.

29 **Wherefore is it,** etc. The refusal to give the Name is significant. Cp. Judg. xiii. 18, where the Name of the supernatural visitant is said to be "wonderful" or secret (one of the titles of the Messiah, Isa. ix. 6). See also Rev. xix. 12.

30, 31 **Peniel . . . Penuel.** No reason can be suggested for the variation in the spelling. The latter form was apparently the one commonly used, as in Judg. viii. and 1 Kings xii. 25.

31 **he halted upon his thigh**—apparently he was rendered permanently lame as the result of the wrestling. The spiritual conflict left its mark on his bodily frame.

32 **Therefore the children of Israel,** etc. The ancient custom here referred to is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. There is no prohibition of this sort in the Law. The **sinew** alluded to is the sciatic muscle.

In whatever way we may explain this mysterious event, it clearly marks a great moment in Jacob's life and in the Divine training he received. As the result of his wrestling he won for himself and his descendants that which he had schemed to win in his younger days, the special "blessing" of God. But he had been taught that God was stronger than himself, and that he could only win spiritual privileges by persevering struggle and at the cost of suffering, not by

CHAPTER XXXII. 3-32

Questions

1. How did Jacob prepare for the meeting with Esau ?

2. What is the significance of Jacob's wrestling at the Jabbok ?

3. What other allusion is there in Scripture to this event ?

4. What new name was given to Jacob, and what is its importance ?

Meeting of Jacob and Esau (xxxiii. 1-17)

And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau 1
came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the
children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids.
And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah 2
and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. And 3
he himself passed over before them, and bowed himself to the
ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau 4
ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and

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craft and deceit, nor even by his own natural abilities. He learned by the Jabbok "how man has to reckon in life with God also, and that his noblest struggles are in the darkness, with the Unseen" (G. Adam Smith).

xxxiii. 1 **And he divided the children,** etc. As with his flocks and herds, he seems to have arranged his family in groups, the most valued and dearest coming last. And with self-sacrificing courage he himself goes first (*v.* 3) to meet alone, if so be, the wrath of Esau.

4 **And Esau ran to meet him,** etc. Esau's conduct appears in the most favourable light. He greets his brother with eagerness and affection, and shows himself generous and sympathetic. He makes no allusion to the ancient grievance.

5 kissed him: and they wept. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw
the women and the children; and said, Who are these with thee?
And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy
6 servant. Then the handmaids came near, they and their children,
7 and they bowed themselves. And Leah also and her children
came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near
8 and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. And he said, What
meanest thou by all this company which I met? And he said,
9 To find grace in the sight of my lord. And Esau said, I have
10 enough; my brother, let that thou hast be thine. And Jacob
said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight,
then receive my present at my hand: [1]forasmuch as
I have seen thy face, as one seeth the face of God,
11 and thou wast pleased with me. Take, I pray thee,
my [2]gift that is brought to thee; because God hath
dealt graciously with me, and because I have [3]enough.
12 And he urged him, and he took it. And he said, Let
us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before
13 thee. And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children
are tender, and that the flocks and herds with me give suck: and
14 if they overdrive them one day, all the flocks will die. Let my
lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on
softly, according to the pace of the cattle that is before me and
according to the pace of the children, until I come unto my lord
15 unto Seir. And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of

[1] Or, *for therefore have I seen.*
[2] Heb. *blessing.*
[3] Heb. *all.*

10 **as one seeth the face of God.** An allusion, no doubt, to Peniel, whose memory was fresh in Jacob's mind. But the phrase seems to have been one usual in Oriental politeness, implying both the greatness of the person seen and the fact that the great one is showing himself friendly.

12 **I will go before thee,** etc. Esau proposes to join forces with Jacob's caravan, and act as advanced guard on his journey. Jacob is evidently anxious that this should not be, and pleads the impossibility of such a company as his keeping up with a body of unencumbered warriors. He also politely declines the services of an escort (*v.* 15). He probably did not trust Esau's followers.

14 **until I come unto my lord unto Seir.** He did not go there, and his words read like a polite subterfuge.

the folk that are with me. And he said, What needeth it? let me find grace in the sight of my lord. So Esau returned that day 16
on his way unto Seir. And Jacob journeyed to 17
[1] That is, *Booths.*
[1]Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

The Sons of Jacob and the Shechemites (xxxiii. 18–xxxiv.)

And Jacob came [2]in peace to the city of Shechem, which is in 18
[2] Or, *to Shalem, a city.*
the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram; and encamped before the city. And he 19
[3] Heb. *kesitah.*
bought the parcel of ground, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred [3]pieces of money.
[4] That is, *God, the God of Israel.*
And he erected there an altar, and called it [4]El-elohe-Israel. 20

17 **Succoth.** There was more than one place of this name: but Jacob's Succoth was probably in the valley east of Jordan (Josh. xiii. 27), and the same as the city whose elders received heavy chastisement at the hands of Gideon (Judg. viii. 5-16).

18 **in peace.** In favour of the marginal translation it may be noted that there is still a village called *Salim*, near to Shechem.

Shechem. Jacob crossed the Jordan after the events just narrated, and encamped in Canaanite territory at the spot already consecrated as Abraham's first resting-place (xii. 6, see note), afterwards in the territory of Ephraim.

19 **he bought the parcel of ground,** etc. This act of faith corresponds to Abraham's earlier purchase of the cave and field of Machpelah (xxv.). The place is alluded to in Josh. xxiv. 32 as the burial-place of Joseph, and also in Acts vii. 16.

an hundred pieces of money. The word used (see margin) is unusual, and the exact meaning is unknown. But it cannot mean coined money, which was not used at so early a date, but some weight of precious metal, either in the form of a wedge or a ring.

20 **El-elohe-Israel.** See margin. This altar, bearing the new name which had been given to Jacob, was a witness to the true God, and

xxxiv
1 And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob,
2 went out to see the daughters of the land. And Shechem the son
of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her; and he took
3 her, and lay with her, and humbled her. And his soul clave unto
Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake
4 [1]kindly unto the damsel. And Shechem spake unto
his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife.
5 Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his
daughter; and his sons were with his cattle in the
6 field: and Jacob held his peace until they came. And Hamor
the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with
7 him. And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they
heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth,
because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's
8 daughter; which thing ought not to be done. And Hamor
communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth
9 for your daughter: I pray you give her unto him to wife. And
make ye marriages with us; give your daughters unto us, and

[1] Heb. *to the heart of the damsel.*

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constituted a traditional "holy place" of the Northern Israelites. Here, too, was "Jacob's well" (St. John iv. 5-12), much venerated by the Samaritans.

xxxiv. This chapter, derived from uncertain sources, breaks the narrative, and is somewhat difficult to harmonise with it. The treacherous massacre of the Shechemites which it records is thought by some modern scholars to be a piece of tribal history rather than a personal act of Simeon and Levi. These names may be personifications of the two tribes, who at some later time wreaked vengeance on the Canaanites. This may be so in some cases, but, speaking generally, the intensely personal and vivid character of these early narratives suggests that they are real stories of *men* and not merely a later writer's reconstructions.

2 **the Hivite.** See x. 17.

7 **he had wrought folly in Israel.** "Folly," like "fool," in Scripture always means something more than lack of wisdom or common sense. It has a strong moral connotation. The fool is the person who wilfully disregards the law of God and man.

Israel is used here in its later tribal meaning, which the actual writer of the story was familiar with.

take our daughters unto you. And ye shall dwell with us: and 10
the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get
you possessions therein. And Shechem said unto her father and 11
unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye
shall say unto me I will give. Ask me never so much dowry and 12
gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give
me the damsel to wife. And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem 13
and Hamor his father with guile, and spake, because he had defiled
Dinah their sister, and said unto them, We cannot do this thing, 14
to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a
reproach unto us: only on this condition will we consent unto you: 15
if ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised; then 16
will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your
daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become
one people. But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; 17
then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone. And their 18
words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son. And the 19
young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight
in Jacob's daughter: and he was honoured above all the house
of his father. And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the 20
gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city,
saying, These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them 21
dwell in the land, and trade therein; for, behold, the land is large
enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and
let us give them our daughters. Only on this condition will the 22
men consent unto us to dwell with us, to become one people, if
every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised.
Shall not their cattle and their substance and all their beasts be 23

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12 **dowry and gift.** The first word implies, as before, the gifts made by the suitor to the woman's parents or family, a relic of the primitive custom of actually buying the bride. The second word probably means the presents actually given to the woman herself.

16 **we will become one people.** The promise was thoroughly deceitful, for in no circumstances could such a union of tribes and intermarriage have been consented to by Jacob. It would have been in flat contradiction to the principles ruling the sacred family of Abraham.

ours? only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us.
24 And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that
went out of the gate of his city; and every male was circumcised,
25 all that went out of the gate of his city. And it came to pass on
the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob,
Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword,
and came upon the city [1]unawares, and slew all the
26 males. And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son
with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of
27 Shechem's house, and went forth. The sons of Jacob came upon
the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their
28 sister. They took their flocks and their herds and their asses, and
29 that which was in the city, and that which was in the field; and
all their wealth, and all their little ones and their wives, took they
30 captive and spoiled, even all that was in the house. And Jacob
said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me, to make me to
stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites
and the Perizzites: and, I being few in number, they will gather
themselves together against me and smite me; and I shall be
31 destroyed, I and my house. And they said, Should he deal with
our sister as with an harlot?

[1] Or, *boldly*.

CHAPTERS XXXIII–IV

Questions

1. Describe the behaviour of Esau at his meeting with Jacob.

2. What do you think of the character of Esau?

3. Where is Shechem? What significant acts did Jacob do there?

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25 **Simeon and Levi.** For the condemnation of this abominable treachery and cruelty of the two brothers and its retribution see xlix. 5-7 and notes. The later Jews unhappily condoned their conduct.

30 **And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi.** There is something rather

Jacob again at Beth-el: Deaths of Rachel and Isaac (XXXV.)

And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell 1
there: and make there an altar unto God, who appeared unto thee
when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then 2
Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put
away the strange gods that are among you, and purify yourselves,
and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; 3
and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the
day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.
And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their 4
hand, and the rings which were in their ears; and
Jacob hid them under the [1]oak which was by Shechem.

[1] Or, *terebinth.*

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characteristic of the less worthy side of Jacob's character in this. He seems concerned only about the personal danger which this act will involve. The answer of the two brothers is wild and reckless: they only care about avenging the insult to their family, regardless of consequences.

XXXV. 2 **Put away the strange gods,** etc. Jacob's household by this time would be a large one, including herdmen, shepherds, and other servants. Many of these no doubt would be openly or secretly worshippers of various Syrian and Canaanite divinities, whose images they carried about with them, just as Rachel had carried the family teraphim. The command to put them away would emphasise the solemnity of this return to Beth-el. Their worshippers would understand that their master's God, who had manifested Himself at Beth-el, would tolerate no rival there at least. In addition they were to undergo the traditional purification of themselves and their clothing, in preparation for drawing near to the presence of God. (Cp. Exod. xix. 10.)

4 **the rings,** etc. These ornaments evidently had some superstitious association with the "strange gods." Probably they were used as charms or amulets.

the oak which was by Shechem. This was evidently a well-known sacred tree. It is referred to in Josh. xxiv. as standing by or in the sanctuary at Shechem. It may be the same as that of Abraham (xii. 6). (See also Judg. ix. 6.)

5 And they journeyed: and [1]a great terror was upon the cities
that were round about them, and they did not pursue
6 after the sons of Jacob. So Jacob came to Luz, which
is in the land of Canaan (the same is Beth-el), he and
7 all the people that were with him. And he built there
an altar, and called the place [2]El-beth-el: because
there God was revealed unto him, when he fled from the face of
8 his brother. And Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and
she was buried below Beth-el under the oak: and
the name of it was called [3]Allon-bacuth.

[1] Heb. *a terror of God.*
[2] That is, *The God of Beth-el.*
[3] That is, *The oak of weeping.*

9 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came from
10 Paddan-aram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy
name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob,
but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.
11 And God said unto him, I am [4]God Almighty: be
fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of
nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of
12 thy loins; and the land which I gave unto Abraham and Isaac, to
thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.
13 And God went up from him in the place where he spake with him.
14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he spake with him, a

[4] Heb. *El Shaddai.*

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5 **a great terror.** See margin and notes on xxiii. 6. This is the first allusion to possible hostility from the Canaanites towards the wandering patriarch, and comes in appropriately after the fear Jacob had just expressed (xxxiv. 30). The travellers were conscious that some remarkable awe was being shown by the Canaanites, a mark of supernatural protection.

9-13 This passage, along with *v.* 15, is taken from the priestly document P, and apparently is a brief account of events already described, the changing of Jacob's name, and his vision at Beth-el, though it is introduced as if it were new matter.

14 **And Jacob set up a pillar.** This again is probably a repetition of what took place at Beth-el (xxviii. 18), and is derived from J, the earlier account being from E. It is possible, however, that Jacob, on his second visit to Beth-el, erected a more substantial obelisk. A new detail is the **drink offering,** i.e. the libation of wine which figured in primitive sacrifices and worship, and was ordered in the Law as an accompaniment of the burnt offering.

pillar of stone: and he poured out a drink offering thereon, and poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place 15
where God spake with him, Beth-el. And they journeyed from 16
Beth-el; and there was still some way to come to Ephrath: and
Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. And it came to pass, 17
when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her,
Fear not; for now thou shalt have another son. And it came 18
to pass, as her soul was in departing (for she died), that she called
his name [1]Ben-oni: but his father called him [2]Ben-
jamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way 19
to Ephrath (the same is Beth-lehem). And Jacob 20
set up a pillar upon her grave: the same is the Pillar
of Rachel's grave unto this day. And Israel jour- 21
neyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Eder.
And it came to pass, while Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben 22

[1] That is, *The son of my sorrow.*
[2] That is, *The son of the right hand.*

18 she called his name Ben-oni. See margin. This human tragedy is described in words of great simplicity and pathos. So in the Arthurian legends, Sir Tristram derives his name from the same sad circumstance of his birth.

> This is what my mother said should be,
> When the fierce pains took her in the forest,
> The deep draughts of death, in bearing me.
> "Son," she said, "thy name shall be of sorrow;
> Tristram art thou called for my death's sake."
>
> M. ARNOLD.

20 the Pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day. These words evidently refer to a well-known tradition and to a monument existing in the original writer's day. From the text as it stands we should gather that the pillar was near Ephrath or Bethlehem; and a monument called the "Dome of Rachel" is still in existence just north of Bethlehem. This tradition seems to agree also with St. Matt. ii. 16-18. But other allusions to Rachel's grave seem to point to a more northern site (1 Sam. x. 2, "the border of Benjamin"; Jer. xxxi. 15, Ramah being north of Jerusalem and a little south of Bethel, cp. also Jer. xl. 1). There may have been two traditions, or the identification of Ephrath with Bethlehem may have been a mistake of a later compiler.

21 the tower of Eder, i.e. "the tower of the flock," i.e. a watch-tower for the use of shepherds. The locality is unknown. Reuben's crime was another of the sorrows that overshadowed the life of Jacob. It is alluded to in xlix. 4. (See also 1 Chron. v. 1.)

went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard of it.

23 Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: the sons of Leah; Reuben,
Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar,
24 and Zebulun: the sons of Rachel; Joseph and Benjamin: and
25 the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid; Dan and Naphtali: and
26 the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid; Gad and Asher: these are
27 the sons of Jacob, which were born to him in Paddan-aram. And
Jacob came unto Isaac his father to Mamre, to Kiriath-arba (the
28 same is Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. And
29 the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. And
Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, old and full of days: and Esau and Jacob his sons buried him.

CHAPTER XXXV

Questions

1. Describe Jacob's second visit to Beth-el.

2. What events are associated with Allon-bacuth, the Pillar of Rachel's grave, Kiriath-arba?

3. Summarise the life and character of Isaac.

The Descendants of Esau, etc. (xxxvi.)

1 Now these are the generations of Esau (the same is Edom). Esau
2 took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah the daughter of

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26 **which were born to him in Paddan-aram.** This section is from P, and as regards Benjamin does not agree with *vv.* 16-18 above.

27 **And Jacob came unto Isaac his father.** Isaac, although represented in xxvii. as an aged man and near his death, apparently survived in lonely old age for many years.

xxxvi. 2 **Esau took his wives,** etc. This catalogue of wives cannot be harmonised altogether with previous statements: **the Hivite** is

Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, the
[1]daughter of Zibeon the Hivite; and Basemath 3
Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebaioth. And Adah 4
bare to Esau Eliphaz; and Basemath bare Reuel; and 5
Oholibamah bare Jeush, and Jalam, and Korah:
these are the sons of Esau, which were born unto him
in the land of Canaan. And Esau took his wives, and his sons, 6
and his daughters, and all the souls of his house, and his cattle,
and all his beasts, and all his possessions, which he had gathered
in the land of Canaan; and went into a land away from his
brother Jacob. For their substance was too great for them to 7
dwell together; and the land of their sojournings could not
bear them because of their cattle. And Esau dwelt in mount 8
Seir: Esau is Edom. And these are the generations of Esau 9
the father of [2]the Edomites in mount Seir: these are 10
the names of Esau's sons; Eliphaz the son of Adah
the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Basemath the
wife of Esau. And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, 11
Omar, [3]Zepho, and Gatam, and Kenaz. And 12
Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau's son; and she bare to
Eliphaz Amalek: these are the sons of Adah Esau's wife. And 13
these are the sons of Reuel; Nahath, and Zerah, Shammah, and
Mizzah: these were the sons of Basemath Esau's wife. And these 14
were the sons of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter
of Zibeon, Esau's wife: and she bare to Esau Jeush, and Jalam,
and Korah. These are the [4]dukes of the sons of Esau: 15
the sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau; duke
Teman, duke Omar, duke Zepho, duke Kenaz, duke 16
Korah, duke Gatam, duke Amalek: these are the dukes that

[1] Some ancient authorities have, *son*. See *v.* 24.

[2] Heb. *Edom*.

[3] In 1 Chr. i. 36, *Zephi*.

[4] Or, *chiefs*.

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probably an error for "Horite," one of the original inhabitants of Seir, dispossessed by the Edomites. (See *v.* 20.)

11 **Teman**—a district to the north of Edom. It was proverbially the home of "wise men." Cp. Jer. xlix. 7 and Eliphaz the Temanite, the "friend" of Job (Job ii. 11).

15 **the dukes.** This curious title is derived from the Vulgate rendering *dux*, "leader," and more properly means chieftain or the head of a clan.

came of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah.
17 And these are the sons of Reuel Esau's son; duke Nahath, duke
Zerah, duke Shammah, duke Mizzah: these are the dukes that
came of Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Base-
18 math Esau's wife. And these are the sons of Oholibamah Esau's
wife; duke Jeush, duke Jalam, duke Korah: these are the dukes
that came of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife.
19 These are the sons of Esau, and these are their dukes: the same
is Edom.
20 These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land;
21 Lotan and Shobal and Zibeon and Anah, and Dishon and Ezer
and Dishan: these are the dukes that came of the Horites, the
22 children of Seir in the land of Edom. And the children of
Lotan were Hori and [1]Hemam; and Lotan's sister
23 was Timna. And these are the children of Shobal;
[2]Alvan and Manahath and Ebal, [3]Shepho and Onam.
24 And these are the children of Zibeon; Aiah and
Anah: this is Anah who found the hot springs in the
wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon his father.
25 And these are the children of Anah; Dishon and
26 Oholibamah the daughter of Anah. And these are
the children of [4]Dishon; [5]Hemdan and Eshban and
27 Ithran and Cheran. These are the children of Ezer;
28 Bilhan and Zaavan and [6]Akan. These are the
29 children of Dishan; Uz and Aran. These are the
dukes that came of the Horites; duke Lotan, duke

[1] In 1 Chr. i. 39, *Homam.*
[2] In 1 Chr. i. 40, *Alian.*
[3] In 1 Chr. i. 40, *Shephi.*
[4] Heb. *Dishan.*
[5] In 1 Chr. i. 41, *Hamran.*
[6] In 1 Chr. i. 42, *Jaakan.*

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20 **the Horite.** Nothing is known of this early people, who were dispossessed by Edom, and partly exterminated. Some apparently intermarried with their conquerors, or retained their nationality or their family identity, as described in *vv.* 20-30. The name Horites has generally been interpreted as meaning "Troglodytes" or cave-dwellers. (Cp. Obad. 3.)

24 **who found the hot springs.** This is one of the curious little bits of personal tradition which brighten the dullness of genealogy, as sometimes in Chronicles, e.g. 1 Chron. iv. 9-10. Nothing is known of these "hot springs" or of their locality. Such springs are said to occur frequently round the Dead Sea.

Shobal, duke Zibeon, duke Anah, duke Dishon, duke Ezer, duke 30
Dishan: these are the dukes that came of the Horites, according
to their dukes in the land of Seir.

And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before 31
there reigned any king over the children of Israel. And Bela the 32
son of Beor reigned in Edom; and the name of his city was
Dinhabah. And Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah 33
reigned in his stead. And Jobab died, and Husham of the land 34
of the Temanites reigned in his stead. And Husham died, and 35
Hadad the son of Bedad, who smote Midian in the field of Moab,
reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Avith. And 36
Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his
stead. And Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth by 37
the River reigned in his stead. And Shaul died, 38
and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his
stead. And Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, 39
and [1]Hadar reigned in his stead: and the name of
his city was [2]Pau; and his wife's name was Mehetabel,
the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Me-zahab.

[1] In 1 Chr. i. 50, and some ancient authorities, *Hadad.*
[2] In 1 Chr. i. 50, *Pai.*

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31 **the kings that reigned in the land of Edom.** This seems to refer to a later and more centralised style of government than that of the "dukes" or chieftains. These Edomite kings were evidently not hereditary, and there was no fixed capital, each had his own city. The condition is parallel to that of the Canaanites, with their multitude of petty kings, at the time of Joshua's invasion.

before there reigned any king, etc. The compiler evidently wrote after the Israelite monarchy was established, i.e. as late at least as the reign of Saul. The Edomites developed more rapidly in this way than the Israelites.

35 **Hadad,** the name of a Syrian god, often found in combination as a proper name, e.g. Ben-hadad. A later Hadad an Edomite appears as one of the adversaries of Solomon (1 Kings xi.).

37 **by the River**—probably the Euphrates, though, as this is far away from Edomite territory, the meaning may be "the river of Egypt," the frontier-brook.

38 **Baal-hanan.** The prefix shows that "Baal" was one of the gods of the Edomites, as of the Canaanites. These Edomite names are

40 And these are the names of the dukes that came of Esau, according to their families, after their places, by their names; duke Timnah, duke [1]Alvah, duke 41 Jetheth; duke Oholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon; 42 duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mibzar; duke Magdiel, duke 43 Iram: these be the dukes of Edom, according to their habitations in the land of their possession. This is Esau the father of the Edomites.

[1] In 1 Chr. i. 51, *Aliah.*

CHAPTER XXXVI

Questions

1. Describe the country in which the descendants of Esau settled. What people did they dispossess?

2. What light does this chapter throw on the development of the Edomites?

Joseph hated and sold by his Brethren (xxxvii.)

1 And Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings, in the

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very similar to Hebrew names, and point to some community of language.

40 **the dukes that came of Esau.** It is not clear why this second list of "dukes" is added, unless the key is to be found in **places** and **habitations** (*vv.* 40, 43). These dukes may have had local settlements, in distinction from the mere tribal chieftains of the earlier list. It has also been suggested that the Edomite "kings" came to an end, after the subjugation of Edom by Israel, and "dukes" again took their places. (Cp. 2 Sam. viii. 14 and 1 Kings xxii. 47.)

With the exception of xxxviii., the rest of Genesis is devoted to the fascinating story of Joseph. It was evidently a favourite theme in old Israel; two accounts of it (J and E) are combined with great skill, and the whole is a literary masterpiece. It has special interest

land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, 2
being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren;
and he was a lad with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of
Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought the evil report of
them unto their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all 3
his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made
him [1]a coat of many colours. And his brethren saw 4
that their father loved him more than all his brethren;
and they hated him, and could not speak peaceably
unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he 5

[1] Or, *a long garment with sleeves.*

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(1) from its dramatic vividness; (2) its knowledge of contemporary Egypt; (3) its presentation of almost an ideal character. Joseph's patience in affliction, his purity of life, his wisdom and statesmanship, but above all his charity and forgiveness, make a picture unique in the O.T., though curiously enough Joseph is scarcely ever mentioned after Genesis. (See, however, Ps. cv. 17-22; Ecclus. xlix. 15; and Heb. xi. 22.)

xxxvii. 2 **These are the generations of Jacob.** This statement, which seems to be disconnected, is derived like *v.* 1 from P, whose scheme of *toledoth* or "generations" has been interwoven by the compiler with other matter (see note, p. 11). The words here have been separated from their context and appear only as a formal introduction to the narrative of Joseph.

the evil report of them. We do not know what was the particular conduct of his brethren which so scandalised Joseph that he incurred hatred by reporting it to their father. But the various allusions to their conduct represent them as wild, undisciplined, and passionate characters at this time. Perhaps they were neglecting the flocks and using them dishonestly.

3 **a coat of many colours.** The margin is probably more correct. This long garment with sleeves was worn apparently by people of high rank (2 Sam. xiii. 18). What no doubt specially excited the jealousy of Joseph's brothers was the belief that this garment intimated that Jacob intended to put Joseph in the position of the first-born, which Reuben had lost by his conduct (see 1 Chron. v.). The headship of the family did not necessarily depend on primogeniture; the father, like the king in later time, claimed the right to put a favourite son in the first place.

5 **And Joseph dreamed a dream.** Primitive people attached great importance to dreams, and the dream was one of the recognised ways

6 told it to his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And
he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have
7 dreamed: for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and,
lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your
sheaves came round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.
8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us?
or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated
9 him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he
dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brethren, and said,
Behold, I have dreamed yet a dream; and, behold, the sun and
10 the moon and eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told
it to his father, and to his brethren; and his father rebuked him,
and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed?
Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down
11 ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him;
12 but his father kept the saying in mind. And his brethren went
13 to feed their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel said unto
Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come,
and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I.
14 And he said to him, Go now, see whether it be well with thy
brethren, and well with the flock; and bring me word again. So
he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.
15 And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in

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in which the gift of prophecy was exercised (cp. Num. xii. 6). There are many instances in Scripture of Divine communications being made in this way. Modern psychology has drawn attention again to the value of dreams as indications of character, nor is it at all impossible that intimations of the future may be conveyed through them. The "unconscious mind," which is a storehouse of forgotten memories and submerged instincts and feelings, may be also peculiarly open to impressions from some supernatural source, whether evil or good. The uncontrolled imagination of the dreamer clothes these materials in images, often grotesque or inconsequent, derived from ordinary waking experiences. Joseph's dreams were evidently prophetic—we may either suppose that the boy's hidden ambitions expressed themselves in figures from the harvest field or the starry heavens, or that some real premonition of his future greatness was given to him while asleep, and took shape in his dreams.

the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou?
And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they 16
are feeding *the flock*. And the man said, They are departed hence: 17
for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went
after his brethren, and found them in Dothan. And they saw 18
him afar off, and before he came near unto them, they conspired
against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, 19
this [1]dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let 20
us slay him, and cast him into one of the pits, and
we will say, An evil beast hath devoured him: and
we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard 21
it, and delivered him out of their hand; and said, Let us not take
his life. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood; cast him 22
into this pit that is in the wilderness, but lay no hand upon him:
that he might deliver him out of their hand, to restore him to his
father. And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his 23
brethren, that they stript Joseph of his coat, the coat of many
colours that was on him; and they took him, and cast him into 24
the pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And 25

[1] Heb. *master of dreams.*

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17 **Dothan,** or Dothaim="two wells." See 2 Kings vi. 13-15. The place is 15 miles north of Shechem, and is noted still for its rich pasturage. The name is still preserved in a mound called *Tell-Dothan*.

18 **And they saw him afar off.** North of Shechem is a high hill which Joseph would have to surmount before descending into the plain of Dothan. His figure might easily be seen on the skyline by his brothers some time before he reached them.

21 **And Reuben heard it,** etc. The narrative is composite. In E Reuben appears as the boy's champion, and Judah in J (*v.* 26); but it is not impossible that both of them may have made a protest against a cold-blooded murder. Reuben intends afterwards to save Joseph's life, and he uses the well-known dread of bloodshed to deter his brethren; Judah does likewise, but proposes instead to make money out of their victim.

22 **this pit.** This was no doubt one of the underground cisterns, which were commonly used for the storage of water for the flocks during dry seasons. It would be impossible to climb out of it, as the sides converged to a narrow opening covered by a stone. (See also Jer. xxxviii.; Zech. ix. 11.)

they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a travelling company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing [1]spicery and [2]balm and [3]myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.
26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it
27 if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our flesh.
28 And his brethren hearkened unto him. And there passed by Midianites, merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty
29 pieces of silver. And they brought Joseph into Egypt. And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in
30 the pit; and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?

[1] Or, *gum tragacanth.* Or, *storax.*
[2] Or, *mastic.*
[3] Or, *ladanum.*

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25 **a travelling company of Ishmaelites.** The word seems to be used here generally for the nomad peoples of the east country, who probably acted as armed convoys for the traders. They are called Midianites in *vv.* 28 and 36 (E). Dothan was on a regular trade-route from the East to Egypt, through Beth-shean, the valley of Jezreel, and the coast road.

spicery and balm and myrrh. These commodities were no doubt much in request in Egypt for medical and religious purposes, and for embalming the dead. There is considerable uncertainty as to their exact nature. **Spicery** may be simply a general name for aromatic gums or drugs. The margin suggests two special kinds, the gum of the "tragacanth" or "goat's thorn," or "storax," from the tree of that name. **Balm** or "balsam" was much valued as a medicine and a perfume. It is associated with Gilead in Jer. viii. 22, xlvi. 11, though it is doubtful whether it was actually found there or was imported from farther East. It may have been called "balm of Gilead" in a general way, as indicating the region whence the traders brought it. **Myrrh**—this is not the ordinary word for that drug, but is probably "ladanum" as in margin—a resinous gum derived from the rock-rose and used as a perfume.

Evidently these merchantmen were ready to traffic in slaves as well as in ordinary commodities.

28 **twenty pieces of silver.** The value of a slave, according to Exod. xxi. 32, was thirty shekels of silver. Joseph was only seventeen (*v.* 2), and so the price may have been less; or the Midianites may have driven a hard bargain, as the circumstances were suspicious.

And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a he-goat, and dipped 31
the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colours, 32
and they brought it to their father; and said, This
have we found: know now whether it be thy son's
coat or not. And he knew it, and said, It is my 33
son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph
is without doubt torn in pieces. And Jacob rent his 34
garments, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and
mourned for his son many days. And all his sons 35
and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but
he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will
go down to [1]the grave to my son mourning. And
his father wept for him. And the [2]Midianites 36
sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of
Pharaoh's, the [3]captain of the guard.

[1] Heb. *Sheol*, the name of the abode of the dead, answering to the Greek Hades, Acts ii. 27.
[2] Heb. *Medanites*.
[3] Heb. *chief of the executioners*.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Questions

1. What is meant by "a coat of many colours"; "Ishmaelites"; "spicery"; "Sheol"?

2. Describe Joseph's dreams and their effect.

3. What evidence is there in this chapter of a combination of narratives?

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35 **I will go down to the grave.** The margin correctly explains the Hebrew word. There was as yet no revelation as to the after-life, and the current Hebrew idea then, and for long afterwards, was that the dead had a mere phantasmal existence in Sheol, purposeless and hopeless. The ancient Greeks had a similar conception (see, e.g., Homer, *Odyssey* xi.).

36 **Potiphar,** an Egyptian name="the gift of Ra," the sun-god. The Pharaoh whom he served was no doubt one of the Hyksos rulers of Egypt (see p. 195).

the captain of the guard. Another interpretation (cp. margin) is the chief of the king's slaughterers or butchers.

The Children of Judah (xxxviii.)

1 And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from
his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name
2 was Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain
Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her, and went in
3 unto her. And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his
4 name Er. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she
5 called his name Onan. And she yet again bare a son, and called
his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him.
6 And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was
7 Tamar. And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of
8 the LORD; and the LORD slew him. And Judah said unto Onan,
Go in unto thy brother's wife, and [1]perform the duty
of an husband's brother unto her, and raise up seed
9 to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should
not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's
wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest he should give seed to
10 his brother. And the thing which he did was evil in the sight of
11 the LORD: and he slew him also. Then said Judah to Tamar his
daughter in law, Remain a widow in thy father's house, till Shelah
my son be grown up: for he said, Lest he also die, like his brethren
12 And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house. And in process

[1] See Deut. xxv. 5.

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xxxviii. This chapter breaks the connection of the story of Joseph, and may be omitted in class-work on Genesis. Its purpose is probably to show that there was a Canaanite admixture with the tribe of Judah, and to explain the connection of the families or clans of Perez (cp. xlvi. 12, note) and Zerah with that tribe.

8 **the duty of an husband's brother.** The Mosaic institution of the *levirate* marriage (i.e. marriage with a brother-in-law) Deut. xxv. 5, alluded to by the Sadducees in their controversy with our Lord (St. Matt. xxii. 24), is here seen to have been a very ancient family custom. To prevent, if possible, a family becoming extinct, it was considered the duty of a man to marry his brother's widow, if there were no children; any child of this second marriage taking the name and the possessions of the dead (cp. Ruth iv. 1-6).

of time Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. And it was told Tamar, saying, 13
Behold, thy father in law goeth up to Timnah to shear his sheep.
And she put off from her the garments of her widowhood, and 14
covered herself with her veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gate of Enaim, which is by the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she was not given unto him to wife.
When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; for she 15
had covered her face. And he turned unto her by the way, and 16
said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee: for he knew not that she was his daughter in law. And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me? And he said, 17
I will send thee a kid of the goats from the flock. And she said,
Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it? And he said, What 18
pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet and thy cord, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave them to her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him. And she arose, 19
and went away, and put off her veil from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood. And Judah sent the kid of 20
the goats by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not. Then he asked the men of her place, 21
saying, Where is the [1]harlot, that was at Enaim by the way side? And they said, There hath been no harlot here. And he returned to Judah, and 22
said, I have not found her; and also the men of the place said, There hath been no harlot here. And 23
Judah said, Let her take it to her, lest we be put to shame: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her. And it came to pass about three months 24

[1] Heb. *kedeshah*, that is, a woman dedicated to impure heathen worship. See Deut. xxiii. 17, Hos. iv. 14.

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18 Thy signet and thy cord, and thy staff. These would be the insignia of a chieftain, by which he could be identified. The signet was worn, as it is still among the Arabs, suspended by a cord round the neck. The staff, probably the mark of the head of a family, and not necessarily signifying old age, would be carved and ornamented.

after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and moreover, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be
25 burnt. When she was brought forth, she sent to her father in law, saying, By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and
26 the cords, and the staff. And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She is more righteous than I; forasmuch as I gave her not
27 to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more. And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins were
28 in her womb. And it came to pass, when she travailed, that one put out a hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand
29 a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first. And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, [1]Wherefore hast thou made a breach for thyself? therefore his
30 name was called [2]Perez. And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zerah.

[1] Or, *How hast thou made a breach! a breach be upon thee!*
[2] That is, *A breach.*

Joseph's Temptation (xxxix.)

1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hand of the Ishmaelites, which had brought him down
2 thither. And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous
3 man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD
4 made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found

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xxxix. 3 **And his master saw that the LORD was with him.** This, of course, does not imply that Potiphar was a worshipper of Jehovah, but that he recognised in the character and ability of Joseph marks of some special Divine favour. Joseph both in prosperity and adversity lived his life as in the presence of Jehovah. God's grace and help were manifest both in Joseph himself and in everything he put his hand to.

grace in his sight, and he ministered unto him: and he made him
overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.
And it came to pass from the time that he made him overseer in 5
his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the
Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD
was upon all that he had, in the house and in the field. And he 6
left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and [1]he knew
not aught *that was* with him, save the bread which
he did eat. And Joseph was comely, and well
favoured. And it came to pass after these things, that his master's 7
wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.
But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, 8
Behold, my master [2]knoweth not what is with me
in the house, and he hath put all that he hath into my
hand; [3]there is none greater in this house than I; 9
neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee,
because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wicked-
ness, and sin against God? And it came to pass, as she spake 10

[1] Or, *with him he knew not.*

[2] Or, *knoweth not with me what is*, etc.

[3] Or, *he is not.*

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4 **overseer over his house.** This was a regular office in the houses of the wealthy Egyptians. Joseph was promoted to it, after he had proved himself efficient in personal service and won his master's favour.

6 **save the bread which he did eat.** This may simply mean that his master left everything so absolutely in Joseph's hands that he did not even have to think about the provision of his meals; Joseph did it all, and his master had only to eat them. Or there may be a reference to some religious scruples about food prepared by a non-Egyptian; Potiphar therefore looked after that himself, as the only exception to Joseph's universal care of the household.

9 **how then can I do this great wickedness,** etc. This most notable answer to temptation illustrates the simplicity and purity of Joseph's life, and stands out in contrast to the filthy conduct of Onan and the undisciplined passion of Reuben and Judah. Joseph scorns the temptation as an act of disloyalty and meanness towards his master. But his reply goes much deeper. He looks upon adultery as a sin not merely against man but against God. He has grasped the profound spiritual truth that sin is essentially an act of disobedience to the law and will of God. So David confesses, when convicted of adultery and murder, "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Sam. xii.

to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by
11 her, *or* to be with her. And it came to pass about this time, that
he went into the house to do his work; and there was none of the
12 men of the house there within. And she caught him by his
garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her
13 hand, and fled, and got him out. And it came to pass, when she
saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth,
14 that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them,
saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us;
he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice:
15 and it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and
cried, that he left his garment by me, and fled, and got him out.
16 And she laid up his garment by her, until his master came home.
17 And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The
Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto
18 me to mock me: and it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and
19 cried, that he left his garment by me, and fled out. And it came
to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she
spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me;
20 that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and
put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were
21 bound: and he was there in the prison. But the LORD was with
Joseph, and shewed kindness unto him, and gave him favour in
22 the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison
committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the
prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.
23 The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under
his hand, because the LORD was with him; and that which he
did, the LORD made it to prosper.

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13), and the great psalm of penitence strikes the same note, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" (Ps. li. 4).

It is this aspect of sin which places the story of Joseph on a higher religious level than the similar stories told of resistance to temptation by Hippolytus in Greek legend, and by Bata in the Egyptian "Tale of the Two Brothers" (twelfth century B.C.).

14 **an Hebrew.** See note on xl. 15.

20 **the prison**—literally "the round house."

Joseph the Interpreter of Dreams (xl.)

And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the 1
king of Egypt and his baker offended their lord the king of Egypt.
And Pharaoh was wroth against his two officers, against the chief 2
of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. And he put 3
them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the
prison, the place where Joseph was bound. And the captain of 4
the guard charged Joseph with them, and he ministered unto
them: and they continued a season in ward. And they dreamed a 5
dream both of them, each man his dream, in one night, each man
according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the
baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison. And 6
Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and saw them, and,
behold, they were sad. And he asked Pharaoh's officers that 7
were with him in ward in his master's house, saying, Wherefore
look ye so sadly to-day? And they said unto him, We have 8
dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it. And
Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God?
tell it me, I pray you. And the chief butler told his dream to 9
Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before
me; and in the vine were three branches: and it was as though 10

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xl. 1 **the butler,** i.e. one who has to do with "bottles"; the Hebrew word occurs in Neh. i. 11, and is rendered "cupbearer." He was a high official who had charge of the wine for the royal table.

his baker. This would be the officer who superintended the cooks and confectioners of the royal household, and would probably, like the butler, be in personal attendance on the Pharaoh.

5 **each man according to the interpretation of his dream,** i.e. the dream of each man had its special and personal meaning for the dreamer, as was unfolded shortly by Joseph.

8 **Do not interpretations belong to God?** Cp. xli. 16. Joseph does not claim to be able to interpret dreams by his own personal sagacity. He acts only as a prophet, interpreting the Divine meaning. He shows himself here, as in xli., what his brethren had scornfully called him, "a master of dreams" (xxvii. 19, margin).

it budded, *and* its blossoms shot forth ; *and* the clusters thereof
11 brought forth ripe grapes : and Pharaoh's cup was in my hand ;
and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and
12 I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand. And Joseph said unto him,
This is the interpretation of it : the three branches are three days ;
13 within yet three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore
thee unto thine office : and thou shalt give Pharaoh's cup into
his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.
14 But have me in thy remembrance when it shall be well with thee,
and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of
15 me unto 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 the dungeon.
16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he
said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and, behold, three
17 baskets of white bread were on my head : and in the uppermost
basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh ; and

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11 **I took the grapes, and pressed them,** etc. This may refer to the drinking of fresh grape-juice. But more likely it is part of the swift movement of a dream, in which the vine buds, blooms, bears fruit, and fills the royal cup with wine as it were in one continuous picture.

15 **the land of the Hebrews.** The name "Hebrew" is generally interpreted as "one who crosses over," i.e. probably the Euphrates—an immigrant from the East; and so would naturally be used by other nations to describe the Israelites, or by Israelites to distinguish themselves from previous inhabitants of Canaan. A formidable people called *Khabiru* are mentioned in the Tel-el-Amarna letters as invading Palestine ; the name is practically the same as "Hebrews," and may refer to the attack of Joshua's armies.

It has been thought that the use of the word in this passage is an anachronism due to the compiler. But it may have been in use as early as this. Cp. xxxix. 14, 17, where "Hebrew" seems to be used quite naturally to describe a foreigner.

16 **three baskets of white bread were on my head.** The description is true to Egyptian custom, as seen in ancient pictures found in the tombs of Egypt. Cp. Murray's *Bible Dictionary*, pp. 95, 116. It is not clear whether the words mean that these were baskets full of bread, or empty baskets intended for that purpose, only the top basket being full of **bakemeats,** i.e. confectionery.

the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head. And 18
Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: the
three baskets are three days; within yet three days shall Pharaoh 19
lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and
the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee. And it came to pass 20
the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast
unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler
and the head of the chief baker among his servants. And he 21
restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave
the cup into Pharaoh's hand: but he hanged the chief baker: 22
as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet did not the chief butler 23
remember Joseph, but forgat him.

CHAPTERS XXXIX–XL

Questions

1. What light do these chapters throw on the character of Joseph?

2. What is the meaning of "an Hebrew"?

3. What were the dreams of Pharaoh's officers, and how did Joseph interpret them?

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17 **the birds did eat them.** This was naturally an evil omen, as the rapacious birds of the East are always ready to swoop down upon sacrifices or banquets and spoil them. Cp. xv. 11 and the classical legend of the Harpies. The baker's dream was somewhat of a nightmare; he was losing what was prepared for Pharaoh, and was helpless to prevent it. It contrasts with the butler's dream, which was pleasant and completed.

20 **he lifted up the head,** etc. There is a grim humour about the double use of the word, which describes both the metaphorical and the literal "lifting up."

The Exaltation of Joseph (xli.)

1 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh
2 dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the [1]river. And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, well favoured and fatfleshed; and they fed in the
3 reed-grass. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and
4 stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured
5 and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. And he slept and dreamed a second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one
6 stalk, [2]rank and good. And, behold, seven ears, thin and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them.
7 And the thin ears swallowed up the seven rank and full ears.

[1] Heb. *Yeor*, that is, the Nile.

[2] Heb. *fat*.

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xli. 1 **Pharaoh.** This is simply a title of the reigning sovereign of Egypt, and it is a matter of conjecture what the ruler's personal name was. The first king of Egypt who is specified by name in Scripture is Shishak (1 Kings xiv. 25), and the first whose title and name are combined is Pharaoh-Necho (2 Kings xxiii. 29). Joseph's Pharaoh probably was one of the Hyksos (or "Shepherd-Kings"), a line of Semitic invaders who possessed themselves of Egypt and reigned for 511 years until they were driven out by a descendant of the ancient royal line. Tradition identified this Pharaoh with Apepi, the last of the Hyksos.

dreamed. The dreams of Pharaoh, like those of his servants, were, as is natural, coloured by the ideas of waking life. The Nile is the great feature of Egypt, on which its fertility depends, and was held sacred. The cow, again, is sacred to the greatest of the Egyptian divinities, and the goddess Hat-hor was represented with the head of a cow. The swallowing up of the fat kine, and the rich ears of corn, by the lean cows and the thin ears is the sort of thing which happens in a dream, though it seems absurd and impossible when one is awake.

6 **blasted with the east wind.** The east wind, bad enough in England, is a dreadful visitation in the East, and is often alluded to in the O.T. as blasting and destroying. (Cp. Ezek. xvii. 10; Hosea xiii. 15; Jonah iv. 8.) It is hot and dry, and carries with it clouds of dust.

And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream. And it came 8
to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent
and called for all the [1]magicians of Egypt, and all the
wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream;
but there was none that could interpret them unto
Pharaoh. Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, 9
saying, I [2]do remember my faults this day: Pharaoh 10
was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the house of
the captain of the guard, me and the chief baker: and we dreamed 11
a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according
to the interpretation of his dream. And there was with us there 12
a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard;
and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each
man according to his dream he did interpret. And it came to 13
pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; [3]me he
restored unto mine office, and him he hanged. Then 14
Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought
him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved him-
self, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. And 15
Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is
none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that
when thou hearest a dream thou canst interpret it. And Joseph 16
answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give
Pharaoh an answer of peace. And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, 17
In my dream, behold, I stood upon the brink of the river: and, 18

[1] Or, *sacred scribes.*
[2] Or, *will make mention of.*
[3] Or, *I was restored ... and he was hanged.*

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8 **the magicians of Egypt.** Egypt was the home of all sorts of magic, but the word used seems to refer to some special class of professional experts in occult matters. The margin, "sacred scribes," is probably correct. These were a priestly order, who are represented on the monuments with a pen and a book. Possibly **the wise men** were also a separate class or order.

14 **he shaved himself.** A detail that shows knowledge of Egyptian customs. The Egyptians were particular about personal cleanliness, and shaving was universal except among the lower classes. Joseph as a foreigner in prison had no doubt worn a beard, but he could not appear with it in the presence of Pharaoh.

16 **It is not in me,** etc. Cp. xl. 8.

behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and
19 well favoured; and they fed in the reed-grass: and, behold,
seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured
and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for
20 badness: and the lean and ill favoured kine did eat up the first
21 seven fat kine: and when they had eaten them up, it could not
be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill
22 favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. And I saw in my
dream, and, behold, seven ears came up upon one stalk, full and
23 good: and, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, *and* blasted with
24 the east wind, sprung up after them: and the thin ears swallowed
up the seven good ears: and I told it unto the magicians; but
25 there was none that could declare it to me. And Joseph said unto
Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: what God is about to do
26 he hath declared unto Pharaoh. The seven good kine are seven
years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.
27 And the seven lean and ill favoured kine that came up after them
are seven years, and also the seven empty ears blasted with the
28 east wind; they shall be seven years of famine. That is the
thing which I spake unto Pharaoh: what God is about to do he
29 hath shewed unto Pharaoh. Behold, there come seven years of
30 great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: and there shall
arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall
be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume
31 the land; and the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason
of that famine which followeth; for it shall be very grievous.
32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is
because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly
33 bring it to pass. Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man
34 discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let
Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint overseers over the land, and
take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous
35 years. And let them gather all the food of these good years that
come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh for food in the
36 cities, and let them keep it. And the food shall be for a store to

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35 **in the cities.** The state-granaries in the principal cities were

the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.
And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes 37
of all his servants. And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we 38
find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is? And 39
Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee
all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou: thou shalt be 40
over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people
[1]be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than
thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have 41
set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh 42
took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it upon
Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of [2]fine
linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he 43

[1] Or, *order themselves*; or, *do homage.*
[2] Or, *cotton.*

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already existing. Corn was the chief source of Egyptian wealth, and there was a corn-tax, paid in kind, and a superintendent who had general oversight. (See picture of Egyptian granary being filled, in Handcock's "Latest Light on Bible Lands," reproduced in Cambridge Bible). The machinery for carrying out Joseph's plan, therefore, was ready to hand, which he suggests should be developed by increasing the corn-tax to 20 per cent. and appointing special officials. Pharaoh not only entrusts the whole scheme to Joseph, but makes him at one stroke the highest officer in the land="the grand vizier." There is considerable similarity between this elevation of Joseph and that of Daniel at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar (Dan. ii. and v.).

38 **in whom the spirit of God is.** This does not, of course, mean that either Pharaoh or the writer of the narrative had any idea of the Holy Spirit as revealed to Christians. It was a general expression signifying the possession of any gift which seemed supernatural or beyond the ordinary experience of mankind, whether it was wisdom, courage, or skill in any art.

42 **vestures of fine linen.** This was a characteristic Egyptian dress, worn by priests and personages of rank. It was also used for wrapping mummies. Flax was largely cultivated in Egypt, linen-weaving existed from very early times, and Egyptian linen was famous in the ancient world. The gold neck-chain was also a usual Egyptian decoration for distinguished service to the State.

made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, [1]Bow the knee: and he
44 set him over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land
45 of Egypt. And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-phera priest of On. And
46 Joseph went out over the land of Egypt. And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land
47 of Egypt. And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought
48 forth by handfuls. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city,
49 laid he up in the same. And Joseph laid up corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was
50 without number. And unto Joseph were born two sons before the year of famine came, which Asenath the daughter
51 of Poti-phera priest of On bare unto him. And Joseph called the name of the firstborn [2]Manasseh: For, *said he*, God hath made me forget all my
52 toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he [3]Ephraim: For God hath made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.
53 And the seven years of plenty, that was in the

[1] *Abrech*, probably an Egyptian word, similar in sound to the Hebrew word meaning *to kneel*.

[2] That is, *making to forget*.

[3] From a Hebrew word signifying *to be fruitful*.

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43 **Bow the knee.** See margin. A word of very uncertain meaning, but probably the text translation is correct.

45 **Zaphenath-paneah.** Several meanings of this new name have been suggested, but the most probable is the beautiful and suggestive phrase "God spoke and he lived." The advent and elevation of Joseph were regarded as direct acts of God's providence.

Poti-phera, i.e. "gift of Ra" (the sun-god): the full form of the name which has already appeared as Potiphar.

On, or Heliopolis ("city of the sun"). Here was a great temple of

land of Egypt, came to an end. And the seven years of 54
famine began to come, according as Joseph had said: and there
was famine in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was
bread. And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people 55
cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the
Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. And the 56
famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all
the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine
was sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt 57
to Joseph for to buy corn; because the famine was sore in all
the earth.

CHAPTER XLI

Questions

1. How did Joseph interpret Pharaoh's dreams, and what advice did he give?

2. What honours did Pharaoh give to Joseph?

3. Compare this narrative with the later story of Daniel.

4. Explain "the magicians of Egypt"; "Zaphenath-paneah"; "priest of On."

Ra (see Herodotus, ii. 3). "Cleopatra's Needle," now in London, was one of the obelisks that formerly stood in front of this temple.

54 **the seven years of famine.** Famines in Egypt are not caused by deficiency in rainfall, which is usually very slight (cp. Zech. xiv. 17, 18), but by the failure of the annual rising of the Nile. Inscriptions have been found recording such calamities and the measures taken to alleviate them (see Driver, *Genesis*). This famine seems to have been general, **in all lands,** but according to xlvii. 13-15 the land of Canaan was especially affected.

Joseph's Brethren in Egypt: First Visit (xlii.)

1 Now Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, and Jacob said
2 unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said,
Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down
thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not
3 die. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn from
4 Egypt. But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with
his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.
5 And the sons of Israel came to buy among those that came: for
6 the famine was in the land of Canaan. And Joseph was the
governor over the land; he it was that sold to all the people of
the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down them-
7 selves to him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph saw his
brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them,
and spake roughly with them; and he said unto them, Whence
come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food.
8 And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. And
9 Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and

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xlii. 7 **spake roughly with them.** Joseph's harshness to his brethren was alien from his character, and was assumed for a purpose. Throughout his dealing with them he was evidently testing them whether they were changed from the cruel and jealous persons he remembered, and were worthy of recognition and forgiveness. Would they now show themselves as callous towards their father and Benjamin as they had been towards himself? Joseph's action is that of a strong and just man. To have welcomed and forgiven them without any expression or proof of penitence on their part would have been weak sentimentalism. Their sin against Joseph had been a very heavy and unnatural crime. Some severity was necessary, not so much to punish them as to prove them.

8 **but they knew not him.** This is not surprising. Joseph was a lad of seventeen when his brethren sold him. He was now about thirty-nine (cp. xxxvii. 2, xli. 46, 54, xlv. 6). Moreover he was shaved, wearing Egyptian dress, and speaking a language his brethren could not understand.

9 **And Joseph remembered the dreams.** He had dreamed of his

said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land
ye are come. And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy 10
food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons; we are 11
true men, thy servants are no spies. And he said unto them, Nay, 12
but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said, 13
We thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the
land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is this day with our
father, and one is not. And Joseph said unto them, That is it 14
that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies: hereby ye shall be 15
proved: by the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except
your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let 16
him fetch your brother, and ye shall be bound, that your words
may be proved, whether there be truth in you: or else by the
life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies. And he put them all together 17
into ward three days. And Joseph said unto them the third day, 18
This do, and live; for I fear God: if ye be true men, let one of 19
your brethren be bound in your prison house; but go ye, carry
corn for the famine of your houses: and bring your youngest 20
brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not

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brethren's sheaves, and the eleven stars, bowing down to him (xxxvii.). Now he sees his brethren before him "with their faces to the earth," in deference to the majesty of the great vizier.

Ye are spies. A very plausible accusation. Egypt has no natural frontier defences, and on the Eastern side lay open to incursion. The excuse of buying corn might very well cloak a visit of espionage from that direction.

14 **That is it that I spake.** Joseph simply repeats his accusation, and implies that the very statement they have made will give him the means of showing that they are liars and spies.

15 **by the life of Pharaoh.** Apparently a common Egyptian oath. The Egyptians regarded the Pharaoh as divine, and to swear by his life was equivalent to swearing by God.

18 **I fear God.** Joseph means that he will refrain from any conduct which might seem contrary to the justice which men, even of different religions, believe that God requires.

21 die. And they did so. And they said one to another, We are
verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of
his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore
22 is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them,
saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child;
and ye would not hear? therefore also, behold, his blood is
23 required. And they knew not that Joseph understood them;
24 for there was an interpreter between them. And he turned
himself about from them, and wept; and he returned to them,
and spake to them, and took Simeon from among them, and bound
25 him before their eyes. Then Joseph commanded to fill their
vessels with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack,
and to give them provision for the way: and thus was it done
26 unto them. And they laded their asses with their corn, and
27 departed thence. And as one of them opened his sack to give
his ass provender in the lodging place, he espied his money; and,
28 behold, it was in the mouth of his sack. And he said unto his

21 **We are verily guilty,** etc. The brethren had not forgotten their conduct towards Joseph; doubtless the memory of it had remained on their consciences ever since; and now it springs to life, when they find themselves in peril, in the very country into which they had sold their brother. It is true to human nature. The brethren were not fundamentally bad men: their crime had been committed in a fit of ungovernable passion, and was still not beyond repentance.

22 **Spake I not unto you,** etc. See xxxvii. 21, 22.

24 **and took Simeon from among them.** Simeon was the next oldest to Reuben. The latter Joseph no doubt spared because of his old kindness, though the brethren could not guess that.

25 **to restore every man's money.** There is an Oriental touch about this secret restoring of the money. Perhaps the idea was to test them whether they would now leave Simeon to his fate and keep the money and refuse to return. They came very successfully through this test (xliii.).

27 **the lodging place.** The coast-road from Egypt to Palestine would be much frequented, and there may have been regular lodging places, or customary shelters for travellers; perhaps even caravanserais or inns, though such places were very rough affairs, not providing food or provender, but simply shelter for the night, or an enclosure to tether the animals.

brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they turned trembling one to another, saying, What is this that God hath done unto us? 29 And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that had befallen them; saying, 30 The man, the lord of the land, spake roughly with us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no 31 spies: we be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and 32 the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. And the man, the lord of the land, said unto us, Hereby shall I 33 know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren with me, and take *corn for* the famine of your houses, and go your way: and bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that 34 ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick in the land. And it came to 35 pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were afraid. And Jacob their 36 father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are [1]against me. And Reuben spake 37 unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. And he said, My son shall not go down with you; 38 for his brother is dead, and he only is left: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to [2]the grave.

[1] Or, *upon.*

[2] Heb. *Sheol.* See ch. xxxvii. 35.

CHAPTER XLII

Questions

1. How were Joseph's early dreams fulfilled?

2. Why did Joseph treat his brethren with apparent harshness?

35 **And it came to pass,** etc. The inconsistency as to the time of

3. What effect did this produce on the brethren ?

4. On what conditions were they allowed to return from Egypt ?

Joseph's Brethren in Egypt : Second Visit (xliii.)

1 And the famine was sore in the land. And it came to pass,
2 when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of
Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.
3 And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest
unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be
4 with you. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down
5 and buy thee food : but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go
down : for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except
6 your brother be with you. And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye
so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother ?
7 And they said, The man asked straitly concerning ourselves, and
concerning our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive ? have
ye *another* brother ? and we told him according to the tenor of
these words : could we in any wise know that he would say,
8 Bring your brother down ? And Judah said unto Israel his
father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go ; that we
may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones.
9 I will be surety for him ; of my hand shalt thou require him : if
I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, [1] Heb. *I*
10 then [1]let me bear the blame for ever : for except we *shall have*
had lingered, surely we had now returned a second *sinned*
11 time. And their father Israel said unto them, If it *against*
thee for ever.

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discovering the money between this verse and 27 is explained by the fact of the combination of the two narratives, J and E.

xliii. 3 **And Judah spake unto him.** Judah takes the lead in the J narrative, from which this chapter is chiefly derived, as Reuben does in E.

be so now, do this; take of the choice fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little [1]balm, and a little honey, spicery and myrrh, [2]nuts, and almonds: and take double money in your hand; 12 and the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks carry again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight: take also your brother, and arise, go 13 again unto the man: and [3]God Almighty give you 14 mercy before the man, that he may release unto you your other brother and Benjamin. And if I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

[1] See ch. xxxvii. 25.
[2] That is, *pistachio nuts.*
[3] Heb. *El Shaddai.*

And the men took that present, and they took double money 15 in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph. And when Joseph saw Ben- 16 jamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, Bring the men into the house, and slay, and make ready; for the men shall dine with me at noon. And the man did as Joseph bade; and 17 the man brought the men into Joseph's house. And the men 18 were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may [4]seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses. And they came near to the 19 steward of Joseph's house, and they spake unto him at the door

[4] Heb. *roll himself upon us.*

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11 **the choice fruits of the land.** These, as appears from the catalogue of them, were not staple foods, which the famine, of course, had exhausted, but special dainties or valuable products laid up in store, which in that simple state of society would seem to be acceptable gifts to offer to a great man. For **balm, myrrh,** and **spicery** see notes on xxxvii.

a little honey. The honey of Palestine was famous: though some commentators think that what is meant here is "*dibs*," a confection made of boiled-down grape juice.

nuts—the pistachio-nut is still cultivated and much valued in Syria and Palestine.

14 **God Almighty**—*El Shaddai.* See note on xvii. 1.

19 **the steward of Joseph's house.** A great official like Joseph would

20 of the house, and said, Oh my lord, we came indeed down at the
21 first time to buy food: and it came to pass, when we came to the
lodging place, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, every man's
money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight:
22 and we have brought it again in our hand. And other money
have we brought down in our hand to buy food: we know not
23 who put our money in our sacks. And he said, Peace be to you,
fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you
treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought
24 Simeon out unto them. And the man brought the men into
Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet;
25 and he gave their asses provender. And they made ready the
present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they
26 should eat bread there. And when Joseph came home, they
brought him the present which was in their hand into the house,
27 and bowed down themselves to him to the earth. And he asked
them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man
28 of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? And they said, Thy
servant our father is well, he is yet alive. And they bowed the
29 head, and made obeisance. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw
Benjamin his brother, his mother's son, and said, Is this your

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naturally have a trusted and confidential steward to preside over the arrangements of his household. Joseph himself had occupied a similar position in Potiphar's house. The Egyptian houses of the higher class were large and splendid. A vestibule led to a great dining-room, behind which were the bedrooms and domestic offices, and behind these again the women's apartments and the garden. The ten brethren, overawed at their reception, and frightened at what it might mean, make a clean breast about the returned money to the steward before they actually enter the house. They are reassured by his kind words, which no doubt Joseph had instructed him to say.

23 **I had your money,** i.e. "I can vouch that it really was paid. What happened afterwards was a Divine interposition. There is no need to be in fear about it. It was a sign of God's good-will."

25 **eat bread**—the regular O.T. phrase for partaking of a meal, whatever the viands might be (cp. *v.* 31). In this case meat in plenty was provided (*v.* 16), which would seem to these shepherd guests, who seldom ate flesh, a sign of great festivity.

youngest brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. And Joseph made haste; 30
for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there. And 31
he washed his face, and came out; and he refrained himself, and said, Set on bread. And they set on for him by himself, and for 32
them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.
And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, 33
and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one with another. And [1]he took 34
and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and [2]were merry with him.

[1] Or, *messes were taken.*
[2] Heb. *drank largely.*

CHAPTER XLIII

Questions

1. Describe the second mission of Jacob's sons to Egypt.

2. How were they received in Egypt?

3. What evidence of knowledge of Egyptian habits and customs is shown in this and the preceding chapter?

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32 **for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.** The Egyptians, from religious scruples, like the later Jews, or the higher castes of India, were very exclusive in their social habits, refusing to eat in company with those of a different religion, or even to use their cooking or eating utensils. At this banquet Joseph, as befitted his rank, sat in a separate place; the Egyptian guests sat by themselves, and then again separately the eleven brothers. Egyptian banqueters did not sit round a table, but on rows of chairs facing a sideboard, on which the meats were displayed. Portions were carried to each guest. The feast was adorned with flowers and accompanied by music.

33 **the men marvelled**—first, no doubt, at the splendour of the entertainment, and then at the knowledge shown of their relative ages.

34 **five times so much.** A specially honoured guest was given a

Joseph and his Brethren: Judah's Appeal (xliv.)

1 And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the
men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every
2 man's money in his sack's mouth. And put my cup, the silver
cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money.
3 And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken. As
soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and
4 their asses. *And* when they were gone out of the city, and were
not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the
men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Where-
5 fore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this it in which my
lord drinketh, and whereby he indeed divineth? ye have done
6 evil in so doing. And he overtook them, and he spake unto them
7 these words. And they said unto him, Wherefore speaketh my
lord such words as these? God forbid that thy servants should
8 do such a thing. Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks'
mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan:

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larger amount of food than the others; no doubt the survival of a very primitive custom. Cp. 1 Sam. ix. 23, 24, where a whole joint is set before Saul by Samuel's orders.

xliv. 2 **And put my cup,** etc. Joseph now applies his final test. The brethren have shown their honesty and truthfulness, and their faithfulness to the hostage, Simeon. The more serious charge of having stolen the grand vizier's silver goblet will show whether they are ready to surrender Benjamin to an undeserved fate, to save themselves.

5 **whereby he indeed divineth.** This cup is stated to have been specially valuable to Joseph, because he used it for the purpose of *divination*. Whether or not Joseph had really adopted this superstitious practice, in accordance with the custom of Egyptian priests or magicians, we cannot tell. But this "hydromancy" or divination by water, was well known in ancient times, and is said to be still practised in the East. Water is poured into the cup, and then particles of metal are thrown in: the ripples thus made in the water are supposed to give oracles, and disclose secrets. It was, of course, a species of "fortune-telling." For pictures of Egyptian cups see "Cup" in Murray's *Bible Dictionary*.

how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold ?
With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, let him die, and we 9
also will be my lord's bondmen. And he said, Now also let it be 10
according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be
my bondman; and ye shall be blameless. Then they hasted, and 11
took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every
man his sack. And he searched, *and* began at the eldest, and left 12
at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.
Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and 13
returned to the city. And Judah and his brethren came to 14
Joseph's house; and he was yet there: and they fell before him
on the ground. And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this 15
that ye have done ? know ye not that such a man as I can indeed
divine ? And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord ? 16
what shall we speak ? or how shall we clear ourselves ? God
hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my
lord's bondmen, both we, and he also in whose hand the cup is
found. And he said, God forbid that I should do so: the man 17
in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my bondman; but as
for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy 18

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15 **know ye not that such a man as I,** etc. Although he has been robbed of his magic cup, Joseph claims to have other ways of finding out secrets. So great and wise a man as the grand vizier of Egypt will easily find out a thief.

16 **God hath found out the iniquity.** Judah was no doubt perfectly certain that his brothers, like himself, were innocent of the theft of the cup. But they all have other guilt of older date on their conscience, and he looks upon this false charge as God's mysterious way of retribution. It is in vain to try to rebut it.

18-34 **Then Judah came near,** etc. This speech of Judah's is singularly noble in its appeal. It is marked by simplicity and quiet dignity, with a deep undercurrent of feeling. He tells again the story of their father's love and sorrow: and rather than he should suffer again through the loss of Benjamin, Judah offers himself as a lifelong slave in Egypt, if only the father's favourite may be set free. The speech marks a complete conversion of heart from the old spirit which hated Joseph, and sold him, and brought lifelong sorrow on his father.

servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as
19 Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father,
20 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
21 him. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto
22 me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his
23 father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see
24 my face no more. And it came to pass when we came up unto
25 thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And
26 our father said, Go again, 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 the man's face, except our
27 youngest brother be with us. And thy servant my father said
28 unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons: and the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I
29 have not seen him since: and if ye take this one also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with
30 [1]sorrow to [2]the grave. Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us;
31 seeing that [3]his life is bound up in the lad's life; it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not *with us*, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with
32 sorrow to [2]the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then shall I bear the blame to my father
33 for ever. Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad

[1] Heb. *evil.*
[2] Heb. *Sheol.* See ch. xxxvii. 35.
[3] Or, *his soul is knit with the lad's soul.* See 1 Sam. xviii. 1.

28 **Surely he is torn in pieces,** etc. This is the first direct allusion that the brethren had made to Joseph's fate and its results. In xlii. 13 they had merely said "one is not." Possibly it was the first time that Joseph had actually heard of the effect of his loss on his father.

go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and 34
the lad be not with me? lest I see the evil that shall come on
my father.

CHAPTER XLIV

Questions

1. How is Joseph's silver cup described?
2. Why was the cup placed in Benjamin's sack?
3. What arguments did Judah use in his appeal to Joseph?

Joseph made known to his Brethren (xlv.)

Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that 1
stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me.
And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself
known unto his brethren. And he [1]wept aloud: and 2
the Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard.
And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; 3
doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not
answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph 4
said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they
came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold

[1] Heb. *gave forth his voice in weeping.*

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xlv. 1 **Then Joseph could not refrain himself,** etc. Joseph could no longer keep the secret. He had found out what he wanted about the brethren's change of heart. He recognised their penitence and accepted it. And the pathetic words of Judah had given the finishing touch. Joseph could not help being profoundly moved by the story of the sorrow and regret of his aged father. Jacob must suffer no longer: the mystery must be unfolded.

3 **doth my father yet live?** This incoherent question is true to life. He had been told over and over again that Jacob was living still, but the truth of it is almost too great for him. He must hear it once more.

5 into Egypt. And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves,
that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve
6 life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and
there are yet five years, in the which there shall be neither plowing
7 nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a
remnant in the earth, and to save you alive [1]by a
8 great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent
me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father
to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over
9 all the land of Egypt. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say
unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of
10 all Egypt: come down unto 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
11 herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee; for
there are yet five years of famine; lest thou come to poverty,
12 thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast. And, behold,
your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my
13 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

[1] Or, *to be a great company that escape.*

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5 **God did send me before you.** It is remarkable how here, and in *vv.* 7 and 8, as well as later on in l. 20, Joseph ascribes all that has happened to him to the good providence of God. He forgets the sin of his brethren and thinks only of the Divine mercy and foresight. His words are the index of a truly religious character: Joseph had lived in the presence of God, and everything else is swallowed up and forgotten in the greatness of God and His purposes.

7 **to preserve you a remnant,** i.e. to prevent your family coming to an end, through famine and calamity. The preservation of the family line was always earnestly desired, but in the case of the sacred family of Jacob, inheriting as it did the great promises to Abraham, this was of special importance, and God had clearly intervened to maintain it.

10 **the land of Goshen.** The eastern district between the Pelusiac arm of the Nile and the valley of Suez. Egypt was divided into provinces called "nomes," and the twentieth nome of Lower Egypt, called *Kesem*, is no doubt identical with Goshen. It has always been considered the best pasture-land of Egypt.

haste and bring down my father hither. And he fell upon his 14
brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon
his neck. And he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: 15
and after that his brethren talked with him.

And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, 16
Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and
his servants. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy 17
brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the
land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and 18
come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt,
and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, 19
this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your
little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.
Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt 20
is yours. And the sons of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them 21
wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave
them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man 22
changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred
pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. And to his father he 23
sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of
Egypt, and ten she-asses laden with corn and bread and victual

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19 **wagons.** Wheeled carts were little used in Palestine, and were usually of a very simple construction with two solid wheels, and were drawn by a yoke of oxen. But in the flat country of Egypt vehicles were of better construction, with spoked wheels, and were no doubt largely used for transport. They were probably provided with a cover, and with cushions for the conveyance of travellers.

20 **your stuff,** i.e. your baggage: the luggage they had brought with them for the journey. In the absence of inns, it was usual to carry everything that would be required, e.g. blankets and bedding and tents. Their return would be much more expeditious than their coming, and they need not trouble about carrying everything back with them, especially as Pharaoh was ready to provide them with the best that Egypt could give.

22 **changes of raiment.** A regular Oriental present from a great man to one whom he wished to honour. These "changes" would be robes of a festal character, different from the working dress.

24 for his father by the way. So he sent his brethren away, and they
departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the
25 way. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land
26 of Canaan unto Jacob their father. And they told him, saying,
Joseph is yet alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.
27 And his heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told
him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and
when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the
28 spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel said, It is enough;
Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

Jacob and his Family go down to Egypt (xlvi.)

1 And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to
Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.
2 And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said,
3 Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God,
the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will
4 there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into
Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph

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24 **See that ye fall not out by the way**: Joseph's warning has perhaps a touch of gentle humour. Their strange experiences might excite them overmuch; they might be inclined to mutual recriminations about their past guilt against Joseph: they might even be jealous of Benjamin.

xlvi. 1 **came to Beer-sheba.** We are not told what was Jacob's starting-point. The last mention of his dwelling-place was in xxxvii. 14—the neighbourhood of Hebron. Beer-sheba was on the southern confines of Palestine, and had special associations with the life and piety of Isaac (cp. xxvi. 23-25, xxviii. 10). It was no doubt at Isaac's altar that Jacob offered his sacrifices on the eve of this momentous entry into Egypt.

2 **And God spake unto Israel,** etc. With this vision of God we should compare Jacob's previous experiences at Bethel (xxviii., xxxv.) and at the Jabbok (xxxii.).

4 **I will also surely bring thee up again,** i.e. in the persons of Jacob's

shall put his hand upon thine eyes. And Jacob rose up from 5
Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father,
and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh
had sent to carry him. And they took their cattle, and their 6
goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came
into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him: his sons, and his 7
sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and
all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.

[1] In Num. xxvi. 12, 1 Chr. iv. 24, *Nemuel.*
[2] In 1 Chr. iv. 24, *Jarib.*
[3] In Num. xxvi. 13, 1 Chr. iv. 24, *Zerah.*
[4] In 1 Chr. vi. 16, *Gershom.*
[5] In 1 Chr. vii. 1, *Puah, Jashub.*
See Num. xxvi. 23, 24.

And these are the names of the children of 8
Israel, which came into Egypt, Jacob and his
sons: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn. And the sons of 9
Reuben; Hanoch, and Pallu, and Hezron, and Carmi.
And the sons of Simeon; [1]Jemuel, and Jamin, and 10
Ohad, and [2]Jachin, and [3]Zohar, and Shaul the son of
a Canaanitish woman. And the sons of Levi; 11
[4]Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. And the sons of 12
Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Perez, and
Zerah: but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan.
And the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. And 13
the sons of Issachar; Tola, and [5]Puvah, and Iob,
and Shimron. And the sons of Zebulun; Sered, and 14
Elon, and Jahleel. These are the sons of Leah, which 15
she bare unto Jacob in Paddan-aram, with his

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descendants, at the exodus. This going down into Egypt would not endanger the separation or the continuance of the sacred family. Rather it would prove a stage in the Divinely-guided development of that family into "a great nation."

Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. Or, as we should say, "shall close thine eyes," i.e. be present at thy death and perform the funeral rites.

8 **And these are the names,** etc. This list, along with *vv.* 6, 7, is derived from P, and is somewhat artificial and difficult to harmonise with other statements (see notes on 21 and 26). It is contained also (with some variations, see margin) in Num. xxvi. and 1 Chron. ii.-viii.

11 **the sons of Levi.** These three are the eponymous ancestors of the three clans of the Levites, to whom was entrusted the care of the Tabernacle and the furniture of worship (Num. iii.).

12 **Perez.** This name (xxxviii. 29) is of special interest, for Perez was

daughter Dinah: all the souls of his sons and his daughters
16 were thirty and three. And the sons of Gad;
[1]Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and [2]Ezbon, Eri,
17 and [3]Arodi, and Areli. And the sons of Asher;
Imnah, and Ishvah, and Ishvi, and Beriah, and Serah
their sister: and the sons of Beriah; Heber, and
18 Malchiel. These are the sons of Zilpah, which Laban
gave to Leah his daughter, and these she bare unto
19 Jacob, even sixteen souls. The sons of Rachel Jacob's
20 wife; Joseph and Benjamin. And unto Joseph in
the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim,
which Asenath the daughter of Poti-phera priest of
21 On bare unto him. And the sons of Benjamin; Bela,
and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, [4]Ehi,
22 and Rosh, [5]Muppim, and [6]Huppim, and Ard. These
are the sons of Rachel, which were born to Jacob: all
23 the souls were fourteen. And the sons of Dan;
24 [7]Hushim. And the sons of Naphtali, [8]Jahzeel, and
25 Guni, and Jezer, and [9]Shillem. These are the sons
of Bilhah, which Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter,
and these she bare unto Jacob: all the souls were
26 seven. All the [10]souls that came with Jacob into
Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's
sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six;
27 and the sons of Joseph, which were born to him in
Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of
Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.

[1] In Num. xxvi. 15, *Zephon.*
[2] In Num. xxvi. 16, *Ozni.*
[3] In Num. xxvi. 17, *Arod.*
[4] In Num. xxvi. 38, *Ahiram.*
[5] In Num. xxvi. 39, *Shephupham*, in 1 Chr. vii. 12, *Shuppim.*
[6] In Num. xxvi. 39, *Hupham.*
[7] In Num. xxvi. 42, *Shuham.*
[8] In 1 Chr. vii. 13, *Jahziel.*
[9] In 1 Chr. vii. 13, *Shallum.*
[10] Or, *souls belonging to Jacob that came.*

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an ancestor of David, and therefore of our Lord Himself. (See Ruth iv. 12-22; St. Matt. i. 3; St. Luke iii. 33.)

21 **And the sons of Benjamin.** In the Septuagint, and in the parallel lists in Num. and 1 Chron. this collection of strange names is made to include grandsons as well as sons, and in the Septuagint Ard is even represented as a great-grandson. It is clear (1) that the lists are not very reliable (owing, no doubt, to corruption of the text); (2) that these descendants of Benjamin cannot have been among those who originally went down to Egypt with Jacob. Indeed Benjamin appears in the previous chapters as quite young (cp. xliv. 20).

27 **threescore and ten.** In the Septuagint and Acts vii. 14 the

And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to shew the way 28
before him unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.
And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel 29
his father, to Goshen; and he presented himself unto him, and
fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel 30
said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that
thou art yet alive. And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto 31
his father's house, I will go up, and tell Pharaoh, and will say unto
him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land
of Canaan, are come unto me; and the men are shepherds, for 32
they have been keepers of cattle; and they have brought their
flocks, and their herds, and all that they have. And it shall come 33
to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your
occupation? that ye shall say, Thy servants have been keepers 34
of cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and our fathers:
that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an
abomination unto the Egyptians.

CHAPTERS XLV-VI

Questions

1. How is Joseph's character further illustrated by his reconciliation with his brethren?

2. Where and how did Jacob receive Divine encouragement to go down to Egypt?

3. What difficulties are there as to the number of Jacob's descendants who went to Egypt?

4. Why were shepherds "an abomination unto the Egyptians"?

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number is given as seventy-five. The computation is somewhat artificial: the "threescore and ten" in the Hebrew text is probably due to the love of the sacred number of seventy.

34 every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians. This can

Jacob introduced to Pharaoh (xlvii. 1-12)

1 Then Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, and said, My father
and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that
they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they
2 are in the land of Goshen. And from among his brethren he took
3 five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said
unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto
Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and our fathers.
4 And they said unto Pharaoh, To sojourn in the land are we come;
for there is no pasture for thy servants' flocks; for the famine is
sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy
5 servants dwell in the land of Goshen. And Pharaoh spake unto
Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee:
6 the land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy
father and thy brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them
dwell: and if thou knowest any [1]able men among [1] Or, *men*
7 them, then make them rulers over my cattle. And *of activity.*
Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh:
8 and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How

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hardly refer to any religious scruple, for cattle were highly esteemed in Egypt. The Egyptians disliked the keepers of swine and sheep because they were usually of a low class. They are represented on the monuments as unshaven and ragged. Another suggested reason for the statement is that the reigning family and their adherents were Semitic "Hyksos," and were known as "shepherds." The native Egyptians were never reconciled to their rule. This Pharaoh may have welcomed the new-comers just for that reason as kindred people who might be a support to him (cp. xlvii. 6).

xlvii. 4 **And they said unto Pharaoh,** i.e. in accordance with Joseph's instructions above. It was his foresight that paved the way for the settlement of his family in the most suitable part of Egypt.

5 **And Pharaoh spake,** etc. These words come in rather awkwardly here. There is a combination of two sources, J and P. The Septuagint gives a different order to the verses.

many are the days of the years of thy life? And Jacob said unto 9
Pharaoh, The days of the years of my [1]pilgrimage are
an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have been the
days of the years of my life, and they have not attained
unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days
of their [1]pilgrimage. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out 10
from the presence of Pharaoh. And Joseph placed his father 11
and his brethren and gave them a possession in the
land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of
Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph 12
nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his
father's household, with bread, [2]according to their
families.

[1] Or, *sojournings.*

[2] Or, *according to* the number of *their little ones.*

Joseph's Rule in Egypt (xlvii. 13-31)

And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was 13
very sore, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan
fainted by reason of the famine. And Joseph gathered up all the 14
money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of
Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought
the money into Pharaoh's house. And when the money was all 15
spent in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the
Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why
should we die in thy presence? for *our* money faileth. And 16
Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle,

9 **my pilgrimage—their pilgrimage**—probably referring to the wandering life and frequent change of habitation of Jacob and his ancestors. They had known similar vicissitudes, but Jacob thinks that his lot has been harder than theirs, and his prospect of life shorter. Abraham is said to have lived to 175 and Isaac to 180. J. H. Newman has a remarkable and pathetic sermon on the sufferings of Jacob in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, v. 20.

11 **in the land of Rameses.** This name was no doubt of later origin than Jacob's time, and was probably derived from the great Pharaoh, Rameses II., who built a city called by his name in this eastern district of Egypt (Exod. i. 11, xii. 37).

17 if money fail. And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, and for the [1]flocks, and for the herds, and for the asses: and he [2]fed them with bread in exchange for all their cattle
18 for that year. And when that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide from my lord, how that our money is all spent; and the herds of cattle are my lord's; there is nought left in the sight of my lord, but our
19 bodies, and our lands: wherefore should 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: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, and that the land be
20 not desolate. So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine was sore upon them:
21 and the land became Pharaoh's. And as for the people, [3]he removed them [4]to the cities from one end of the border of Egypt even to the other end thereof.

[1] Heb. *cattle of the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds.*
[2] Heb. *led them* as a shepherd.
[3] According to Samar., Sept. and Vulg., *he made bondmen of them, from,* etc.
[4] Or, *according to their cities.*

17 **in exchange for the horses,** etc. The Hyksos kings probably introduced horses and chariots into Egypt, which afterwards became one of the most characteristic features of Egyptian warfare and wealth. Joseph had previously stripped the inhabitants of their money; he now obtains all their animals for a royal possession. No doubt the former owners were still allowed to use them, but no longer as their own property.

20 **So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt.** This involved, of course, a tremendous economic revolution.[1] The Egyptians from being proprietors became mere tenants of the Crown and had to pay a heavy rent in kind (*v.* 24) for their lands. This aggrandisement of the wealth and power of the Pharaohs, by taking advantage of suffering and hunger, seems to us high-handed and unjust; but it appears to have been regarded differently at the time. Gratitude for deliverance from starvation overcame regret at the loss of possessions, and Joseph would be thought to have abundantly justified his elevation both from the point of view of the court and of the people generally.

[1] Evidence of this change is found in Egyptian history. See Driver, *Genesis*, note on this passage.

Only the land of the priests bought he not: for the priests had 22
a portion from Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh
gave them; wherefore they sold not their land. Then Joseph 23
said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this
day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you,
and ye shall sow the land. And it shall come to pass at the 24
ingatherings, that ye shall give a fifth unto Pharaoh, and four
parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food,
and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones.
And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the 25
sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. And Joseph 26
made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt unto this day,
that Pharaoh should have the fifth; only the land of the priests
alone became not Pharaoh's. And Israel dwelt in the land of 27
Egypt, in the land of Goshen; and they gat them possessions
therein, and were fruitful, and multiplied exceedingly.

And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the 28
days of Jacob, the years of his life, were an hundred forty and
seven years. And the time drew near that Israel must die: and 29
he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found
grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and
deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in
Egypt: but when I sleep with my fathers, thou shalt carry me 30
out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place. And he said,
I will do as thou hast said. And he said, Swear unto me: and he 31
sware unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.

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22 **Only the land of the priests bought he not.** The priests of Egypt had special privileges, and here it is stated that they alone had no need to sell their possessions, for they enjoyed a fixed allowance of food from the royal stores.

24 **ye shall give a fifth unto Pharaoh.** This was the traditional rent paid in Egypt by the peasantry to the State. It seems to us excessive, but much heavier exactions are known in the East both in ancient and modern times, as much as 50 per cent. or even 75 per cent. having been paid.

29 **put, I pray thee, thy hand,** etc. See note on xxiv. 2.

31 **And Israel bowed himself,** etc. This mysterious expression has

CHAPTER XLVII

Questions

1. Describe Jacob's interview with Pharaoh.
2. Where did Jacob's family settle in Egypt ?
3. How did Joseph aggrandise the royal power in Egypt ?
4. What request did Jacob make to Joseph, and why ?

Jacob blesses Joseph's Sons (xlviii.)

1 And it came to pass after these things, that one said to Joseph,
Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons,
2 Manasseh and Ephraim. And one told Jacob, and said, Behold,
thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened him-
3 self, and sat upon the bed. And Jacob said unto
Joseph, [1]God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in
4 the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto

[1] Heb. *El Shaddai.*

been interpreted in various ways. As it stands it seems to imply some act of worship or prayer, as if thanking God for the accomplishment of his desire. The Septuagint reads " on the top of his staff " (see Heb. xi. 21, where it is apparently interpreted as an act of faith of Jacob's in the future destiny of his family). The staff may have been understood as signifying Jacob's pilgrim life, or the weakness of his old age. He had to lean upon it, but his soul was lifted up in hope and aspiration. The staff has also been interpreted as a type of the Messiah, " the rod of Jesse "; cp. the strange rendering of the Vulgate, " he worshipped the top of his staff."

xlviii. 3 **God Almighty appeared unto me.** Retrospect, sorrowful or thankful, is a characteristic of Jacob (cp. 15 and 16, and xxxii. 9-12). The portrait drawn of him suggests that he was one who dwelt much among memories of the past. The tendency among some scholars to think that these patriarchal characters are only personifications of tribes, needs to be corrected by a study of these personal sketches, with their subtle differences.

me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a company of peoples; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. And now thy 5
two sons, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine. And thy issue, 6
which thou [1]begettest after them, shall be thine; they shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. And as for me, when I came from 7
Paddan, Rachel died [2]by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when there was still some way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way to Ephrath (the same is Beth-lehem). And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, 8
Who are these? And Joseph said unto his father, They are my 9
sons, whom God hath given me here. And he said, Bring them,

[1] Or, *hast begotten.*
[2] Or, *to my sorrow.*

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5 **Ephraim and Manasseh, even as,** etc. Jacob means that as head of the family he intends to adopt Joseph's two sons as his own, and not merely consider them as grandchildren. They are to be on the same level as the other sons, so that henceforth instead of one tribe of "Joseph" there will be two, Ephraim and Manasseh. Reuben and Simeon are probably mentioned simply as examples, being the two eldest. This arrangement, of course, really would make thirteen tribes, though the sacred number of twelve was still always maintained in theory. The division of Canaan into twelve divisions only was managed by the exclusion of Levi, which, as the priestly tribe, had no inheritance of land, but other privileges. In Rev. vii., in the enumeration of the twelve tribes of the new Israel, "Joseph" is given instead of Ephraim, and Dan is omitted, perhaps because that tribe had been especially a centre of idolatry.

6 **they shall be called,** etc., i.e. any subsequent sons of Joseph will be classed as belonging to one of these two new tribes, Ephraim or Manasseh.

7 **Rachel died by me.** See margin, which gives the true sense. The untimely death of Rachel, the favourite wife, had been one of the great hidden sorrows of Jacob's life.

8 **Who are these?** Jacob was nearly blind (*v.* 10), and the question brings this out dramatically. He could distinguish two persons with Joseph, but was not sure who they were.

10 I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. Now the eyes of
Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought
them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them.
11 And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face:
12 and, lo, God hath let me see thy seed also. And Joseph brought
them out from between his knees; and he bowed himself with
13 his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in
his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left
hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him.
14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's
head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's
head, [1]guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh
15 was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said,
The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac
did walk, the God which hath fed me all my life long unto this day,

[1] Or, *crossing his hands.*

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12 **from between his knees.** This means apparently that to receive the preliminary embrace of *v.* 10, the two lads had knelt by the knees of their grandfather. He was sitting up on his bed (*v.* 2), which would be practically on the ground, the raised beds of modern times not being in use. Joseph now withdraws his boys for the moment, and makes a lowly obeisance, preparatory to presenting them again for the solemn and prophetical "blessing."

14 **guiding his hands wittingly.** See margin. Isaac had blessed Jacob instead of Esau, without knowing it. Jacob apparently acts consciously, with prophetical insight into the future of the descendants of the two. Ephraim became the more powerful and prominent tribe. The providence of God does not follow the natural order. Manasseh was the first-born, but here again "the elder shall serve the younger."

15 **And he blessed Joseph,** i.e. by blessing his sons. It is remarkable to notice the threefold nature of Jacob's blessing. Cp. the High Priest's blessing in Num. vi. 24-27. Jacob speaks (1) of the God of his fathers; (2) of the God who has been like a shepherd to him all his life (cp. Ps. xxiii.; St. John x.); (3) of the **angel** who has **redeemed** him, i.e. delivered him from all evils. This may be regarded as at least a foreshadowing of the doctrine of the Trinity, afterwards to be revealed, though we cannot go so far as to identify precisely these three descriptions of God with the Three Holy Persons. Shepherd and Redeemer are of course both titles applied elsewhere to the Second Person.

the angel which hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; 16
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. And when Joseph saw that his father laid 17
his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and
he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head
unto Manasseh's head. And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, 18
my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his
head. And his father refused, and said, I know *it*, my son, I 19
know *it*: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great:
howbeit his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed
shall become [1]a multitude of nations. And he blessed 20
them that day, saying, [2]In thee shall Israel bless,
saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh:
and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. And Israel said unto 21
Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you,
and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.
Moreover I have given to thee one [3]portion above thy 22
brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite
with my sword and with my bow.

[1] Heb. *fulness.*
[2] Or, *By.*
[3] Or, *mountain slope.* Heb. *shechem,* shoulder.

16 **the angel,** i.e. the personal manifestation of God, which is described elsewhere as "the angel of the LORD." See note on p. 88. Perhaps Jacob is referring especially to the wrestling at Penuel.

20 **In thee shall Israel bless.** This is a little obscure. By **thee** is probably meant Joseph, as the pronoun is singular (see *v.* 15). Joseph's blessing, which has been expanded into the blessings of Ephraim and Manasseh, will become proverbial in Israel. Any one who wishes to give a high blessing will thus refer to Joseph and his sons. Cp. the glowing blessings given to Joseph and his descendants in xlix. 22-26 and Deut. xxxiii. 13-17.

22 **one portion.** See margin. The portion was Shechem between Ebal and Gerizim. (See St. John iv. 5.)

which I took, etc. This conquest is unknown. In xxxiii. 19 Jacob buys a piece of ground at Shechem (cp. Josh. xxiv. 32 and also Acts vii. 16, where there seems to be a confusion between this and the cave of Machpelah). Jacob was, after this purchase, involved in trouble with the inhabitants, through the treacherous massacre of the Shechemites by Simeon and Levi, and some unrecorded fighting may have taken place.

CHAPTER XLVIII

Questions

1. How did Jacob adopt Joseph's sons into his family ?
2. What was unusual in the blessing he gave to them ?
3. What special gift did Jacob give to Joseph ?

Final Blessings and Death of Jacob (xlix.–l. 3)

1 And Jacob called unto his sons, and said : Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the latter days.

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xlix. These blessings (and reproofs) of *vv.* 2-27 (derived from J) are in poetical form, and of remarkable vigour and beauty. With them should be compared the still more glowing and exalted blessings of Moses on the tribes (Deut. xxxiii.). It is obvious that Jacob's " blessings " are concerned with the tribal history of his sons' descendants rather than with the sons themselves (see note on *v.* 1), though in several cases (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and perhaps Joseph) the personal history of the ancestor forms the basis of what is said about the tribe. Those who believe that Jacob actually uttered this song must assume that he was enabled by prophetic insight to see in the characters of his sons the future history of their descendants. More probably, however, some inspired poet of the early period after the settlement of the tribes in Canaan, i.e. the period of the Judges and Samuel (or possibly David, see 8 and 9), made use of the tradition that Jacob prophetically blessed (or cursed) his sons, and developed it in the light of contemporary events. He described the characteristics of the tribes as he knew them himself.

1 **in the latter days.** The phrase is frequent in prophecy. It denotes some distant period in the future, regarded as the consummation of an epoch, as in Num. xxiv. 14 and Jer. xxiii. 20. Thus it naturally passes into a description of the Messianic age (cp. Isa. ii. 2 ; Dan. ii. 28). Here it is used somewhat vaguely of the future history of the tribes.

Assemble yourselves, and hear, ye sons of Jacob ; 2
And hearken unto Israel your father.

Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the 3
[1]beginning of my strength ;
The excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power.
[2]Unstable as water, [3]thou shalt not have the excellency; 4
Because thou wentest up to thy father's bed :
Then defiledst thou it : he went up to my couch.

Simeon and Levi are brethren ; 5
Weapons of violence are their [4]swords.
O my soul, come not thou into their [5]council ; 6
Unto their assembly, my glory, be not thou united ;
For in their anger they slew [6]a man,
And in their selfwill they houghed [7]an ox.

[1] Or, *first-fruits.*
[2] Or, *Bubbling over.*
[3] Or, *have not thou.*
[4] Or, *compacts.*
[5] Or, *secret.*
[6] Or, *men.*
[7] Or, *oxen.*

3-4 **Reuben.** First the poet describes the ideal of the first-born son of the sacred family, inheriting his father's strength and position, supreme over all the other sons in rank and power. But the personal Reuben had fallen from this high estate by his undisciplined passion and his crime of incest. It is implied that this will affect his descendants. As a matter of history, the tribe of Reuben, who were settled on the east of Jordan, never attained any eminence, and dwindled in numbers. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 6 and the scorn poured in Deborah's Song (Judg. v. 15-16) on the faint-hearted Reubenites who failed to answer to the great national call, but only argued about it, and sat still.

4 **Unstable as water.** The simile is derived from a torrent of water, released, and rushing headlong. It aptly describes a character without moral restraint.

5-7 **Simeon and Levi.** The two brothers are associated under the same curse, referring apparently to their treacherous massacre of the Shechemites (xxxiv.), which the poet denounces with righteous indignation.

5 **their swords.** The word is found only here, and is of uncertain meaning. Curiously enough it is very similar to the Greek word for a sword (*machaira*), which gave rise to the Jewish saying that Jacob cursed his sons' swords in Greek. The margin " compacts," if correct, would probably refer to the conditions of alliance which the two brothers made with the men of Shechem and cruelly violated.

6 **my glory,** a word used several times in the Psalms (e.g. xvi. 9) to mean the highest part of man, his " spirit." The verse is a poetical

7 Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce;
And their wrath, for it was cruel:
I will divide them in Jacob,
And scatter them in Israel.
8 Judah, thee shall thy brethren praise:
Thy hand shall be on the neck of thine enemies;
Thy father's sons shall bow down before thee.

---

way of saying that the singer, with all the force of his soul, repudiates any connection with the secret plots of the two brothers.

7 **I will divide them,** etc. This is remarkably appropriate to the history of the two tribes. The Simeonites received a territory in the extreme south of Canaan, cut out of the inheritance of Judah: they made no mark in history except in the raid described in 1 Chron. iv. 39-43, and were gradually absorbed either by the tribe of Judah or by their heathen neighbours on the south. In Deut. xxxiii. Simeon does not appear at all.

Levi too was "scattered," but in a very different way. The tribe was specially commended by Moses, who sprang himself from Levi, for their loyalty to Jehovah at Mt. Sinai (Exod. xxxii.), and received the priesthood, which previously had been the privilege of all the first-born sons of Israel (Num. iii.). They had no inheritance of land assigned them by Joshua, but were scattered about Canaan in various cities with their adjacent fields. They were maintained by the sacrifices, by tithes, and by other offerings. Their original curse was thus regarded as having been revoked, and the great blessing substituted, that they "had the LORD for their inheritance." Hence in Moses' blessing (Deut. xxxiii. 8-11) the special privileges of Levi are described in glowing words of high spiritual elevation.

8-12 **Judah,** the fourth son, is the first to merit a "blessing." His name means "praise" and suggests the words that follow. He is described (1) as having supremacy over the enemies of Israel, and over Israel itself; (2) as courageous and invincible; (3) as holding the sovereignty as a preparation for the Messiah (see note on 10); (4) as enriched with the fruits of a fertile land.

8 **the neck of thine enemies.** Judah's territory in the south was surrounded by powerful and hostile nations, the Philistines, Amalekites, and Edomites. The singer foretells a complete victory over them all. This and the words that follow seem to be an allusion to the victories of David, and the establishment of his kingdom, which made Judah henceforth the royal tribe.

Judah is a lion's whelp;
From the prey, my son, thou art gone up:
He stooped down, he couched as a lion,
And as a lioness; who shall rouse him up? 9
The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
Nor [1]the ruler's staff from between his feet,
[2]Until Shiloh come;
And unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be. 10
Binding his foal unto the vine,
And his ass's colt unto the choice vine;
He hath washed his garments in wine,
And his vesture in the blood of grapes: 11

[1] Or, *a law-giver.*
[2] Or, *Till he come to Shiloh, having the obedience of the peoples.* Or, as read by the Sept., *Until that which is his shall come*, etc. Another ancient rendering is, *Till he come whose it is*, etc.

9 **gone up—stooped down.** There is probably a reference to the mountainous territory of Judah, "the hill-country of Judæa": the tribesmen descend from their heights like marauding lions, and return again to their security, having slain and taken their prey. Cp. Rev. v. 5, where Christ is spoken of as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah."

10 **The sceptre shall not depart,** etc. Again probably an allusion to the kingdom of David, and to the great promises of its continuance made to him in 2 Sam. vii.

from between his feet. It is difficult to see the point of this if "lawgiver" is correct; but the ruler's **staff** would naturally be held between the knees of the king as he sat on his throne of judgment.

Until Shiloh come. A mysterious and much debated prophecy. The English translators of the Bible evidently thought that Shiloh (supposed to mean "peaceful") was a title of the Messiah. There is no other evidence for this, though the phrase is undoubtedly Messianic. The first marginal explanation "until he come to Shiloh" is really meaningless. Shiloh was in the tribe of Ephraim, and its greatness had passed away before the time of the monarchy. The Septuagint translation "that which is his" is very vague and seems only to imply some predestined greatness which the tribe will attain. By far the best interpretation is the last in the margin, which is supported by the remarkable words of Ezekiel (xxi. 27), "until he come whose right it is," where the Hebrew words contain a fairly obvious play on the name "Shiloh," and are a prediction of some rightful ruler who will restore the fallen and ruined line of David, clearly the Messiah.

11 **Binding his foal unto the vine.** A poetical description of the

12 His eyes shall be red with wine,
And his teeth white with milk.

13 Zebulun shall dwell at the [1]haven of the sea:
And he shall be for an [1]haven of ships;
And his border shall be [2]upon Zidon.

14 Issachar is a strong ass,
Couching down between the sheepfolds:

15 And he saw [3]a resting place that it was good.
And the land that it was pleasant;
And he bowed his shoulder to bear,
And became a servant under taskwork.

[1] Heb. *beach.*
[2] Or, *by.*
[3] Or, *rest.*

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well-known plenteousness and luxuriance of the vines in the hills of Judah. So many will there be that the tribesman will tie his foal or his ass to a vine branch, instead of some common hedge or tree. Clothes, of course, would not literally be washed in wine: but it is a poetical way of saying that "wine will be as plentiful as water." Early Christian interpreters naturally saw other meanings in the passage bearing on Christ—the foal and ass's colt suggesting the triumphal entry into Jerusalem: the wine-washed garments the encrimsoned robes of the Messianic conqueror of Edom (Isa. lxiii.).

13 **Zebulun.** This blessing simply suggests the advantages to the tribe of an inheritance bordering on the sea (cp. Deut. xxxiii. 19). The difficulty, however, is that the lot of Zebulun, according to Josh. xix., was separated from the sea by that of Asher. But it seems that Zebulun must at some time have had access to the coast, probably north of the ridge of Carmel, and perhaps commanding the port of Acco (Ptolemais or Acre).

upon Zidon—in early times the greatest seaport of Phoenicia, afterwards eclipsed by Tyre. Again there is a difficulty, for according to Joshua, Asher and Naphtali separated Zebulun from Phoenician territory. We can only conjecture that the borders of the tribes varied considerably at different periods.

14-15 **Issachar.** A remarkable simile describes this tribe as like a beast of burden, fit for work, but preferring not to exert himself; doing only what he is compelled to do, and desirous most of idleness. The tribe of Issachar had a rich inheritance in the south of Galilee, including the wide and fertile plain of Esdraelon, probably the best land in Palestine. But this district in early times was overrun and dominated by the fierce Canaanite tribes of the north, with their

Dan shall judge his people, 16
As one of the tribes of Israel.

Dan shall be a serpent in the way, 17
An [1]adder in the path,
That biteth the horse's heels,
So that his rider falleth backward.
I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD. 18
Gad, [2]a troop [3]shall press upon him : 19
But he shall press upon their heel.

[1] Or, *horned snake.*
[2] Heb. *gedud*, a marauding band.
[3] Heb. *gad*, to press.

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chariots and cavalry. It is implied that Issachar, rather than fight for liberty, was willing to endure this foreign lordship and to perform tasks of forced labour for the Canaanites. On the other hand on the great occasion of Barak's victory, Deborah speaks of Issachar as taking a noble part in answering the national call (Judg. v. 15).

16-17 **Dan.** Again there is a play on the name, Dan being interpreted as meaning "judge" (see xxx. 6). The tribe of Dan had a chequered history. It had originally a small but rich inheritance, bordering on the sea, just north of the Philistine territory, including the port of Joppa. But the Danites were hard pressed by their heathen neighbours, especially by a tribe of Amorites on the coast (Judg. i. 34, 35). Some of them, therefore, made a new settlement for themselves in the extreme north (see Judg. xviii.). The blessing may refer to both positions : *v.* 16 may mean that Dan, in spite of difficulties, will not be obliterated, but will maintain his independence and his position as one of the tribes ; *v.* 17 may refer to the treacherous and fatal attack of the Danites on the quiet and inoffensive inhabitants of the north.

17 **An adder in the path.** The allusion (see margin) is to the *cerastes*, a small poisonous snake, with protuberances like horns over its eyes. It is known and dreaded in the East for its habit of lurking in the sand, which it resembles in colour, and darting out suddenly when disturbed, and attacking a horse or other animal.

18 **I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.** The exact force of this exclamation has been much discussed. Probably it has a Messianic reference. "Salvation" or deliverance, as a great act of Divine mercy, is looked forward to throughout the O.T., and its full meaning is seen in St. Luke ii. 30. Cp. the words of the 7th Article of Religion, "they are not to be heard, which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises."

Gad. The Gadites were a warlike tribe (see 1 Chron. viii. 15).

20 [1]Out of Asher his bread shall be fat,
And he shall yield royal dainties.
21 Naphtali is a hind let loose:
He giveth goodly words.
22 Joseph is [2]a fruitful bough,
A fruitful bough by a fountain;
His [3]branches run over the wall.
23 The archers have sorely grieved him,
And shot at him, and persecuted him:

[1] According to some ancient versions, *Asher, his bread*, etc.
[2] Heb. *the son of a fruitful* tree.
[3] Heb. *daughters*.

In their settlement east of Jordan they often had to contend against the attacks of the neighbouring peoples, e.g. the Ammonites (Judg. xi.), and various nomad tribes (1 Chron. v. 18-22), to which, no doubt, the word **troop** refers.

he shall press upon their heel, i.e. he will defeat his enemies, and pursue hard after them as they flee away.

20 **Asher.** The margin is more intelligible, and probably correct. The allusion is to the fertility of Asherite territory, and probably to the fact that it supplied dainties even to the royal tables of the kings of Phoenicia.

21 **Naphtali.** This tribe had its inheritance in the mountainous and beautiful district of Galilee, which borders on the Jordan and the Lake of Merom and the Sea of Galilee—our Lord's country. The comparison of the tribe to **a hind let loose** suggests freedom and expansion. Another possible translation is "a spreading terebinth tree."

He giveth goodly words. The allusion is uncertain. Perhaps this mountain people became noted for their eloquence or their songs, e.g. the Song of Deborah and Barak (Judg. v.), the latter being a man of Naphtali. A further fulfilment of the "goodly words" may surely be seen in our Lord's teaching in Galilee in after-time.

22-26 **Joseph.** This blessing ranks with that of Judah in its eloquence and fervour. Joseph, according to 1 Chron. v. 1, 2, received the "birthright," which Reuben had lost. He is blessed here with the promise of extraordinary fertility, triumph over the attacks of enemies, and blessings mysteriously greater than nature alone can give (see note on 26).

22 **A fruitful bough**—there is a play in the Hebrew on the name Ephraim=fruitfulness (xli. 52). The simile refers to the fertile country of Ephraim—like a vine, nourished by a spring of water at its foot, and spreading luxuriantly over the vineyard walls.

23 **The archers,** etc. This may be an allusion to the early hatred

But his bow abode in strength, 24
And the arms of his hands were made [1]strong,
By the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,
([2]From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel,)
Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee, 25
And by the Almighty, who shall bless thee,
With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that coucheth beneath,
Blessings of the breasts, and of the womb.
The blessings of thy father 26

[1] Or, *active.*
[2] Or, *from thence,* from *the shepherd.* Or, as otherwise read, *By the name of the shepherd.*

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of Joseph's brethren: but no doubt there is some reference to later events in the history of the tribe. We gather from the complaint made by the children of Joseph to Joshua (Josh. xvii. 14-18) that the settlement in their inheritance involved unusual difficulty and a severe struggle with the Canaanites.

24 **the shepherd, the stone of Israel.** This is very obscure, and scholars suspect some corruption in the text. Both "shepherd" and "stone" are probably titles given to God Himself (see margin) who has just been described as "the mighty one of Jacob." There cannot be any direct Messianic reference, as the Messiah is never connected in prophecy with the tribe of Joseph.

25 **blessings of heaven . . . of the deep,** etc. The two great sources from which water was looked for, so absolutely necessary in the climate and soil of Palestine. From above come the rain and the dew; from beneath, the springs and rivers, which were regarded as proceeding from the great "deep," some vast subterranean storehouse of waters, or the waters on which Hebrew poets supposed the earth itself to rest.

26 **The blessings of thy father,** etc.—**hills.** As it stands, this expression is somewhat unintelligible. The margin, with which the Septuagint agrees, gives a very good sense. The blessing given by Jacob surpasses all the temporal good things which Joseph's mountain inheritance can provide. The eternal hills will indeed provide "desirable things," unchanging and fruitful successions of vintages and harvests, but there are better things than these, e.g. the great spiritual promises made to the sacred family of Abraham.

separate from his brethren—the word is the same that is translated elsewhere "Nazirite," one under a vow of religious separation. But it may also mean "prince" (margin), and refer to the birthright transferred to Joseph.

Have prevailed above [1]the blessings of my progenitors
Unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills:
They shall be on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of him [2]that was separate from his brethren.

27 Benjamin is a wolf that ravineth:
In the morning he shall devour the prey,
And at even he shall divide the spoil.

[1] According to some ancient authorities, *the blessings of the ancient mountains, the desire* (or, *desirable things*) *of the everlasting hills.*
[2] Or, *that is prince among.*

28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he 29 blessed them. And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers 30 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 from 31 Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace: there they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and 32 Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah: the field and the cave that is therein, which was purchased from the children of 33 Heth. And when Jacob made an end of charging his sons, he
1 gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and
1 was gathered unto his people. And Joseph fell upon his father's
2 face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. And Joseph com-

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27 **Benjamin.** This small tribe was distinguished for its warlike character, and on one terrible occasion for its lawlessness which led to civil war (Judg. xix.-xx.). For its warriors see 1 Chron. viii. 40, xii. 1-2. The tribe produced Ehud (Judg. iii.), Saul, the first king, and his hero-son, Jonathan, and in later days the fiery-spirited Saul of Tarsus, afterwards the apostle St. Paul.

a wolf that ravineth: Benjamin is compared to a wolf, mad with hunger, that plunders the flock. There is probably an allusion to some unrecorded raids of the Benjamites on their neighbours.

33 **was gathered unto his people.** The expression is vague, but it seems to imply some sort of belief in the survival of the soul after death. Jacob has departed to join his great ancestors in Sheol, the region of the dead. (See p. 186.)

manded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. And forty days were fulfilled 3 for him; for so are fulfilled the days of embalming: and the Egyptians wept for him threescore and ten days.

CHAPTERS XLIX–L. 1-3

Questions

1. How far were the curses on Reuben, Simeon, and Levi fulfilled in later years?

2. Describe the blessing of Judah, and show its significance.

3. What probable Messianic allusions are contained in this chapter?

4. What is said concerning Issachar, and how is it to be explained?

5. What special blessings are given to Joseph?

Subject for Study

A comparison between these Blessings and those ascribed to Moses in Deut. xxxiii.

G. A. Smith, *Deuteronomy*, Cambridge Bible.

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1. 2 **to embalm his father.** This well-known practice of the ancient Egyptians was connected with their strong belief in immortality. They thought that at the Resurrection the actual bodies of the dead would be needed again. There were various styles of embalming. That of the great and wealthy was elaborate and expensive, and took a long time, as in the case of Jacob. So thoroughly was this done, that the embalmed bodies, swathed in linen, and enclosed in coffins which were elaborately painted and gilded and carried a carved representation of the dead, have been preserved in the dry soil of Egypt,

Burial of Jacob : Death of Joseph (l. 4-26)

4 And when the days of weeping for him were past, Joseph spake
unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in
5 your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, My
father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which
I [1]have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there
shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I
pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again.
6 And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he
7 made thee swear. And Joseph went up to bury his father: and
with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his
8 house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, and all the house of
Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little
ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of
9 Goshen. And there went up with him both chariots and horse-
10 men: and it was a very great company. And they came to the
threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they

[1] Or, *bought.*

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in their sealed tombs or pyramids, to the present day. The Jews buried the great dead with aromatic spices, but did not actually embalm them. Joseph conforms to Egyptian usage in doing honour to his father.

4 **Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh.** It is curious that this request should have been preferred not by Joseph personally, who must have had ready access to Pharaoh (cp. xlvii. 1), but through the medium of court officials. It has been suggested that the reason was that Joseph would be regarded as "unclean" because of his mourning, and could not enter the presence of Pharaoh.

5 **which I have digged for me.** The verb is ambiguous (see margin). According to P's narrative (*v.* 13) and general tradition, Jacob was buried in the cave of Machpelah, which had been "bought" by Abraham. But there seems to have been a variant tradition, of which there is a trace in Acts vii. 16, that Jacob's burying-place was at Shechem, where he had himself bought ground (xxxiii. 19).

10 **the threshing-floor of Atad,** i.e. "of the thorn-bush." The place is unknown.

beyond Jordan. These and the similar words of *v.* 11 are some-

lamented with a very great and sore lamentation: and he made
a mourning for his father seven days. And when the inhabitants 11
of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad,
they said, This is a grievous [1]mourning to the Egyp-
tians: wherefore the name of it was called Abel-
mizraim, which is beyond Jordan. And his sons did unto him 12
according as he commanded them: for his sons carried him into 13
the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of
Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field, for a possession
of a buryingplace, of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.

And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all 14
that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried
his father. And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father 15
was dead, they said, It may be that Joseph will hate us, and will
fully requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent 16
a message unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before
he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee 17

[1] Heb. *ebel.*

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what difficult. Wherever Jacob was buried, it was clearly on the west side of Jordan. We must assume either (1) that the funeral procession went a long way round, south of the Dead Sea, and made a ceremonial halt at the threshing-floor of Atad, which seems very improbable, or (2) that "beyond Jordan" is a scribe's mistake and really means beyond the boundary river of Egypt.

11 **Abel-mizraim,** i.e. literally, the "meadow of Egypt." The word for "mourning" (margin) is similar in sound. The place is unknown. There may have been a place of that name on the east of Jordan which gave rise to the tradition of the mourning-place being "beyond Jordan."

15 **It may be that Joseph will hate us.** Joseph had given them no reason to suppose this, but their remorse for the past was not altogether quieted, even after seventeen years. Their fears awake, as they consider how absolutely they are in Joseph's hands, and they knew, no doubt, that the majority of the potentates of the time would not hesitate to exact vengeance, even after so long a delay.

16 **Thy father did command,** etc. It is impossible to say whether Jacob had actually given such a charge, or whether the brethren invented it. But even in the latter case it represented no doubt what Jacob felt, and what he would have said had the need arisen.

now, the transgression of thy brethren, and their sin, for that they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph
18 wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy
19 servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in
20 the place of God? And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to
21 save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake [1]kindly unto them.

[1] Heb. *to their heart.*

22 And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and
23 Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were born upon Joseph's knees.
24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which he
25 sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you,

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19 **Fear not,** etc. Joseph's character nowhere stands out more highly than in this reply. It shows his profound humility: he was entirely unspoiled by his elevation, for he had never forgotten God. It is not for him to interfere with God's justice and mercy. It shows also, as elsewhere, his profound belief in God's providence, by which even evil deeds are turned to good. And Joseph moreover speaks not merely as a teacher of truth, or a man of faith, but with deep charity and kindliness towards his erring brothers. What he had been to them in the past he intended always to be, and doubtless he was.

22 **an hundred and ten years:** the Egyptians, as we learn from writings and inscriptions, regarding this as the ideal age for man to live.

23 **Machir.** The name became famous afterwards as that of the most powerful clan of that part of the tribe of Manasseh which was settled on the east of Jordan (cp. Num. xxxii. 39-40; Josh. xvii. 1; Judg. v. 14).

upon Joseph's knees, i.e. he ceremonially adopted them as members of his family (cp. xxx. 3).

and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, 26
being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him,
and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

CHAPTER L. 4-26

Questions

1. What difficulties are there in the description of the funeral ceremonies of Jacob?

2. How was Joseph's religious spirit shown after the death of Jacob?

3. Where and how was Joseph buried?

Subject for Study

The Egyptian allusions in the story of Joseph.

Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, "Genesis."

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25 **ye shall carry up my bones from hence.** For the fulfilment of this solemn charge see Exod. xiii. 19; Josh. xxiv. 32. Cp. also Heb. xi. 22, where these words of Joseph are used to link him on into the great line of *faith*. He, like his fathers, saw the promises and "greeted them from afar" (*ib.*, *v.* 13).

26 **he was put in a coffin in Egypt.** Though embalmed, his body was apparently not buried, but preserved by the Israelites, as a silent prophecy, through the years of exile, of the great future.

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