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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. Heroes and Judges.

SUNDAY, February 22nd, 1875.—The Land Divided—Joshua xviii. 1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."—Psalm xvi. 6.

THE CONNECTION.—Palestine was now in a measure conquered, though the primitive population, unfortunately, Num. xxxiii. 55, 56, was not wholly exterminated, and many isolated strongholds were still in the possession of the enemy. The whole land was to be divided into twelve parts, and one of these parts was to be assigned to each tribe, Num. xvi. 55; xxxiii. 54; xxxiv. 13. There were certain means taken to secure the acquiescence of the whole people in the practical details and results of the plan. Joshua had grown too old to complete the conquest, Josh. xiii. 1; and it was important that the division of the land on the west of the Jordan should be made during his life-time, so as to secure the weight of his immense influence in preserving the tribes from jealousies. Accordingly he was commissioned to superintend this work, Josh. xiii. 1-7. An appeal to God was made by the use of the lot; and his supreme wisdom was invoked to ratify or reverse the arrangements of his servants, and thus to prevent discontent and discord. The first division of the land into nine or ten parts had been made without a minute survey of it. Judah, Ephraim, and half Manasseh moved off to their homes at once. But the other tribes, accustomed to a nomadic life, preferred still to roam up and down in Canaan, as the Patriarchs had done, where they could find pasture, as the Canaanites were so far subdued as not to molest them. While they lingered, Shiloh was made the capital, and the removal of the Tabernacle took place doubtless by divine command. Joshua could not rest content with the nomadic life of his people, and reproved them for not taking possession of their territories.

THE EXPOSITION.—Verse 1. The whole congregation. The mass of the nation. The tribes of Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh were not present, as they had gone to their territories, chs. xv-xvii. Assembled together. After the march, during which, necessarily, they would be scattered over a wide extent of country, traveling by various roads, as a large army always must do. Shiloh. The name means rest, or a place of rest. A memorial of the rest which God had given the people and the sanctuary. Shiloh was about twenty miles north of Jerusalem, twelve north of Bethel, and ten south of Shechem. It would be at least two days' journey for the Israelites from the Gilgal near Jericho, and but one from the Gilgal near Shechem. The ruins are now called Seilum by the Arabs. Josephus, who wrote while Palestine was yet fertile, represents Joshua as selecting Shiloh for the Tabernacle on account of its beauty. God chose the most beautiful position for the Temple. It was near the centre of the whole land, easily accessible to all the tribes. The Tabernacle continued at Shiloh during the whole period of the Judges, until in the latter days of Eli the ark was taken to the army to rouse the sinking spirits of the people after their defeat by the Philistines, 1 Sam. iv. 3, 4, and was captured after their second and total defeat. The Tabernacle, with the rest of the sacred furniture, except the ark, is next heard of at Nob, 1 Sam. xxi. 1 ff. Shiloh is again mentioned as the home of Abijah the prophet, and as a city in the kingdom of Jeroboam. Set up. The Tabernacle was made in many parts, so formed that they could be separated and carried, and again joined together. The Levites carried these parts, together with the ark, the altars, and the other contents of the sacred building, Num. ch. 4, and vii. 1-9. Tabernacle of the congregation. Or, as many render, tent of meeting where God met his people, Ex xxix. 42-46; Num. xvii. 4. The land was subdued before them. A statement introduced here to explain the record which immediately follows of the undisturbed survey of the land by the commission appointed for that purpose.

Verse 2.—Seven. Two tribes and a half had received their portions east of the Jordan, Num. ch. 32, and two and a half on the western side, or in Canaan proper,

Josh. chs. xv-xvi. This left seven tribes yet unsettled.

Verse 3.—How long are ye slack? The work of dividing the land was suspended owing to the indifference of the seven tribes about it. To go. Each tribe to its territory. God of your fathers. These words would call to the mind the promises to the patriarchs.

Verse 4.—Give out. Select by the popular election of each tribe, or by the action of its rulers. These men are distinct from those of Num. xxxiv. 18-20. Three men for each tribe. The same principle was observed in appointing the board of overseers, Num. xxxiv. 18-20. There were thus twenty-one men in all. The tribes were equally represented, as there were three men from each. Arise. Expresses the transition from a life of ease, in which sitting was the typical posture, to one of energetic action. Go through the land. So as to divide it into seven parts, determining the size and the general boundaries of each. Josephus says that the commissioners took into consideration, not merely the size of the different parts, but also their comparative excellence in other particulars, so that the various territories should be of nearly equal value, though not of equal size. And describe it. Write an account of its boundaries, climate, soil, productions, scenery, commercial advantages, etc. Come again to me. That I may inspect the work, submit it to the tribes, and make it the basis of further proceedings; such as the casting of lots, etc., vs. 6. We do not know how long the men were engaged in their task; the Rabbins say seven years; but Josephus, with greater plausibility, says seven months.

Verse 5.—Divide it into seven parts. As there were seven tribes to occupy it. Abide in their coasts. The surveyors were to respect the border as an established fact, and not to carry their work within the territory of Judah. However, when the survey was completed, his territory was found to be so disproportionately large, that a part of it was yielded to Simeon. The tribe of Judah acted kindly in thus yielding a part of its possessions, Josh. xix. 1, 9. The house of Joseph. The descendants of Joseph. That larger part of these descendants which had crossed the Jordan, the tribe of Ephraim and half the tribe of Manasseh. The other half of Manasseh was already established east of the Jordan, Num. ch. xxxii. Shall abide. Not molested by the surveyors, whose duties lay wholly without these territories already occupied.

Verse 6.—Ye shall therefore describe, etc. The men are now appointed, and Joshua proceeds to instruct them in their duties. Cast lots. Takes. See Joshua vii. 14. We are not told in what manner the lot was cast. Perhaps two urns were employed, one containing descriptions of the several districts to be allotted, the other the names of the tribes; and the portion of each tribe would then be determined by a simultaneous drawing from the two urns. The value of the territory to be allotted to each tribe was to be determined by the population of the tribe, Num. xxvi. 51-56.

Verse 7.—But. This word introduces the reason for restricting the commissioners to seven tribes. There were in fact thirteen tribes, since the descendants of Joseph constituted two. The name Levi means a joining, Gen. xxix 34. In Num. iii. 5-13 the Levites are assigned to the service of the sanctuary as substitutes for the first-born son of every Hebrew mother, whose special service Jehovah claimed as a thank-offering for the destruction of the first-born in Egypt, by which the Israelites were delivered from bondage. No part. That is, no one of the tribal parts which the surveyors were appointed to describe. They had cities in all the tribal possessions. The priesthood. The descendants of Aaron belonged to the tribe of Levi, and thus it possessed the priesthood.

Verse 8.—The men arose and went. To the task assigned them. Charged. He first gave a general statement of his plan to the chief men of the nation which he required them to appoint these men, vs. 4, and now he explains to the men themselves their duties, repeating the instructions already given, vs. 6, that they might be deeply impressed on the minds of the surveyors.

Verse 9.—According to the cities. Anciently in Palestine, as now in the same country and in most of Europe, all the inhabitants live in cities and villages, none living in isolated farm-houses. The custom probably arose from the need of protection in an age when the people were liable to

predatory incursions. The farmer went out in the morning to toil, and returned at night to his city or village. In harvest, if there was no alarm, the proprietor and the laborers slept in the field, Ruth iii. 7. In a book. A written document. The Israelites used rolls of skins for this purpose. It is probable that the art of writing was known among the people of God in the earliest ages of the world, Gen. v. 1. Joshua cast lots. He superintended all the process, but assisted by the chief men of the nation, Num. xxxiv. 16-20. According to their divisions. Their tribal divisions, into seven parts.

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.—God shall give all his people rest in the heavenly Canaan.

The impenitent seek to build a heaven on earth. To them the gospel calls: "How long are ye slack to possess the better land." If the call is disregarded, ruin ensues.

When important questions are to be decided we should, if possible, take time. The time spent by the surveyors mentioned in the lesson was well spent, vs. 4-10.

This appeal to the lot was not an appeal to chance, but to God, who had prescribed the method.

God's ministers should be so amply supported that their minds shall not be distracted and their services impaired by worldly anxieties, vs. 7.

God's children may be led through the hardships of the wilderness and the perils of warfare, but they shall inherit rich possessions at the last, vs. 1-10.

—From Heroes & Judges.

SUNDAY, March 7th, 1875.—The Cities of Refuge.—Joshua xx. 1-9.

Youths' Department.

A DEED AND A WORD.

A little spring had lost its way Amid the grass and fern; A passing stranger scooped a well, Where weary men might turn; He waited it in, and hung with care A ladle at the brink; He thought not of the deed he did, But judged that toil might drink. He passed again, and lo! the well, By summer never dried, Has cooled ten thousand parching tongues, And saved a life beside.

A nameless man, amid a crowd— That thronged the daily mart, Let fall a word of hope and love, Unstudied from the heart; A whisper on the tumult thrown, A transitory breath— It raised a brother from the dust, It saved a soul from death, O germ! O fount! O word of love! O thought at random cast! Ye were but little at the first, But mighty at the last!

THE HEAVY BURDEN.

"Rather a heavy burden, isn't it my boy?"

Clarence Spencer, to whom the words had been addressed, turned from the ledger, and looked towards the speaker. Clarence was a young man—not more than five and twenty—and he was book-keeper to Mr. Solomon Wardle. It was Solomon Wardle, a pleasant-faced, keen-eyed man of fifty, who had spoken.

"A heavy burden, isn't it, Clarence?" the merchant repeated.

And still the young man was silent. His looks indicated that he did not comprehend. He had been for some time bending over the ledger with his thoughts far away; and that his thoughts were not pleasant ones, was evident enough from the gloom on his handsome face.

"My dear boy, the burden is not only heavy now, but it will grow heavier and heavier the longer you carry it."

Mr. Wardle, I do not comprehend you."

"Ah, Clarence!"

"I certainly do not."

"Didn't I call at your house for you this morning?"

Clarence nodded assent.

"And didn't I see and hear enough to reveal to me the burden that you took with you when you left? You must remember, my boy, that I am older than you are, and that I have been through the mill. You find your burden heavy; and I have no doubt that Sarah's heart is as heavily laden as your own."

And then Clarence Spencer understood; and the morning's scene was present with him, as it had been present with him since leaving home. On that morning he had had a dispute with his wife. It had occurred at the breakfast table. There is no need of reproducing the scene. Suffice it to say that it had come of a mere nothing, and had grown to a cause of anger. The first had been a look and a tone; then a

flash of impatience; then a rising of the voice; then another look; the voice grew higher; reason was unhinged; passion gained sway; and the twain lost sight of the warm, enduring love that lay smitten and aching deep down in their hearts, and felt for the time only the passing tornado. And Clarence remembered that Mr. Wardle had entered the house and caught a sign of the storm.

And Clarence Spencer thought of one thing more: he thought how miserably unhappy he had been all the morning; and he knew not how long his burden of unhappiness was to be borne.

"Honestly, Clarence, isn't it a heavy and thankless burden?"

The book-keeper knew that his employer was his friend, and that he was a true-hearted Christian man; and after a brief pause he answered: "Yes, Mr. Wardle, it is a heavy burden."

"My boy, I am going to venture upon a bit of fatherly counsel. I hope I shall not offend."

"Not at all," said Clarence. He winced a little, as though the probing gave him new pain.

"In the first place," pursued the old man, with a quiver of emotion in his voice, "you love your wife?"

"Love her? Yes; passionately."

"And do you think she loves you in return?"

"I don't think anything about it—I know."

"You know she loves you?"

"Yes."

"Then you must admit that the trouble of this morning came from no ill-feeling at heart?"

"Of course not."

"It was but a surface squall, for which you, at least, are very sorry?"

"A moment's hesitation, and the—Yes, yes; I am heartily sorry."

"Now, mark me, Clarence, and answer honestly: Don't you think your wife is as sorry as you are?"

"I cannot doubt it."

"And don't you think she is suffering all this time?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Let that pass. You know she is bearing her part of the burden?"

"Yes—I know that."

"And now, my boy, do you comprehend where the heaviest part of this burden is lodged?"

Clarence looked upon his interlocutor wonderingly.

"If the storm had all blown over, and you knew that the sun would shine when you next entered your home, you would not feel so unhappy."

Clarence assented.

"But," continued Mr. Wardle, "you fear that there will be gloom in your home when you return?"

The young man bowed his head, as he murmured an affirmative.

"Because," the merchant added, with a touch of parental sternness in his tone, "you are resolved to carry it there?"

Clarence looked up in surprise.

"I—I carry it!"

"Aye—you have the burden in your heart, and you mean to carry it home. Remember, my boy, I have been there, and I know all about it. I have been very foolish in my lifetime, and I have suffered. I suffered until I discovered my folly, and then I resolved that I would suffer no more. Upon looking the matter squarely and honestly in the face, I found that the burdens which had so galled me had been self-imposed. Of course, such burdens can be thrown off. Now you have resolved that you will go home to your dinner with a heavy heart and a dark face. You have no hope that your wife will meet you with a smile. And why? Because you know that she has no particular cause for smiling. You know that her heart is burdened with the affliction which gives you so much unrest. And so you are fully assured that you are to find your home shrouded in gloom. And, furthermore, you don't know when that gloom will depart, and when the blessed sunshine of love will burst in again. And why don't you know? Because it is not now in your heart to sweep the cloud away. You say to yourself, 'I can bear it as long as she can.' Am I not right?"

Clarence did not answer in words.

"I know I am right," pursued the merchant, and very likely your wife is saying to herself the same thing. So your hope of sunshine does not rest upon the willingness to forgive, but upon the inability to bear the burden. By-and-by it will happen, as it has happened before, that one of the twain will surrender from exhaustion,

and it will be likely to be the weaker party. Then there will be a collapse and a reconciliation. Generally, the wife falls first beneath the galling burden, because her love is keener and most sensitive. The husband, in such a case, acts the part of a coward. When he might, with a breath, blow the cloud away, he cringes and cowers, until his wife is forced to let the sunlight in through her breaking heart."

Clarence listened and was troubled. He saw the truth, and he felt its weight. He was not a fool, nor was he a liar. During the silence that followed he reflected upon the past, and he called to his mind scenes just such as Mr. Wardle had depicted. And this brought him to the remembrance of how he had seen his wife weep when she had failed and sunk beneath the heavy burden, and how often she had sobbed upon his bosom in grief for the error.

The merchant read the young man's thoughts; and after a time he rose and touched him upon the arm.

"Clarence, suppose you were to put on your hat and go home now. Suppose you should think, on your way, only of the love and blessing that might be; and with this thought, you should enter your abode with a smile upon your face; and you should put your arms round your wife's neck, and kiss her, and softly say to her, 'My darling, I have come home to throw down the burden I took away with me this morning. It is greater than I can bear.' Suppose you were to do this, would your wife repulse you?"

"Repulse me?"

"Ah, my boy, you echo my words with an amazement which shows that you understand me. Now, sir, have you the courage to try the experiment? Dare you be so much of a man? Or, do you fear to let your dear wife know how much you love her? Do you fear she would respect and esteem you less for the deed? Tell me—do you think the cloud of unhappiness might thus be banished? Oh, Clarence, if you would but try it!"

Sarah Spencer had finished her work in the kitchen and in the bed-chamber, and had sat down with her work in her lap. But she could not ply her needle. Her heart was heavy and sad, and tears were in her eyes.

Presently she heard the front door open, and a step in the passage. Certainly she knew that step! Yes, her husband entered. And a smile upon his face. She saw it through her gathering tears, and her heavy heart leaped up. He came and put his arms around her neck and kissed her; and he said to her, in broken accents, "Darling, I have come home to throw down the burden I took away with me this morning. It is greater than I can bear."

And she, trying to speak, pillowed her head upon his bosom, and sobbed and wept like a child. Oh, could he forgive her! His coming with the blessed offering had thrown the burden of reproach back upon herself. She saw him noble and generous, and she worshipped him.

But Clarence would not allow her to take all the blame. He must share that.

"We will share it so evenly," said he, "that its weight shall be felt no more. And now, my darling, we will be happy." "Always!"

Mr. Wardle had no need, when Clarence returned to the counting-house, to ask the result. He could read it in the young man's brimming eye, and in his joy-inspired face.

It was a year after this—and Clarence Spencer had become a partner in the house—that Mr. Wardle, by accident, referred to the events of that gloomy morning.

"Ah!" said Clarence, with a swelling bosom, "that was the most blessed lesson I ever received. My wife knows who gave it to me."

"And it serves you yet, my boy?"

"Aye; and it will serve us while we live. We have none of those old burdens of anger to bear now. They cannot find lodgment with us. The flesh and jar may come, as in the other days—for we are but human, you know—but the heart, which has firmly resolved not to give an abiding place to the ill-feeling, will not be called upon to entertain it. Sometimes we are foolish; but we laugh at our folly when we see it, and throw it off—we do not nurse it till it becomes a burden."

Believe nothing against another, but on good authority; nor report what may hurt another, unless it be a greater hurt to another to conceal it.

Be gentle, be genuine, be generous.