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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. Heroes and Judges.

SUNDAY, February 14th, 1875.—Ebal and Gerizim.—Joshua viii. 30-35.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing."—Deut. xxx. 19.

ANALYSIS.—I. Altar built. Vs. 30, 31. II. Stones inscribed. Vs. 32. III. Tribes stationed. Vs. 33. IV. Reading of the law. Vs. 34, 35.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—After the punishment of Achan the Israelites were assured of God's favor, and in a second endeavor to take Ai they met with signal success. Ai was burned and made a heap for ever. Joshua now marched to Shechem, about twenty miles from Ai, there to erect an altar on Mount Ebal, and to rehearse the blessings and curses, according to the direction of Moses. Deut. xxvii. 28.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 30.—Then Joshua built an altar. He caused it to be built immediately after Ai's capture. In Deut. xxvii. 2 the command was to build this altar "on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan,"—as soon as practicable. This place was central, about equally distant from the north and the south limits, as also from the east and the west, sacred associations were connected with Shechem or Sychar. Gen. xii. 6, 7; xxv. 1-4; xxxiii. 19; Joshua xxi. 20, 21; xxiv. 1, 25; xxiv. 32; iv. 5; iv. 39, 40. Shechem "lies in a sheltered valley, protected by Gerizim on the south, and Ebal on the north. The feet of these mountains, where they rise from the town, are not more than five hundred yards apart. The bottom of the valley is about eighteen hundred feet above the level of the sea, and the top of Gerizim about eight hundred feet higher." The town is now called Nablous from Neapolis. Dr. Hackett says "the valley is unsurpassed in beauty and fertility by any other region in the holy land. It runs very nearly north and south, and may be, on the average, ten or twelve miles in length, and a mile and a half in breadth. Towards the upper part of the plain the mountains which skirt its western side fall apart, leaving a somewhat narrow defile between them, where stands Nablous, the ancient Shechem or Sychar. A more lovely spot than that which greets the eye it would be difficult to find in any land. Streams which gush from perennial fountains impart a bright and constant freshness to the vegetation. Fruit trees of every kind known to the climate flourish here abundantly. The deep verdure which clothes the gardens or orchards, produces the most pleasing effect, because it has its foil, so to speak, in the sterile aspect of the adjacent mountains." In Mount Ebal. So Deut. xxvii. 4. Why on the mount of cursing, rather than of blessing? Was it that the sacrifices of the altar, and so the altar itself were occasioned by sin? The sacrifices of sin offerings were the curse visibly set forth? So Christ, as crucified, was made sin for us, and bore our sins in his own body on the tree, being made a curse for us. Gal. iii. 13. On the mount of blessing, which stands over against that of cursing, there is no place, no occasion for sin-offerings, and hence for altars on which to offer them.

Verse 31.—The servant of the Lord. A frequent and honorable title. In the book of the law of Moses. Deut. xxvii. The Pentateuch was already completed and recognized as God's word. An altar of whole stones over which no man hath lifted up any iron. Ex. xx. 24-26, where the preference seems to be given to a strictly earth altar, and then if stones were to be used, they were to be in their native state. This was partly, no doubt, to prevent the carving of any images on stones for altars, and so to help prevent idol worship. They offered thereon burnt offerings unto the Lord, etc. From Ex. xxiv. 5 it seems that these two kinds of offerings were presented at the solemn inauguration of the covenant. Strictly the burnt-offering, or more exactly whole burnt-offering—holocaust, in the Hebrew, "ascents," because all, save the ashes ascended in smoke. The peace-offering had reference to the blessed state consequent upon the surrender to God and acceptance by him. For the law of these offerings, see Lev. vi. vii.

Verse 32.—And he wrote there upon the stones. Not the stones of which the altar was made, but those mentioned in Deut.

xxvii. 2. These stones, the number of which is not made known, were covered with plaster, no doubt white, so as to be readily seen from afar, and in the plaster, while soft, the writing was done. This seem to have been a custom in the East in the ancient time, for it is said that "stones, and even rocks, are seen in Egypt and the peninsula of Sinai, containing inscriptions made three thousand years ago in paint or plaster." The Israelites may have learned the art in Egypt. A copy of the law of Moses. The word translated copy, means duplicate—a second. There has been much conjecture as to just what was written. This may have been the ten commandments, or a summary of the blessings, and the cursing to which, when read, the people responded, or a summary made up at the time from the chief precepts. Wrote in the presence of the children of Israel. The stones were set up in Mount Ebal when the altar was built. The need for the law was the same as that for the altar, as appears from Gal. iii. 19; Rom. v. 20.

Verse 33.—Stood on this side of the ark and on that side before the priest the Levites, etc. The ark was obviously in the centre of the narrow valley already described, and with it the priests. It and they would thus be about seven hundred feet from the base of each mountain. Next follows a statement of the position of the people. Half of them over against Mount Gerizim, and half of them over against Mount Ebal. Six tribes on the former; namely, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin; and six on the latter, namely, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. Deut. xxvii. 12, 13. As Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded, etc. See on verse 31. "They," in this clause, seems to refer not to the tribes ranged on either side of the valley at the base and on the side of the two confronting mountains, but to the Levites who, as God's representatives, spake or read the words of blessing. Deut. xxvii. 14.

Verse 34.—And afterwards he read all the words of the law. Joshua is said to have read this because the Levites read under his direction, at his command, a very common mode of speaking. There are twelve curses given in Deut. xxvii. 15-26, which were to be read on this occasion. These could, of course, be changed into blessings by inserting a "not" in the statement of each one. As each curse was read with a loud voice by the Levites in the centre of the valley by the ark, the tribes on Ebal responded "Amen," and as they read in like manner each corresponding blessing the tribes in Gerizim answered Amen. Dr. Hackett says: "The hills are at such a distance from each other that it has been judged that the voice of the speakers in a clear day might have been heard distinctly from one summit to the other (compare Judges ix. 7-21). . . There is something in the elastic atmosphere of an eastern clime which causes it to transmit sound with wonderful celerity and distinctness." The tribes were on the two sides of the mountain facing each other, not on the extreme summits. The "loud voice" of the Levites had only to travel from the centre of the valley, and that which he was to say had probably already been learned by heart by many if not by most of the nation. This solemnity was not so much for instruction as for endorsement, a formal acceptance of the covenant and its conditions now made by the nation for themselves and their posterity.

Verse 35.—There was not a word, etc. Attention is called to the minute and faithful exactness of this obedience as a course to be approved and imitated. With the women, and the little one, &c. God overlooks none of his people either in requiring obedience or in promising and conferring the rewards of obedience.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 30. Where was Ebal? Where Gerizim? For what was Shechem noted? Ans. It was where Abram and Jacob first pitched their tents. What object of interest was in the valley in our Saviour's time? John iv. 6.

Vs. 31. Why was the altar built of whole stones? Ex. xx. 24, 25.

Vs. 32. Was all the law inscribed thereon? What was the process of inscription?

Vs. 33. What tribes were stationed on Gerizim? Deut. xxvii. 12. What on Ebal? Deut. xxvii. 13.

Vs. Who pronounced the blessings and curses in full? Who responded Amen?

Vs. 35. Why were little children present?

GENERAL QUESTIONS.—What was the design of this visit to Shechem? Ans. A public renewal of covenant with God. How far was Shechem from Ai? How

high were Ebal and Gerizim? How wide was the valley between them? What curse should we all think of? Gal. iii. 10. What blessing? Rev. xxii. 14. Whom does David call blessed? Ps. i. 1. Whom does Jesus? Matt. v. 1-3.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, February 21st, 1875.—Caleb's Inheritance.—Joshua xiv. 6-15.

Youths' Department.

THE SENSIBLE CAT.

BY MRS. BRADLEY.

This is a true story, and it happened just as I am going to tell you.

There was a gentleman in New York who kept house by himself, and having no children to pet and play with when he came home from business, he amused himself with keeping pet animals. He had rabbits and guinea-pigs in the garden; a pair of squirrels that lived in a great cage on the piazza; canary-birds and gold-fish in the parlor, and a white cat who made herself at home everywhere.

She had three little kittens who were exceedingly well brought up, and never snarled or quarrelled. Their mother knew how to train them, as I shall show you.

She, for her part, was a cat who conducted herself with great propriety, as a general thing. She never mistook the guinea-pigs for a queer kind of mice, as some cats do; and she never cast longing eyes at the canary-birds. But the best of people have their weak moments sometimes, and pussy was tempted one day by the gold-fish.

There were two of them, lazy, fat fellows, with their shining sides glistening through the glass globe. Everybody knows how the heart of a cat hankers after a fish, and these were so pretty, and so handy! The glass globe stood upon a table, where there was plenty of room for puss to stand also. She had only to spring up and help herself. So she pondered the matter, and once when she thought herself alone in the parlor, she determined to risk it. Jumping lightly on the table, she put her paw into the water, and was just about to clutch a fish, when in walked her master. Puss dropped her treasure, shook her wet paw, and tried to run; but the gentleman caught her, and brought her back to the table.

"Now, madame, you must understand, in the beginning, that this will never do," he said sternly. "I have caught you in the act, and you must be punished. Take this, and this, and this;" and he boxed her ears smartly. "Now, remember, never touch the gold-fish again."

With this he set her down, and puss ran to hide herself in a corner. Her master watched her to see if she would meddle with the fish again, and this is what he saw her do instead. Creeping out from her corner presently, she ran to the rug where her kittens were, picked them up one by one, and carried them over to the table where the gold-fish stood. Then she stretched out her paw to the globe, as if to say, "Do you see that?" and deliberately boxed each kitten by the ears! After which she went gravely back to her place, and the kittens scampered off, as if they understood their lesson perfectly.

They did, too, for it never had to be repeated; and the gold-fish lived in peace henceforth, unmolested by cat or kittens. I simply want to ask if she wasn't a sensible cat? And if she might not see a good example to some children we know?—Young Reaper.

AFTER THE STORM.

After the storm, a calm;
After the bruise, a balm;
For the ill brings good, in the Lord's own time,
And the sigh becomes the psalm.

After the drought, the dew;
After the cloud the blue.
For the sky will smile in the sun's good time,
And the earth grow glad and new.

Bloom is the heir of blight,
Dawn is the child of night,
And the rolling change of the busy world
Bids the wrong yield back the right.

Under the fount of ill
Many a cup doth fill,
And the patient lip, tho' it drinketh oft,
Finds only the bitter still.

Truth seemeth oft to sleep,
Blessings so slow to reap,
Till the hours of waiting are weary to bear,
And the courage is hard to keep!

Nevertheless, I know,
Out of the dark must grow
Sooner or later, whatever is fair,
Since the heavens have willed it so.

A STRANGE SCENE IN A COURT OF JUSTICE.

Many of us remember the story told by Prof. Wilson, in his own tender and vivid way, of the two hostile Highland brothers, William and Stephen, reconciled at their father's grave. In a city no further from home than Bridgeport, Conn., a recent trial for assault and battery was made memorable by an incident almost equally worthy of Wilson's pen, and we wish we could see it described as he would describe it. Two brothers named Adams, residents of Westport, who had lived on bad terms with each other several years, finally came to blows. Both made complaint before a trial-justice, and both were convicted of breach of the peace. Dissatisfied with this, they appealed, and at the next session of the Supreme Court the jury failed to agree in the case of one, but found the other guilty. Judge Foster, grieved as a man at the spectacle of two warring brothers, and humanely anxious to stop further litigation in the future between them, called the men before him and talked to them in a strain of serious but kind reproof. He briefly reviewed their difficulty, and showed the absurdity of their quarrel, and then appealed to their respect, their relationship, and their sense of moral responsibility, to let this unnatural enmity go on no longer.

"M., you claim you have always used your brother well?" questioned the judge.

"Yes, sir."

"And he has always abused you?"

"Yes, sir."

"B., you claim that you have always used your brother well?"

"Yes, sir."

"And he has always abused you?"

"Yes, sir."

"See," continued the judge, "you are both to blame, and no jury can decide which of you is the worse."

Then he warned them solemnly, and even tenderly, of the folly of doing as they had done, and charged them by all they held sacred never to go to law on any difference again. He painted to them the beauty of harmony and peace, and urged them then and there to pledge friendship and brotherly kindness for all coming time.

Gravely, as if reading a printed covenant, he pronounced the words, "You, M. Adams, do promise on your part that you will be friends in future with your brother?"

"I will," said M., earnestly.

"You, B. Adams, do promise on your part, that you will be friends in future with your brother?"

"I will," said B., with equal earnestness.

"Then shake hands!" said the judge; and as the softened brothers grasped each other's hands, the spectators and members of the bar, already thrilled by the words they had heard, felt their eyes moisten and their hearts swell.

Judge Foster himself was deeply affected when the offenders both audibly invoked God's blessing on their reconciliation, and his voice trembled as he said to the convicted one, "Then I impose on you one dollar, and I discharge your bond."

Is it too much to say that of all present at that remarkable scene none went away who were not better for having witnessed it? May the blessing of the peacemakers rest upon that judge, and the God of peace keep those reunited brothers in lifelong love.

MODES OF WALKING.

An ingenious contemporary gives the following summary of the different modes of walking adopted by those who go to and fro upon the earth.

Observing persons move slowly, their heads move alternately from side to side while they occasionally stop and turn around.

Careful persons lift their feet high and place them down slowly; pick up some little obstruction and place it down quickly by the side of the road.

Calculating persons generally walk with their hands in their pockets and their heads slightly inclined.

Modest persons generally step softly for fear of being observed.

Timid persons often step off the sidewalk on meeting another, and always go round a stone instead of stepping over it.

Wide-awake persons "toe out," and have a long swing to their arms, while their hands move about miscellaneously.

Careless persons are forever stubbing their toes.

Lazy persons scrape about loosely with

their heels, and are first on one side of the sidewalk and then on the other.

Very strong minded persons place their toes directly in front of them, and have a kind of a stamp movement.

Unstable persons walk fast and slow by turns.

One idea persons toe in.

Cross persons are apt to knock their knees together.

Good natured persons snap their finger and thumb together every few steps.

Fun-loving persons have a kind of a jig movement.

THE RIVER AND THE CANAL.

There was a beautiful river; but the river was very discontented, and made even its beauty a source of discontent. It had a sore grievance.

There was a canal which, for a long way, went almost side by side with the river, and at such a little distance from it that, on placid evenings, when even the fluttering of winged insects make a gentle noise of joy, the river and the canal could hear one another speaking.

"This straight, hideous thing," exclaimed the river. "Why do men forsake me for it, stealing the water from me to feed its frightfulness?"

"I may be hideous," replied the canal, "and I certainly am straight; but then you see I am always of the same depth, whereas you brawl along in a shallow way over the rocks here; while at the further reach you are deep enough to drown a giant. Now, men—and they are not to be blamed for it—like what is of even depth and always serviceable."

The river murmured to itself something about its unrecognized beauty and merit; but did not make any distinct reply to the canal. For it could not.

TOBACCO SMOKING IN PUBLIC PLACES.

A writer in a recent number of the Freeman, London, gives vent to his feelings, in regard to those who smoke in public places, in words which some in other lands might well lay to heart. He says:

A great number of smokers seem to have lost sight of politeness! Their smoking makes them rude. Why should a smoker blow his smoke in my face, or allow the dust of his weed to fly in my eyes? Why should he think it not indecent frequently to expectorate in my presence? I have as much right to scatter fine strong pepper, and half blind the passers-by, or my companions in a railway carriage. I might answer, it pleased me, and they must put up with it. Men have no more right to smoke in public than I have to scatter the pepper. Our pleasures ought not to be at the expense of another; all public smokers, however, break this law, and give great offence to that part of the public who hate the most distant fumes of tobacco. But, poor things, they cannot help themselves; tobacco has mastered them; the pipe, the cigar, is to them what feeding-bottles are to babies. How could they live without their smoke? Well, let them have it, only let them have it in-doors. I do not wish, for one, to deprive them of their joy in the smoke, but at the same time I do not wish by them to be deprived of my joy without the smoke. Smoking rooms and smoking-carriages are the proper places for smokers; but they have no license in the world or out of it, to vex the righteous souls of those in whose nose tobacco-smoke is an abomination in-doors. Gentlemen, in-doors to your chimneys; oh! ye smokers, thrust your heads up the sooty openings and puff away with all your might, but do not sin against us, we pray you, who are panting for a pure atmosphere.

A REST.

There's no music in a "rest," that I know of, but there's the making of music in it. And people are always missing part of the life-melody always talking of perseverance, and courage, and fortitude; but patience is the finest and worthiest part of fortitude, and the rarest too. I have known twenty persevering girls to one patient one; but it is only the twenty-first one that can do her work, out and out, and enjoy it. For patience lies at the root of all pleasures as well as of all powers.

Time appears very short, eternity near; and a great name, either in or after life, together with all earthly pleasures and profits, are but an empty bubble, a deluding dream.