

The Christian Messenger.

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. Heroes and Judges.

SUNDAY, June 20th, 1875.—Saul Chosen.—1 Sam. x. 17-24.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls." Psalm cvi. 15.

ANALYSIS.—I. The people called to Mizpeh. Vs. 17. II. Samuel's address. Vs. 18, 19. III. The lot cast. Vs. 20, 21. IV. Saul hidden and found. Vs. 21-23. V. Saul praised and hailed. Vs. 23, 24.

It speaks well for Israel that, having the promise of a king, they exhibit no impatience for his appointment, and no stirring of private ambition. It should be said also to Samuel's credit, that, though supplanted, he shows no favor to his family, kindred, or tribe, in the choice of his royal successor. Everything seems to hang upon the ordering of an unerring Providence.

EXPOSITION.—Connection.—Our lesson to-day is on the public designation of Saul to the kingship. Our last lesson was on the demand made by the people, through their elders, for a king. In the mean time God has made known to Samuel, and through Samuel to the prospective king himself, who is to have the perilous honor of being the first of the kings of Israel. The story is full of interest. See ix, x. 1-16. The private anointing and kiss (vs. 1) were intended for Saul's own assurance, the separation to the certain expectation of the office, and not to its immediate occupancy, and the exercise of its rights.

Verse 17.—And Samuel called the people together unto the Lord [Jehovah] to Mizpeh. How much time intervened between the private designation of Saul and the call does not appear. The period was probably short. The call was official and fell within the scope of Samuel's office as judge. The purpose, fully explained in the following verses, was in accordance with the request of the elders, and the consequent command of Jehovah, both considered in our last lesson. The gathering was an altar, and the recognition of the man who was to be the first occupant of the throne was to be observed with religious rites and in fact was made through a special revelation in the use either of the lot, or of the Urim and Thummim. Mizpeh was selected as the place of gathering as having some special sacredness. It was recently the subject of one of our lessons. vii. 5-13. It was also one of the three cities at which Samuel judged Israel, vii. 16, on an eminence near Jerusalem, and commanding a view of the city.

Verse 18.—In this, and the next verse, we have a brief but most solemn and weighty address from God to his people through his prophet. Jehovah had been virtually called upon by Israel to abdicate his kingship in favor of a man. I brought up Israel out of Egypt, etc. God is said to be "a jealous God," not willing to have his authority despised, his mercy forgotten, or his honor stolen. He it was, as the Shepherd and the King of Israel, that had abundantly and gloriously proved both his willingness and his ability to save the nation from impending destruction, and to give it greatness and blessing.

Verse 19.—Ye have this day rejected your God who himself, etc. The fault, was theirs, not his. Here is the greatness of divine mercy, that when most deeply wronged it still deals with the wrong-doers in order to help, and not to harm. This is love, that God first loved us, not we him; that while enemies, not friends, Christ died for us. It is "the old, old story" of grace. And ye have said unto him: Nay, but set a king over us. The request was made to Samuel, but as we last week saw, to Samuel as the Lord's prophet, and hence virtually, as here stated, to the Lord himself through the prophet. They wanted God to give them the king. Israel's sin was not that of final apostasy. Now, therefore. At your own request, granted, it is best that it should be granted, though not right. This is the righteousness of God as it fronts and meets man's responsibility. Present yourselves. That all may be performed with due publicity and solemnity. Before the Lord [Jehovah]. Before his altar, vs. 17. This would make more impressive the services. By your tribes. Each tribe by itself. Of course the tribes were there only in their representatives. And by your thousands. In vs. 21, we find instead of

"thousands," "families." These "thousands" or "families" were the main subdivisions of the tribes, which were made according to family descent.

Verse 20.—Caused all the tribes of Israel to come near. If this question was settled by lot, as is almost certain, we are probably to think of Samuel as standing at the altar, in front of the tribes ranged in their order, having in his hand an urn, into which he has placed twelve lots, one of them differing from the others. There comes forward from the ranks the head man of each tribe, with or without attendants, draws the lot for his tribe, and returns to his place. Hence "come near" to the altar beside which Samuel stood. The tribe of Benjamin was taken. That is, by Jehovah, as indicated by the drawing of the lot. The tribe of Benjamin though small, was an honored tribe, as Benjamin himself had in his own person been for sundry reasons an object of special regard. Paul seems to regard his derivation from that tribe as an honor. Rom. xi. 1. Saul evidently thought that one of the larger tribes would naturally have the honor.

Verse 21.—Caused the tribe of Benjamin to come by their families. In the same way with the tribes. Taken. By the lot. And Saul the son of Kish was taken. We have here to understand that there were two more drawings of lots. We are left to imagine the intense excitement connected with this process of decision. The nation seems quietly to have awaited the Lord's decision. After the decision we find some of the people unable to conceal their disappointment and vexation. Vs. 27: xi. 12. When they sought him he could not be found. He knew the lot would fall on him, and, probably from a natural shrinking from the publicity, had withdrawn. The desire to see the king would be intense. The decision by lot thus publicly, after the secret designation of Saul, was in part that the people might see and know that the choice was truly of God, and partly to give still further assurance to Saul himself.

Verse 22.—They inquired of the Lord [Jehovah] further. That is, in addition to the decisions already made. Behold he hath hid himself among the stuff. Hence there was a camp with the usual camp baggage, etc., furnishing a capital hiding place, but not from the eyes of Jehovah.

Verse 23.—They ran and fetched him. Excitement was at a white heat. Walking, or moderation would have been impossible, ill-timed. He was higher, etc. Easily seen—striking all as fit in form and dimension to be the nation's chief.

Verse 24.—See ye whom the Lord [Jehovah] hath chosen, etc. The evidence that the Lord, and not chance had determined the lot, was before them in the signal comeliness and great stature of the man. All the people shouted. An outburst of genuine enthusiasm. It was general—and perhaps the shouting, though not the enthusiasm (vs. 27), was absolutely universal. God save the king. Or literally, "let the king live." Nearly the more modern—"long live the king."

QUESTIONS.—Were the tribes impatient for their king's appointment? Did they manifest any private ambition? Did Samuel push his family into notice? How was God's choice indicated? (Chaps. ix and x? What is special providence? Matt. x. 29, 30.

Vs. 17. Where is Mizpeh? Vs. 18. Why this reproachful complaint of the Lord God of Israel? Vs. 19. What is meant by "your thousands"?

Vs. 20. Was there anything peculiar about the tribe of Benjamin? Who was Benjamin? Who was born of this tribe in later times? Vs. 21. Why did Saul hide? Ans. In unselfish modesty.

Vs. 22. Among what stuff? Vs. 23. Has a man a greater claim for public honor by being tall? See 1 Sam. xvi. 7; Luke xvi. 15; Psalm cxlviii. 10, 11. Had Saul a fine form only to command him to favor? Ans. No; for awful as was the close of his career, "the throne and its temptations spoiled in him a nature that was in many aspects more beautiful than his stature." His fortune ruined him; though before he had been a filial and loving and obedient child, a reverent and hospitable man. See chap. ix. 4, 5, 7, 10, 21; x. 16, 22.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, June 27th, 1875.—Samuel's parting words.—1 Sam. xii. 20-25.

"And so we go," said a member of a Boston School Committee; "Our greatest men are fast departing—first Greeley, then Chase, and now Sumner—and I don't feel very well myself."

A friend indeed is one who is not in need.

Youths' Department.

BLUE AND GOLD.

FROM THE GERMAN.

I know a poor woman who has a little boy, and he is her one joy in all the world. This little boy's name is Fritz, and he is a bright and sturdy little fellow, three years old. His father is a long way off, working on a railroad, and has promised to send some money to get a new coat for Fritz. In the meantime, the mother works all day long to earn money for herself and her little boy. And Fritz is just as brave and contented a child as one would wish to see. He has learnt to sit still and not hinder his mother, when she has so much to do, nibbling away at a crust of bread, or playing with a few sticks or stones, and when he has built a house he calls out, "Look, mother!"

Mother cannot always look, but she calls out, "Oh, yes, that is fine!" and Fritz is satisfied.

Their house is a very, very little cottage, and every year the mother has to pay twelve florins rent to the farmer to whom it belongs. She has a little garden, and two or three hens, and she sells eggs to the landlady at the baths near by, and Fritz is allowed to look after and bring them from the nest. But for some time now the gray hen has been missing, so the mother is very sad.

Now not far from the village store was a forest, on the edge of which stood an immense tree, where the mother used to leave Fritz when she went to gather strawberries in the wood, and what was the joy of both mother and Fritz to find there, one day, their lost hen sitting upon a nest made in the soft grass behind the great tree. There was a path through the forest which led to a large town where there were baths, that is, warm springs of water spouted out of the earth, and sick people who bathed in them were made well.

Not far from the springs stood a great hotel, which in the summer time was filled with fashionable people, both sick and well; and here Frau Lisbeth, Fritz's mother, picked up a little money in various ways, and also sold her strawberries at the baths.

One morning Lisbeth was very, very sad. She had not been able to raise the money for the rent, and the landlord had told her she must leave the house if it was not paid the next day, and she had not a penny, not enough even to buy a bit of bread; where, then, were three florins to come from?

In a fortnight her husband would come and bring her some money, but she could not get it before, and the farmer would not wait another day! She arose very early and prayed that the good God would help her in her distress; then she woke Fritz, and gave him her last crust of bread soaked in water. She herself ate nothing. She determined to go to the baths and see if the housekeeper at the hotel would lend her a little something, and on the way she would pick some strawberries to sell. There was a little meal left in the chest, and with a drop of milk she made it into porridge, and putting it on a plate, said, "See, Fritz, this is yours to eat when the bell rings for noon."

Fritz nodded, as if he understood, and when he saw his mother weeping, he patted her cheek, and said, consolingly, "Not cry, mother; be brave, not cry," just as she was wont to quiet him.

As the mother now started out with five eggs in one basket, and two empty baskets for strawberries, Fritz called out, "Let me go, too."

"Well," said his mother, "as far as the great tree where the hen has her nest," and she gathered up a few crumbs that Fritz might feed her.

When they came to the tree the mother kissed her little boy, and said, "Be a good boy, and may God protect thee, my Fritz."

Then she went away into the forest. She had no fear about the child. Many a time he had been left there alone; no horses or oxen ever came that way, only now and then a person carrying something to the baths.

Fritz watched his mother till she disappeared among the trees; then he fed his hen with the bread-crumbs; then he picked some flowers and grasses; then he watched the ants running so busily hither and thither over the ground, and then the birds hopping from twig to twig in the tree above.

After awhile he thought of his porridge, which his mother had made for him. Sure-

ly it must be noon by this time. At any rate he was hungry, and away he trotted to the village, no small journey for such a little boy; and when he found his porridge, back again to the old tree the little feet trudged.

Why he would rather eat it there he could not tell, only many a time he and his mother had taken their dinner at this pleasant spot. But what a journey it was! The porridge was no longer hot, but the plate was very full, and he did not want to spill one bit; so he went along very slowly, saying all the time to himself, "Be careful, Fritz, be careful!" But he would hardly have been able to have carried it to the tree if Anna, a little girl from the village, had not happened along and helped him with it. She was carrying some milk to the baths, and when she had fixed Fritz on a comfortable seat under the old tree, with his porridge beside him, she gave him a friendly nod and went on.

Then Fritz began to eat his dinner, often saying, "dat is good;" and it was so quiet that the little birds came nearer and nearer, and peered at him curiously. Very warm it was, and so still. The hen dozed on her nest, the bees and beetles hummed very softly, not a breath of air stirred the leaves, and Fritz had made a long journey, and was tired. Midday was long past, he ate more slowly. At last his plate slipped out of his lap, the little hands with the spoons dropped down—Fritz was asleep. Sweetly and soundly he slept, and dreamed a beautiful dream. The birds came nearer and nearer; they picked at his porridge, and Fritz knew nothing about it. It was so very still.

Just then from a path in the forest there appeared a young gentleman and lady. They were husband and wife, and were staying at the baths with the bride's mother, who was an invalid. The young lady wore a blue dress, and it was so warm she carried her hat in her hand, and pushed back her golden hair from her forehead.

"How quiet it is," said she; "and for awhile, at least, no beggars."

"I am not so sure," said the young man; "there lies one little rascal now."

"He is no beggar; he has more than enough already," said the lady, laughing, and pointing to the little sleeper, and the birds who had been tasting from his plate, but now were shyly flying away.

"I have half a mind to give him something," said the young man.

"Yes, just for the pleasure of it," said his companion; and drawing a little silk purse from her pocket, she took from it a shining coin, and said playfully to her husband, "May I?"

"Yes, spendthrift," he replied, laughing; and the Fraulein, delighted, knelt down by the child, and softly took the little hand, and laid the gold piece in it.

Fritz roused a little, looked up dreamily into the beautiful face bending over him, then the little head sank down, and in a moment he was asleep again. The two went back through the forest, and Fritz slept on.

In the meantime poor Lisbeth had passed a sad and weary day. It was not very easy to find strawberries in the forest, but at last with great pains she filled her two baskets. They would bring her twelve kreutzers, and the eggs six; that would buy her a loaf of bread.

As she was hastening by the shortest way to the baths, her foot tripped, she fell, and away flew her strawberries and eggs, all lost and broken. In despair she gathered together a few of the berries, and proceeded on her way weeping.

The housekeeper was very busy, and had hardly time to speak to her, but she was sorry for Lisbeth, and gave her a groshen; but when the poor woman asked to borrow a little money, she received a very short reply.

"I have given you something, Frau," said the housekeeper, "and you may have your dinner here, but I have no money to lend. And mind, you need not beg of the visitors, they are tired of beggars."

Ah! she need not have been afraid; poor Lisbeth would never have been bold enough to beg.

She helped in the kitchen till noon, then she ate some dinner, and the good-natured cook gave her a cake for her little boy, but her heart was no lighter as she went to the miller's house, where she often did a day's work. Perhaps she could earn enough here to satisfy the landlord for awhile.

All that afternoon she worked in the burning heat, hard enough for two. The miller's wife spoke kindly; "but money is scarce with us," said she, as Lisbeth was going; "I will give you some flour

and butter, which you must need as much." Ah, indeed, Lisbeth needed them, but she needed the money more.

Sick at heart, the poor woman turned her steps again toward the forest, repeating by the way all the beautiful consoling hymns and sentences that she knew, but still she was sick at heart.

As she approached the opening from the forest, there lay her Fritz, still sleeping, his empty plate beside him, and his spoon in his hand, for the innocent child had no care to disturb his slumbers.

Lisbeth stood before him weeping bitterly, as she thought, "Oh, my poor boy, you lie there and sleep, and to-morrow there will be no roof to cover you."

Just then Fritz quietly opened his eyes, and stretched out his hand with the piece of money.

"Look there, mother!" said he.

"My child!" cried the astonished Lisbeth, "that is a gold piece, a large gold piece, worth ten florins! Who gave it to you?"

"An angel," answered Fritz, with perfect confidence.

"Oh, child! what do you say? What have you seen?"

"Blue and gold," said he; and his mother could get no more from him.

The mother knelt down and drew her child beside her. She would gladly have uttered a thanksgiving, but no words would come from her weeping; but we may be sure the dear Lord knew all that was in her heart.

Then the happy mother and child went home together, Fritz with the cake, his mother with the money. All her trouble was over now; she had even a little to spare till her husband should return.

Whether Fritz really sent an angel from heaven, or relieved her necessity through some kindly mortal, that the poor woman has never discovered.—Churchman.

HE COULD BE TRUSTED.

Alfred was missing one night about sunset. Mother was getting anxious, for she always wished him to be home early. A neighbor, coming in, said a number of boys had gone to the river to swim, and he thought it likely Alfred was with them.

"No," said his mother, "he promised me he would never go there without my leave, and he always keeps his word."

But seven o'clock came, then eight, and mother was still listening for Alfred's step; but it was half-past eight before his shout and whistle were heard when he ran in at the gate.

"Confess now," said the neighbor, "that you have been to the river with other boys, and so kept away till late."

How the boy's eyes flashed, and the crimson mounted to his cheeks.

"No, sir; I promised my mother that I would never go there without her leave, and do you think I would tell a falsehood? I helped James to find the cows that had strayed in the woods, and didn't think I should stay so late."

"I think," said the neighbor, turning to the mother, as he took his hat to go home, "there is a comfort in store for you by him: Such a boy as that will make a noble man."—Youths' Companion.

THE WAY TO GET ALONG.—Twenty clerks in a store, twenty hands in a printing office, twenty apprentices in a shipyard, twenty young men in a village—all want to get along in the world, and expect to do so. One of the clerks will become a partner, and make a fortune; one of the compositors will own a newspaper, and become an influential citizen; one of the apprentices will become a master builder; one of the young villagers will get a handsome farm, and live like a patriarch—but which one is the lucky individual? Lucky? There is no luck about it. The thing is almost as certain as the rule of three. The young fellow who will distance his competitors is he who masters his business, who preserves his integrity, who lives cleanly, purely, who devotes his leisure to the acquisition of knowledge, who gains friends by deserving them, and who saves spare money. There are some ways to fortune shorter than this old, dusty highway; but the staunch men of the community, the men who achieve something really worth having, good fortune, good name, and serene old age, all go in this hard, dirty road.—Exchange.

The Indian Daily News says: "We learn from Ahmedabad that a young and accomplished Hindu girl, the daughter of the Judge of the Local Small Cause Court, Mr. Gopalrow Harry Deshmook, preached a sermon, if we may so call it, before a congregation composed of Hindu ladies, about forty in number. The congregation met in the Hindu Temple, which is used by the Prathna Somaj of Ahmedabad for their prayers. The subject of the discourse was, 'We worship only one God.'