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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, February 1st, 1874.

Jehovah's Promise.—Exodus vi. 1-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God."

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verse 4-7.

SUMMARY.—God pledges himself to defend his people from their foes, and to deliver them from their woes.

ANALYSIS.—I. Deliverance foretold. vs. 1. II The ancient covenant. vs. 2-5. III. The covenant renewed. vs. 6-8.

EXPOSITION.—The connection.—The Bible is a history of Redemption. One great purpose, eternal with God, slowly works itself out in human history, and in Scripture slowly emerges to the reader's view. To Moses and Aaron that purpose assigned very conspicuous parts. The position of Moses, especially, is scarcely inferior to that of any one except Christ. Hence we have the detailed account of his preparation for his life-work, and of his formal call to it. The latter was the subject of our last two lessons. We find from chap. v that he and Aaron, accepted by their own people as God's messengers, at once obeyed the command to visit Pharaoh, and demand for Israel time and opportunity to go to the wilderness for worship. The demand was scornfully refused, and led to such increase of cruelty to Israel as only such a tyrant could be guilty of. Straw was denied them, but the full quantity of bricks demanded. So these deliverers, Moses and Aaron, brought not deliverance, but worse bondage. They were hated for it. Then Moses turned to God, for there was nowhere else to turn, and, half-complainingly, laid the whole case before him. Just here our lesson finds him.

Verse 1.—Then. Or, literally "and"; that is, when Moses ended his complaint, Chap. v. 22, 23. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." Both Moses and Israel are in extremity—the sorest, direst extremity—where they cannot much longer endure. So God hastens, and said unto Moses. Whether by audible voice, or by an inward communication, or how, is not told. Thou shalt see, suggests the contrast between what was and what should be, and bids sight yield to faith, despair yield to hope. Very often we need just this answer to prayer—the assurance that the end is not yet, that God lives, that he is working, and that we shall see what he will do. With a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of the land. The thought expressed in these words seems to be that, as Pharaoh is holding them fast with his strong hand, that is, his mighty power by which he oppresses them, so he shall use all this power to get rid of them. Another translation, which seems better to fit the connection and the facts of the history, is as follows: "By a strong hand," etc., that is, by God's hand of judgment brought to bear on Pharaoh he shall be made to let go his grip, and not only permit them to leave, but even hasten their leaving, anxious to be rid of them. So little need has a saint to vex himself, as though the reins could slip out of Jehovah's hands!

Verse 2.—And God spake unto Moses. This form of expression is used here a second time, as in verse 1, not to indicate that this was said at a later day, or another interview, but because the message which follows is of another nature, and makes a whole by itself. It is introduced with marked formality, because of its great importance. I am the Lord. There are two Hebrew names of God which are currently represented in English by this word Lord. The reason is that one of them, usually called the tetragram, because it had four Hebrew letters, was the name never pronounced by the Hebrews; and hence whenever it occurred they substituted for it in reading, (not in writing,) the word which they might pronounce—either the word for Lord, or, if that immediately preceded, the word for God. Our English Version has the word Lord not only where its Hebrew equivalent is written, but also where it was spoken as a substitute for the unspoken name. In the latter case it is always written in small capitals. That unspoken name was Jehovah, which we find in our common Version in the next verse. The same word in the Hebrew occurs in this verse—"I am Jehovah." They had not, as we have, the full light of a completed Bible, and the

open history of God's dealing with the church and world for six thousand years. And in all the history of Israel there was no time when there was more need of a special manifestation of himself than just when he made this announcement of Moses. Verse 3.—I appeared unto Abraham. Genesis xvii. 1, compare xiv. 18-20. Unto Isaac. Gen. xxvii. 25. And unto Jacob. Gen. xxviii. 10-22; xxxii. 24-32. By the name of God Almighty. The Hebrew word for God is derived from a word meaning strength, or, to be strong, mighty. In rude ages, and among rude, unthinking people, force, power, strength, is most respected. Isaac and Jacob were both solitary "strangers and pilgrims," themselves powerless, and in such circumstances that it seemed impossible for them to found a nation, to take and hold position. So God, who always does the right thing at the right time, and meets the want of his children just when the want exists, in those days made prominent his power to do what he had undertaken. But by my name Jehovah was I not known unto them. God does not mean to say that the name Jehovah and its meaning were utterly unknown to the fathers; but, rather, that the name was comparatively unknown. See Gen. xv. 7; xxii. 14; xxviii. 13, etc.; which show that it was in use, and its meaning, doubtless, partially, dimly apprehended. What is the meaning of this name JEHOVAH? For an answer we must look to chap. iii. 14. God said, when asked as to his name, I AM THAT I AM, and then bade Moses tell Israel that I AM sent him. Jehovah is one form of the Hebrew word meaning to be. He is the I AM; that is, the Eternal, the Changeless—to whom there is no past, present and future, in such way as to affect his purposes. So is he with his people ever, abidingly always. It was to become more and more clear that the pretended gods of heathen nations were not existences, were rather "nothings," and that there was only one God who could say I AM.

Verse 4, 5.—Such is the name, such the nature, of God. Hence the force of his words now added. Three facts mentioned: (1) The establishment of the covenant with the three patriarchs, singly, (2) the hearing (implying compassionate notice) of the groaning of the patriarchs' seed, the seed of promise and covenant; (3) the memory of the covenant, that is, the recognition of his promise as binding him to be a present help to "the seed" in the time of trouble. Verse 6-8.—Wherefore. That is, because such are the facts, and such is my name, my nature, go, tell my people that three things must follow: (1) Deliverance.—Escape from bondage. I will bring you out. I, the GOD ALMIGHTY, and the CHANGELESS, EVER PRESENT BEING—I, not you, not man, not aught else. I, and with arm stretched out—to smite down foes, and with great judgments—which are the blows of my arm. (2) Adoption.—That is, openly, manifestly, realized in fact; for Israel in bondage was God's people, but not manifestly, as seen in outward condition. (3) Settlement at home.—I will bring you. The end of the deliverance and the fulfilment of the oath, for God swear [Hebrew, lifted his hand] to the fathers that this should be done; and so there were "two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie"—the one the promise, the other the added oath.

QUESTIONS.—What had Moses asked of Pharaoh? Chap. iii. 1. What was the result? Chap. iii. 2-21. What was then Moses's prayer? Chap. iii. 22, 23.

Vs. 1. What did the Lord say to Moses? When? Meaning of the phrase, "with a strong hand"? Did Pharaoh afterward thus drive the Hebrews out? Chap. xii. 31-33.

Vs. 2. Can you tell why, in the Old Testament, the word Lord is sometimes written, as here, in small capitals, and sometimes not? Chap. iv. 10, 13, etc. Why does God begin with this declaration?

Vs. 3. How did God appear to the three patriarchs? Gen. xvii. 1; xxvi. 2-5; xxviii. 10-22. With what name? Why was that name first made prominent? What name was unknown? Was it wholly unknown? Gen. xv. 7; xxii. 14; xxviii. 13. Explain. The meaning of the name Jehovah? Chap. iii. 14. Why was this now made prominent?

Vs. 4, 5. What three facts does God mention concerning himself in these verses? Why should he now refer to his covenant promise? Why is Canaan called the land of the patriarchs' pilgrimage? What is here meant by hearing the groaning of Israel? What by remembering the covenant?

Vs. 6-8.—What three things does God here promise to do? Did he afterward do them?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 166, 167.

SUNDAY, February 8th, 1874.—The First Plague.—Exodus vii. 14-22.

Youths' Department.

ONLY ONE: A FABLE.

While I was walking in the garden, one bright morning, a breeze came through and set all the flowers and leaves a fluttering. Now, that is the way the flowers talk, so I pricked up my ears and listened. Presently an elder tree said: Flowers, shake off your caterpillars."

"Why?" said a dozen, altogether, for they were like some children who always say "why," when they are told to do anything.

The elder said: "If you don't they'll gobble you up." So the flowers set themselves to shaking, till the caterpillars were shaken off.

In one of the middle beds there was a beautiful rose, who shook all but one, and she said to herself, "O, that's a beauty; I'll keep that one."

The elder overheard her and called out, "One caterpillar is enough to spoil you."

"But," said the rose, "look at his brown and crimson fur, and his beautiful black eyes, and scotes of little feet. I want to keep him. Surely one won't hurt me."

A few mornings after, I passed the rose again. There was not a whole leaf on her; beauty was gone; she was all but killed, and had only life enough to weep over her folly, while the tears stood like dew-drops on her tattered leaves. "Alas! I didn't think one caterpillar would ruin me."

STOP AND WEIGH.

One morning an enraged countryman came into Mr. M's store with very angry looks. He left a team in the street, and had a good stick in his hand.

"Mr. M.," said the angry countryman, "I bought a paper of nutmegs here in your store, and when I got home they were more than half walnuts; and that's the young villain that I bought 'em of," pointing to John.

"John," said Mr. M., "did you sell this man walnuts for nutmegs?"

"No, sir," was the ready reply.

"You lie, you little villain," said the countryman, still more enraged at his assurance.

"Now look here," said John. "If you had taken the trouble to weigh your nutmegs, you would have found that I put in the walnuts gratis."

"Oh, you gave them to me, did you?"

"Yes, sir, I threw in a handful, for the children to crack," said John, laughing at the same time.

"Well, now, if that aint a young scamp," said the countryman, his features relaxing into a grin as he saw through the matter.

Much talk and bad blood would be saved if people would stop to weigh before they blame others.

"Think twice before you speak once," is an excellent motto.

A SCENE FROM LIFE.

A young man entered the bar-room of a village tavern, and called for a drink. "No," said the landlord, "you have had too much already. You had delirium tremens once, and I cannot sell you any more. He stepped aside to make room for a couple of young men who had just entered, and the landlord waited upon them very politely.

The other had stood by silent and sullen, and when they had finished he walked up to the landlord, and thus addressed him: "Six years ago, at their age, I stood where those young men now are. I was a man with fair prospects. Now, at the age of twenty eight, I am a wreck, body and mind. You led me to drink. In this room I formed the habit that has been my ruin. Now sell me a few glasses more, and your work will be done! I shall soon be out of the way; there is no hope for me. But they can be saved; they may be men again. Do not sell it to them. Sell it to me, and let me die, and the world will be rid of me; but for heaven's sake sell no more to them!" The landlord listened, pale and trembling. Setting down his decanter, he exclaimed "God helping me that is the last drop I will ever sell to any one." And he kept his word.—Nat. Temperance Advocate.

SOME THOUGHTS ON READING ALOUD.

A wise and genial writer describes his library very pleasantly. He says it is not a show library, too fine for every-day use, but a comfortable room to live in, and in

which to receive friendly neighbors when they drop in; a place where he and his wife, and his sons and daughters, may ordinarily pass the hours in cheerful chat or graver discourse, or in that highest and finest of social pleasures, reading a charming book for mutual enjoyment.

Of course if we would derive social pleasure from books they must be read aloud. And this leads me to say that while to read well aloud is one of the most elegant and delightful accomplishments that can be possessed by a man or woman, it is an exceedingly rare one—almost the rarest of any. For there are very few really good readers, who can give the proper emphasis, modulation, and expression to prose or poetry, so as to bring out the finer meanings of an author, and convey to a hearer all that it has been in the writer's mind to convey. If we could put this to the test, and ascertain who of all our circle of acquaintances can read aloud in an unexceptionable manner, unfolding all those nice shades of meaning which are hid from common observation, I think we would be amazed to find how very few have this charming and wizard power. Numbers will be found who read glibly enough, without any egregious blunders in pronunciation or fatal dislocations of the sense; but they are very rare who can give full expression to the subtler and more delicate ideas of an author, or do full justice to his most profound, his most impassioned, and his most beautiful thoughts.

Now I am sure that all this may be done without running into the extreme of what I shall call dramatic mouthing. To read like a gentleman or gentlewoman is one thing, and to read like an actor is another and far inferior thing.—The one reads unaffectedly and with that simplicity which is the result of good taste, calmly but earnestly, gracefully yet forcibly, and above all without trick or mannerism—in fine, he unconsciously takes the tone of his author and identifies himself with his thoughts and shares his emotions. The other, very commonly, is stilted, artificial, prone to exaggeration, and apt to tear a passion into tatters.

I am inclined to the opinion that reading aloud is an accomplishment that is peculiarly charming in a woman, and is especially appropriate to her. At the same time, it is a mighty lever in her hands for the instruction, the elevation, and the refinement of the family circle of which she is the chief centre and ornament. The family, as we all know, is the empire over which woman has the chief sway; and, reading aloud, in this circle of her peculiar and greatest influence, has a value and a power that can hardly be over-estimated.

A choice book of any kind—of romance, of history, of poetry, or of inspiration—read aloud of a winter evening by the father or son of the family, or in the silvery voice of a mother or a sister, while all the rest are either listening or following some household pursuit, is really, as Milton calls it, "a life beyond life." Nothing doubtful, nothing debasing, nothing impure will ever be read by such and in such a hearing. And if pursued systematically, while the younger and more impressionable are won away from questionable pleasures, and allured from temptations and may-haps saved from pollutions, all will be laying up a fund of information beyond the power of computation, and which in after life will prove of priceless value. To say nothing of the softened and elevated tastes which will be acquired, an hour or two systematically spent in this manner every evening will accomplish a round of reading which, at the end of a twelvemonth will astonish by its extent and variety. Will mothers and sisters consider these suggestions, and ponder them in their hearts?—Christian Intelligence.

LIFE IN CAIRO, EGYPT.

A VISIT TO A HAREM.

Among other introductions, we two Englishwomen had brought a letter to a certain Turkish princess, widow of a pasha, and reputed to be a beautiful, amiable, and agreeable lady. The presentation of this missive required some little formality; but, after one or two interviews between our dragoman and her royal highness's chief of the household, all was arranged; and one sultry afternoon we found ourselves at the gate of the palace. Two very smart negroes, dressed in black frock-coats and trousers, received us with stately politeness. We were led through a garden to the front of the house, where several women-servants received us, and the men retired. These women, at a first glance, might have been taken for English maids-of-all-work; but,

on closer inspection, their olive features and white-crape turbans betrayed an Oriental nationality. They were, in fact, Circassian slaves.

On the terrace sat a very ugly old duenna smoking a long pipe. We bowed to each other, and she rose with some difficulty to accompany us to the reception-room, a long apartment, that made us fancy we were in a fashionable lodging-house at St. Leonard's. Excepting a few knick-knacks, all the furniture had come from Paris and London, and was in very bad taste indeed. The old lady motioned us to sit down, pipes were presented to us, which we refused with all the graciousness attainable; then followed a long pause, during which our companion continued to puff away and stare hard without a word.

Then the princess entered. She was tall and slender and very handsome, with a pearly skin, delicately-cut features, and black hair and eyes. Her dress was simply perfect, ample, flowing, easy, of soft, noiseless, lustrous silk, the precise hue of which it would be impossible to describe: it was something between an asphodel-blossom and the palest pink coral, and yet neither the one nor the other approached it at all nearly. Around her head was wound a little turban of delicate-colored gauze, fastened over the forehead with a jewel.

Now, I am sorry to confess that this graceful and imposing creature was such an inveterate smoker that it seemed the sole business of two or three of her slave-girls to supply her wants. During the two hours that we were honored with her presence one of these automaton-like figures would come in about every seven or eight minutes, unsummoned, and hand each of the ladies a cigarette. Any thing more like machinery could not be conceived. There was no salutation on the part of the servant, no acknowledgment on the part of the mistress. The cigarettes came and went, and that was all.

Meantime, our hostess had sent for the French governess of her little adopted daughter Gilparé to act as interpreter; and soon the governess and her young pupil appeared. Coffee was handed to us in little jewelled cups, the French lady made something like sociability possible, and we were asked if we should like some music and dancing.

Of course, the proposal was accepted joyfully. "You will be much amused," said the French governess to me; "the Turkish national airs are so naive, and the princess has among her young slaves some really fine voices."

"We do not realize at home," I said, "that slavery still exists in the East."

"Oh! but what kind of slavery? These girls are happier than our cooks and house-maids at home. The princess is like a mother to them. Some she marries off and provides with a dowry; to all she is kindness itself. They have no cares—think of that!"

Not being able to argue the point from her *eroga*, I was silent. I could readily believe that our hostess would be good and kind to everybody and everything under her care; but the thought was uppermost in my mind, how differently such goodness and kindness work on our own conditions of society. With us a good mistress is sure to have a smiling household. Here no one smiled. Every look and movement of the dozens of women we saw about us, most of them young girls, was joyless, mechanical, monotonous. They were evidently neither starved, nor beaten, nor overworked; but the prevailing look of apathetic helplessness and hopelessness was very depressing to unaccustomed eyes.

Meantime, the musicians and dancers entered, ten in number, all Circassians. The latter wore Turkish trousers of white linen, striped with gold, bright silk sashes, and flowers in their hair, which was long and flowing.

The singing had something inexpressibly savage about it, consisting, for the most part, of wild chants repeated again and again to a monotonous accompaniment. After the songs came the dancing, which lasted nearly an hour—if a series of gymnastic feats and exercises could indeed be called dancing. The woodcuts in Wilkinson's "Ancient Egyptians," representing women tumbling and performing feats of agility, from the temple of Beni Hassan, would give a better idea of the entertainment than any descriptions in writing. The jumps, prostrations, rhythmic movement of the arms, standing on the head, and other ungraceful, labourious performances, displayed for our amusement, must be very like those of the dancing-women at the time of the Pharaohs.

On the termination of the dance we rose to take leave. Gilparé, her governess, and half a dozen maids—I mean slaves—accompanied us to the garden, where we were presented with roses; then they retired, and we drove away, without the slightest wish ever again to enter the precincts of a harem. The monotony, the inanity, the dead-alive atmosphere, were unendurable.—Appleton's Journal.