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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Heroes and Judges.

SUNDAY, *April 25th*, 1875.—Gideon's Army.—Judges vii. 1-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"There is no restraint to the Lord, to save by many or by few." 1 Sam. xiv 6

ANALYSIS.—*I. Position of opposing forces* Vs 1 *II Order for Israel's reduction*, Vs. 2. *III Number of faint-hearted*, Vs 3. *IV. Reduction by special test* Vs. 4-6. *V. Three hundred retained*, Vs. 7, 8.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—In the fire that miraculously consumed his meat offering, Gideon had proof that God had called him to be the deliverer of Israel. He at once strikes a blow at Phœnician idolatry by overthrowing an altar erected by his father to Baal, because of which he was called Jerubbaal, that is "*let Baal plead*." He then leads an insurrection against the Midianites, the Amalekites and children of the East (Arabs), who have crossed the Jordan probably at Bethshean, and pitched their tents in the plain of Jezreel for a fresh invasion of Israel. By a duplicate miracle of wet fleece and dry ground, and of dry fleece and wet ground, performed at his request, Gideon is doubly assured that God will save Israel by his hand.

EXPOSITION.—*Verse* 1—*Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon* vi. 25-32. *And all the people that were with him.* The army gathered at his call to contend against the Midianites, and consisting of Abi-ezrites, and volunteers from Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, Naphtali, all of them tribes on the west of Jordan, and nort of Ephraim, vi. 33-35. The whole number was thirty-two thousand, vs. 3. *Rose up early* Evidently the next morning after the second successful sign of the fleece and the dew that Jehovah was with him, vi. 36-40. That double sign had given him entire confidence, had assured him, and he was now ready for action, and for *prompt* action. He rose "*early*" Faith is the "victory that overcomes the world," because it leads a man to side with God even though against the whole world. *And pitched beside the well Harod* We can here take the word "pitch" as meaning encamp, more properly translated "the fountain Harod," which was at the foot of an elevation called, in vs. 3, Gilead, on which was Gideon's camp. This is perhaps the fountain mentioned in 1 Sam. xxix. 1. *So that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.* This completes the description of the two armies. The hill on which Gideon was encamped fronted the hill Moreh to the north, and between lay a valley wide enough for the encampment of the Midianites and their allies, who may have kept near Moreh because of water at its base, and to draw down from their encampment the little army of Israel into the open plain. Between *Ain-Jalûd*, the spring of Harod, and 'Little Hermon' a space between two and three miles intervenes, ample in extent for the encampment even of the enormous horde of the Amalekites. It is memorable in connection with Saul's and Jonathan's deaths. 1 Sam. xxxi. 1-6; 2 Sam. i. 6-10. There was a Moreh near Shechem (Gen. xii. 6).

Verse 2—*The Lord* [Jehovah] *said*, etc. He again appeared to him as at the oak. *The people that are with thee are too many.* Gideon's army is here, as in vs. 1, "the people." Yet his army at the full was only a handful as compared with the enemy, 32,000 to 135,000 (viii. 10), less than one to four, and doubtless these far less trained to war and reliable in conflict. One judging by sight only would have said, "the people are yet too few, Gideon wait for reinforcements." Why then does God say "too many"? Ans. *For me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me*, etc. Just before we were ready to say "*folly*," but this added explanation shows that God's folly is wisdom itself. God will *give* Israel the victory, and he is determined that it shall be *seen* that he gives it. Intelligent faith owns God as the giver of success even where means used are the most adequate; but this was a time of gross unbelief, and hence the need of an outward, visible, striking evidence that God's hand wrought.

Verse 3.—*Whosoever is fearful and afraid let him return and depart from Mount Gilead* Proclaimed here by special direction of Jehovah, though this form of proclamation was in the law required to be given before every battle. Deut. xx. 8 The reason there assigned is that the timid weaken an army, especially by their liability to bring on a panic. Compare same chap. vs. 1-7. Gideon, not having acted as a leader in war, was possibly not posted as to this law, and besides the peculiar emergency in which he was now would have made him anxious to keep his army as large as possible. Hence the need of Jehovah's special command to dismiss the timid. *There returned of the people twenty-two thousand* This was more than two-thirds of the whole, a remarkable proportion of cowards! But it must be remembered that for seven years the nation had been under the heels of the savage plunderers, that the people were not accustomed to war. The dreadful foe was clear and full in sight, that his numbers were seen to be more than four times their own, that Gideon was not a man of note and eminence in any respect, and especially that he was not known as a great and successful military leader.

Verse 4.—*The people are yet too many.* So said Jehovah to Gideon—*too many*, and yet less than one to thirteen of their trained antagonists. Gideon knew who gave it and why. It was enough. *Bring them down* [that is, from the hill-top] *to the water* [of the fountain of Harod, at or toward the foot of the hill, therefore, and nearer to the foe] *and I will try them for thee there.* The word translated "try" means originally to melt, then to refine or purify, as gold or silver, because it was done by melting. *Of whom I shall say unto thee this shall go with thee*, etc. Mark the explicitness of the command. Nothing was to be left to Gideon in the way of selection. A test was to be furnished by which Gideon could determine each one. It was thus in effect as though Jehovah had called off, or written off, one by one in full, the names of the approved and the names of the rejected.

Verse 5.—*So he brought down the people unto the water.* No sign of wavering in Gideon's faith. The miracle of the fleece in connection with all the rest, had settled him and fixed his sole trust on Jehovah. *Every one that lappeth with his tongue as a dog.* This is more fully explained in vs. 6. "The wandering people in Asia when, on a journey, or in haste, they come to water, do not stoop down with deliberation on their knees, but only bend forward as much as is necessary to bring their hand in contact with the stream and throw it up with rapidity, and at the same time such address, that they do not drop a particle." The Israelites, it seems, were acquainted with the practice. Those who adopted it were set by themselves, those drinking by bowing on their knees, by themselves: the former, three hundred only, selected; the latter, rejected. It is thought that the test was not arbitrary, but rather that the practice of three hundred showed them to be more alert, wary, ready for action—the pure gold.

Verse 7.—*By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you*, etc. Yet now there were left only one Israelite to four hundred and fifty of the enemy. This disproportion was so enormous as to make clear to the most skeptical that not Israel's might was the cause of success. It would *exclude boasting* (Rom. iii. 27), the object of the whole arrangement. *Let all the people go every man unto his place.* His tent in the encampment on the hill. See vs. 8. They would then be ready for the pursuit which succeeded the rout, though we are told that from Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh there also came pursuers. vs. 22. These men must have been astounded to be thus sent back to their places, though very likely inwardly pleased to escape the manifest peril of the impending encounter. Many a man is brave enough to go willingly into places of danger at duty's call, who yet is glad enough if he may not feel that it really is duty to go.

Verse 8.—*So the people took victuals in their hands, and their trumpets.* It is conjectured that this should read, "*so they* [the three hundred] *took the victuals of the people* [those dismissed], *and their* [the people's] *trumpets*," thus enabling each of the band to have a trumpet.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 1 Where was Israel encamped? Where the Midianites?

Vs. What was the number of the Israelites? Of the Midianites? The proportion of the latter to the former? Why did God call Israel "too many"? 2 Cor. iv. 7.

Vs. 3 How many reductions does God order? Was the first an unusual one? What was the result of the first reduction? Ans. *It thinned the army of cowards.*

Vs 5. Will you explain this test? What was its result? Ans *It thinned the remaining ten thousand of self-indulgent men.*

Vs. 8. Did these three hundred carry swords? What did they carry? Ans. *Firebrands concealed in pitchers, or earthen vessels, and trumpets.* See vs. 16 Was the attack by day or by night? vs. 9 What was its character? Ans. *A surprise.* What lesson was taught Israel? 1 Sam. xvii. 47. In what respects do these few fitly represent the Christian church?

Abridged from the *Baptist Teacher.*

SUNDAY, *May 2nd*, 1875.—The Death of Samson.—Judges xvi 25-34.

Youths' Department.

THE BOY WHO TOLD A LIE.

The mother looked pale and her face was sad,
She seemed to have nothing to make her glad;
She silently sat with tears in her eye,
For her dear little boy had told a lie.

He was a gentle, affectionate child,
His ways were winning, his temper was mild;
There was love and joy in his soft blue eye,
But the dear little boy had told a lie.

He stood alone by the window within,
For he felt that his soul was stained with sin;
And his mother could hear him sob and cry,
Because he had told her that wicked lie.

Then he came and stood by his mother's side,
And asked for a kiss, which she denied;
While he promised, with many a penitent sigh,
That he never would tell another lie.

So she bade him before her kneel gently down,
And took his soft hands within her own;
And she kissed his cheek as he looked on high,
And prayed to be pardoned for telling that lie.

THE PILGRIM AND THE KNIGHT.

In a noble castle there once resided a very rich knight. He expended much money in adorning and beautifying his dwelling, but he gave very little to the poor. A weary pilgrim came to the castle and asked for a night's lodging. The knight haughtily refused him, and said:

"This castle is not an inn."

The pilgrim replied, "Permit me to ask two questions, and I will depart."

"Upon this condition speak," replied the knight; "I will readily answer you."

The pilgrim then said to him, "Who dwelt in this before you?"

"My father," replied the knight.

"And who will dwell here after you?" still asked the pilgrim.

The knight said, "With God's will, my son."

"Well," said the pilgrim, "if each dwells but a short time in the castle, and in time must depart and make way for another, what are you here otherwise than guests? The castle, then, is truely an inn. Why, then, spend so much money adorning a dwelling which you will occupy but a short time?"

The knight took these words to heart. He gave the pilgrim shelter for the night, and was ever afterward more charitable unto the poor.

A promise should be given with caution and kept with care. It should be made with the heart and remembered by the head.

If sin be harbored in the house, the curse waits at the door.

Literary.

SPELLING MATCHES.

that were common some years ago have recently become quite a rage in some parts of the United States We know of but few more useful amusements. The following account of one from the *Boston Post*, will interest our young readers:

The epidemic of spelling matches which has prevailed in many western cities and towns for some time past made its first appearance in Boston last evening, and it may safely be said that a virulent type of the disease has been developed here. The Music Hall was crowded in every part, and the audience was one of the better class, quick to perceive mistakes, prompt to respond to anything worth responding to, whether with applause or laughter, and plainly inclined to have a merry time. It was slightly after half past seven when Mr Williams appeared upon the platform and marshalled the sides to their places. The school-boys bubbling over with animal spirits, and almost nervously anxious, tumbled into the chairs prepared for them at the northern end of the platforms, and began with many whispered criticisms and sly bursts of laughter to reconnoitre the opposing forces. These were seated at the opposite extremity of the stage, and it was plain to see that in that quarter no very high opinion was entertained of the abilities of their stripling antagonists. Each side numbered forty-two persons, the boys apparently ranging in age from 12 to 16 years, while the printers were included between the typo of 20 and the gray haired type-sticker of more than 50. There were also a few reporters on this side.

THE CONTEST.

When the buzz of comment in the audience had been stilled and everything prepared for the test, Prof. Brown lifted a sheet of foolscap, containing a written list of words, and turning with a smile to the printers, pronounced the word "attorney." There was a moment of hesitation, and then the occupant of the first chair arose and slowly and correctly named the letters without pronouncing the syllables. This excited a ripple of laughter throughout the house, and seemed to amuse the schoolboys immensely. The first of the youngsters came to grief by making it "curtecy," however, and as he slowly followed his chair to the side scenes, the joy of his comrades was turned to sadness. Then a too confident typo said it was "millenium," and became the first fruit of those who missed on his side, and when next the printers had a turn some one smuggled an extra r into "geranium," and stepped down and out for his pains. The next to miss was a bright little boy who struggled into "physiology," to the extent of three syllables, became confused, hesitated, a wild jump at "igy," and subsided amidst roars of laughter. He had his revenge, however, for three of the other side were immediately afterwards caught tripping, the first by making it "farnaceous," and another by venturing to end "superintendent" with ant. "Anthetipe" was then a boy's view. His opponent put it "antytype" amid great laughter, which turned to applause when another boy showed that "antitype" was what they were after. Then a boy renewed the merriment by "surfit," and a perfect roar of applause and laughter rewarded the genius who sought to simplify the language by calling it "lettice." The next to fall was a printer who thought "ferrule," a band, had but one r, and his companion, in turn, put such a comically uncertain interrogation point after "skewer" that the audience was convulsed with merriment, which was redoubled when was heard his sigh of relief to find he had made no mistake. Two r's in "rarely" brought another printer low, but two of the boys immediately followed him to the shadow of the great organ, one of them losing all chance for the laurel by risking it as "rododendron." "Ferule," a rod, was correctly given by one of the whiskered contestants, who supplemented the performance by remarking that he had felt the thing too often not to be familiar with it. It was 8.50, and eighteen boys and fifteen men were still unvanquished. The contestants moved to the central part of the stage, and and the slaughter again began. The first word took one of the boys, who thought it was "Epipheny." "Exacerbate," which soon followed, blighted the hopes of three. The first, a boy, made a long struggle, producing "exasser co-exasser-cerbate," but nothing more, and the two who succeeded him scarcely did better. Three printers then made their final bows, one on "satelite," one on "adscitious," and one on "asceous." One of the boys then failed by saying "cantoes," another dropped out on "souchon," and "trusseau" proved the fate of a third. The scene now changed, and a man got stuck with "poignard." "Congearies" then brought a boy to grief, and in the next breath another boy said "weazel," and wondered why everybody laughed. "Syzygy" was then pronounced to one of the printers who was designated by the audience as "white hat," and he started "seyz—" then hesitated and said it was a word he had never seen. A discussion now ensued as to whether this was not a technical term, and therefore out of order. The decision was that it was, although many in the audience expressed disapproval, and most of the boys shouted that they could spell it. This party was then given "anthropophagous," and when he had triumphantly mastered its intricacies the applause that greeted him lasted for nearly half a minute. Shortly after, however, he slipped on "phocine," getting it "focin," while a boy put it "foeyn" "Conhaug" ended another boy, and "quohog" another still, while a man fell by calling it "quahog." An *i* for the second *a* in "sanatory" (tending to produce health) closed the career of one of the best spellers among the printers, and another by saying "sacahrine" was done for. At 9.20 but two printers were left, and four boys still held out. "Cacchination" took one of the men, and then Mr George Kimball, proof reader on the *Transcript*, was left alone. Of the three boys one fell on "fucias" and one on "trafficing." It was now one to one, but only for a moment, for Mr. Kimball put an *i* in "conferrable," and so had to be contented with the plain Webster Dictionary, while Master Frank M. Elsbree, of the English High School, took the more elaborately bound Worcester.

CURIOSITIES OF LANGUAGE.

Language is a very curious thing to those who study the subject. While some languages have words that cannot be expressed in English, others are deficient in our commonest terms. The French, for instance, have no word for "home;" and when Victoria first went to Scotland and the Highlanders presented her an address in Gaelic, they had no word for "queen," so they called her "king's wife". A late writer has noted other such peculiarities.

The Hindoos are said to have no word for "friend." The Italians have no equivalent for our "humility." The Russian dictionary gives a word the definition of which is, "not to have enough buttons on your footman's waistcoat;" a second means to "kill over again;" a third "to earn by dancing." The Germans call a thimble a "finger-hat," which it certainly is, and a grasshopper a "hay-horse" A glove with them is a "hand-shoe," showing that they wore shoes before gloves. The French, strange to say, have no verb "to stand," nor can a Frenchman speak of "kicking" any one. The nearest approach he, in his politeness, makes to it, is to threaten to "give a blow with his foot," the same thing, probably, to the recipient in either case, but it seems to want the directness, the energy, of our "kick." The terms "up stairs" and "down stairs" are also unknown in French.

AN "ENGLISH" RIDDLE.

The more cultivated of English people are not insensible to the deformities of the "cockney" dialect. The defect most notorious in this vulgate is the subject of the witty poem appended below, wherein the uses and abuses of the letter in question are touched with great ingenuity in the double meanings of the verse:

Thomas Hope, the distinguished author and patron of art, was once entertaining at his princely mansion in London, a number of eminent and literary friends, and in the course of conversation, a discussion arose upon the outrageous neglect which a certain single letter in the English alphabet received even in well-informed London society. The subject discussed interested a female guest—Miss Fanshawe—and so touched her ingenious fancy, as the story goes, that she produced to the delighted and astonished guests at the breakfast table the next morning the following little poem. The riddle, it will be perceived, is not a difficult one to solve by those who have met and talked with some of the natives of Old England:

'Twas whispered in heaven, 'twas muttered in hell,
And echo caught faintly the sound as it fell;
On the confines of earth 'twas permitted to rest,
And the depths of the ocean its presence confessed.
'Twill be found in the sphere when 'tis riven asunder,
Be seen in the lightning, and heard in the thunder.
'Twas allotted to man with his earliest breath,
Attends at his birth, and awaits him in death;
Presides o'er his happiness, honor, and health;
Is the prop of his house and the end of his wealth.
In the heaps of the miser 'tis hoarded with care,
But is sure to be lost on his prodigal heir.
It begins every hope, every wish it must bound,
With the husbandman toils, with the monarch is crowned.
Without it the soldier, the seaman may roam,
In the whispers of conscience its voice will be found,
Nor e'en in the whirlpool of passion be drowned.
'Twill not soften the heart; but, though deaf be the ear,
It will make it acutely and instantly hear.
Yet in shade let it rest, like a delicate flower;
Ah! breathe on it softly—it dies in an hour.