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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. Heroes and Judges.

SUNDAY, January 17th, 1875.—The Memorial Stones.—Josh. iv. 4-9.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old."—Psalm lxxvii. 11.

THE CONNECTION.—From vs. 1-3 of this chapter, we should conclude that the twelve men mentioned in the lesson were selected after the passage of the Israelites was completed. From Josh. iii. 12, however, it seems that the tribes were directed to make the selection before the passage. By referring to ch. iii. 12, the reader will see that the command to select the twelve men is quite brief, and that it does not specify the purpose for which they were chosen. We may suppose that, in obedience to this order, they were designated, and stood ready to perform a special and severe duty, of whose precise nature they were as yet ignorant. When the crossing was completed, God impressed it upon the mind of Joshua that the time had arrived for them to carry the stones from the bed of the river; and he accordingly called them, as in the vs. 1-3 of the present chapter.

EXPOSITION.—4. Called. Having been previously selected, ch. iii. 12, they probably remained with Joshua on the eastern side of the river, or, if they had already passed over with the nation, they returned to the river-bed. As soon as the crossing was completed he informed them that the time had come for their special duties.

Whom he had appointed. Each tribe seems to have selected its man, as is indicated by the plural you in vs. 2, as also by the express command to the tribes in ch. iii. 12. As it was also made by Joshua's order, he is said to have appointed the men.

One man out of each tribe. Thus they were twelve men, one to represent each tribe. There were twelve tribes without that of Levi, Joseph having been the progenitor of two, Ephraim and Manasseh. It is in strict analogy with this development of twelve tribes into thirteen, that there were in fact thirteen Apostles, Paul having been added to the twelve.

5. Before. We are not to understand by this that the ark returned to the eastern shore and again advanced to the middle of the stream, preceded by the twelve men. It may be that the stones were to be gathered immediately before the ark, that is, in front of it as it stood above the river-bed. But more probably the Hebrew word rendered before means here as often elsewhere, Num. viii. 22; 2 Kings iv. 38; Zech. iii. 8, merely in the presence of, near to.

The midst. The stones were to be taken from the very midst of the river-bed, that they might the more impressively call to mind the miracle by which the waters, in even their deepest part, were caused to recede for the passage of the chosen people.

Each man one stone. It is probable that the men had been selected with reference to strength for some arduous task. The stones were such as could be built into the intended monument.

Upon his shoulder. They were so large that but one could be borne by a man.

According to the number of the tribes. Twelve. See on vs. 4, last paragraph. Thus every tribe had a witness in the monument. This was appropriate; for even the two tribes and a half who preferred the pasture lands east of the Jordan, sent forty thousand troops into Canaan, vs. 13, and the miracle made a passage for them, as for those of other tribes. It was one monument of twelve stones, as they were one nation of twelve tribes.

6. That this may be a sign among you. BUSH: "A sign that shall permanently remain among you; a monument or memorial; a conspicuous object which shall be a standing witness of the wonderful event that has this day happened. Heaps, or pillars of stone, in commemoration of great events, such as covenants, victories, etc., have been common among all nations from the earliest ages. See Gen. xxxi. 46; Ex. xxiv. 4. In the present case, though there was no inscription on the stones, yet from the number of them, and from the place where they stood, it would be evident that they pointed to some memorable transaction. The Lord's Supper is to aid our understandings and affect our hearts by sensible symbols,

though the same great truths which they represent are plainly delivered in words in the inspired oracles."

What mean ye by these stones? What is your object in preserving them? And why were they erected?

7. Then ye shall say. Parents and teachers should converse freely with their children at such times, they would exert a vast and salutary influence upon the rising generation.

Were cut off. A graphic statement of the event. It is repeated a little below in this same verse; and the repetition serves admirably to convey the sense of wonder which the miracle inspired.

Before the ark of the covenant of Jehovah. The circumstance was not to be narrated as a natural event, or as a mere wonder, as it would be referred to by a skeptic; but the instructor, in transmitting the tradition, must be careful to preserve a knowledge of Jehovah, the God of Israel, in connection with it, by remarking the singular fact that the presence of the ark was the signal for the waters to fall.

When it passed over Jordan. The Jordan was divided in order that the true religion might be established in a country where it could be preserved and transmitted to posterity.

For ever. The expression is used in a poetic sense with the idea of indefinite duration.

8. The sons of Israel did. The expression is a glance at the whole transaction, which began with the selection of the twelve men by the tribes.

And took up. A company or community is often said in the Scriptures to do that which is done by their constituted agents.

Where they lodged. Gilgal, vs. 19. It was between five and six miles from the river, and about one mile from Jericho. The camp of two million people doubtless extended over a vast space; but it was probably named from the position of the headquarters, which here, as in all ancient warfare, would be nearest to the enemy. See vs. 19.

9. Twelve stones. This transaction is quite distinct from the one which we have thus far considered. There were two monuments of the passage: one at Gilgal, the encampment after it, and one in the midst of the river-bed across which it took place.

In the midst of Jordan. The stones were not to be carried each by a single man; like those which were taken to Gilgal, they may have been very large, requiring many persons to handle them. The Jordan is usually quite shallow; and its waters are very transparent. If the monument was erected near the customary fords it would be plainly seen.

When the feet of the priests. The stones for the monument at Gilgal were taken from this spot, vs. 3. The stones for the present monument are not said to have been taken from this spot; they might have been brought from some other part of the river bed.

They are there unto this day. They resisted the current, and were visible. These words may have been written by Joshua many years after the passage, and towards the close of his life. Even if this expression could be proven to refer to a date much later, it would not prove the whole book to be later; since it might have been added by Samuel or Ezra, or some one divinely authorized, as the history of Moses' death was added to the book of Deuteronomy.

In the seventh century a church was found by Arculf on the reputed site of Gilgal; and in this twelve stones were shown, purporting to be those of the ancient monuments. Later travelers also mention them; the latest is Ludolph de Suchem, at the beginning of the 14th century. But the early monks were so credulous and so fond of discovering sacred antiquities, that no reliance can be placed on their traditions. No traces of those shown in the middle ages can now be found.

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.—God's people may be scattered through many nations and known by many party names; but they are in fact one people; as the Israelites, though divided into twelve tribes, and separated, ultimately, by the Jordan, were but one nation, the twelve tribes, hence, being all presented in the monument.

The duty of instructing children in the knowledge of God, vs. 6, 7.

The duty of instructing children in the knowledge of God belongs especially to the parent. Valuable as the Sabbath School is, it can not do that for which God has instituted the family. The family is in the highest sense God's school.

God teaches us, in the lesson, the art of instructing the young, and indeed also, all persons. We must first arouse their attention and excite an inquiring dispo-

sition. The monument of the lesson was designed to call forth questions vs. 6.

God teaches us that we should call to mind the mercies of the past.

The duty of being companionable with children, vs. 6. The young are made wise by social intercourse with their elders, and the old are kept young and kindly by intimate association with children.

A history of the past is chiefly valuable as it exhibits the hand of God and records his mercies. A Godless history is a useless history.

International Bible Lessons for 1875.

FIRST QUARTER. 1. Jan. 3. Joshua Encouraged... Joshua I. 1-9. 2. " 10. Crossing the Jordan... Josh. I. 10-17. 3. " 17. Memorial Stones... Josh. IV. 4-9. 4. " 24. Preparation for Conquest... Josh. V. 9-15. 5. " 31. Jericho Taken... Josh. VI. 1-20. 6. Feb. 7. Achish's Sin... Sam. I. 19-26. 7. " 8. Ebal and Gerizim... Josh. VIII. 30-35. 8. " 21. Caleb's Inheritance... Josh. XIV. 6-15. 9. " 28. The Land Divided... Josh. XIII. 1-10. 10. Mar. 7. The Cities of Refuge... Josh. XX. 1-9. 11. " 14. The Altar of Witness... Josh. XXIV. 1-27. 12. " 23. Joshua's Warning... Josh. XXIII. 1-36. 13. Mar. 28. REVIEW: God's Mercies to Israel... Josh. I-XXIV. 1-13.

SECOND QUARTER. 1. April 4. Israel's Promise... Josh. XXIV. 14-18. 2. " 11. The Promise Broken... Judges II. 11-16. 3. " 18. The Call of Gideon... Jud. VI. 11-18. 4. " 25. Gideon's Army... Jud. VII. 25-31. 5. May 2. Ruth and Naomi... Ruth I. 16-22. 6. " 16. A Praying Mother... 1 Sam. I. 21-28. 7. " 23. The Child Samuel... 1 Sam. III. 1-10. 8. " 30. The Death of Eli... 1 Sam. IV. 1-22. 9. June 6. Samuel the Judge... 1 Sam. VIII. 4-9. 10. " 13. The Good Shepherd... 1 Sam. X. 1-11. 11. " 20. Saul Chosen... 1 Sam. X. 17-24. 12. " 27. REVIEW: Samuel's parting Words... 1 Sam. I-XX. 20-25.

THIRD QUARTER. 1. July 4. The Word made Flesh... John I. 1-14. 2. " 11. Following the Lamb... John I. 35-46. 3. " 18. Jesus at the Marriage... John II. 1-11. 4. " 25. The New Birth... John III. 1-17. 5. Aug. 1. The Water of Life... John IV. 1-15. 6. " 8. Jesus at Bethesda... John V. 5-15. 7. " 15. The Bread of Life... John VI. 47-58. 8. " 22. Jesus the Christ... John VII. 40-46. 9. " 29. Freedom by the Truth... John VIII. 28-36. 10. Sep. 5. The Light of the World... John IX. 1-11. 11. " 12. The Good Shepherd... John X. 1-11. 12. " 19. The Resurrection and the Life... John XI. 31-44. 13. " 26. REVIEW: Christ Rejected... John I-XI. 47-63.

FOURTH QUARTER. 1. Oct. 3. Jesus Lifted up... John XII. 23-33. 2. " 10. Washing the Disciples' Feet... John XIII. 1-9. 3. " 17. Many Mansions... John XIV. 1-7. 4. " 24. The Vine and the Branches... John XV. 1-8. 5. " 31. Friends and Foes of Jesus... John XVI. 11-19. 6. Nov. 7. The Work of the Spirit... John XVII. 7-14. 7. " 14. Jesus Interceding... John XVII. 15-21. 8. " 21. Jesus the King... John XVIII. 33-38. 9. " 28. Jesus on the Cross... John XIX. 25-30. 10. Dec. 5. Jesus and Mary... John XX. 11-18. 11. " 12. Jesus and Thomas... John XXI. 24-31. 12. " 19. Jesus and Peter... John XXI. 31-34. 13. " 26. REVIEW: The Ministry of Jesus.

Youths' Department.

"I WANT IT."

"I want it." "You shan't have it." "I want it, and I will have it." "I want it myself, and I'm going to keep it." That's the way the trouble generally begins. It is in a mild way at first, and even tolerably pleasant; no scratching nor biting nor pounding nor tearing nor saying very ugly words nor doubling up of little fists.

"I want it" has caused more quarrels than almost anything else in the world. Often a quarrel has begun with a very little want, almost as small as a child's doll. One side wanted it as much as the other side did. The question got to be, Who was the strongest? It generally turned out that the strongest wanted it the most, and got it if it was worth having. If what was wanted turned out not to be worth having, the strong one would generally let the little one have it.

To fight for a holy principle is noble. To quarrel and snatch and try to get every good thing that we see that belongs to other people, is not lovely.

If you want people to love you and treat you kindly, begin early to treat everybody else kindly.—Good Cheer.

A SERMON ON PUSH.

When Cousin Will was at home for vacation, the boys always expected plenty of fun. The last frolic before he went back to his studies, was a long tramp after hazel-nuts. As they were hurrying along in high glee, they came upon a discouraged-looking man and a discouraged-looking cart. The cart was standing before an orchard. The man was trying to pull it up hill to his own house. The boys did not wait to be invited, but ran to help with a good will. "Push! push!" was the cry.

The man brightened up; the cart trundled along as fast as rheumatism would permit, and in five minutes they all stood panting at the top of the hill.

"Obliged to ye," said the man, "you just wait a minute;" and he hurried into the house, while two or three pink-aproned children peeped out of the door.

"Now, boys," said Cousin Will, "this is a small thing; but I wish we could all take a motto out of it, and keep it for life. 'Push!' it is just the word for a grand, clear morning.

"If anybody is in trouble, and you see it, don't stand back; push!

"If there's any thing good doing in any place where you happen to be, push!

"Whenever there's a kind thing, a Christian thing, a happy thing, a pleasant thing, whether it is your own or not, whether it is at home or in town, at church or at school, just help with all your might; push!"

At that moment the farmer came out with a dish of his wife's best doughnuts, and a dish of his own best apples; and that was the end of the little sermon.

A TRUE STORY ABOUT A TURTLE.

Once upon a time there was a little turtle. This turtle lived in a glass house. Some people called it an aquarium. It stood near a window. There were other turtles and some pretty fishes in the same place. There was a rock in the middle of the house, which rose above the water. The other turtles would swim about in the water till they were tired, and then would climb up on the rock, and dry themselves in the sunshine which came through the window. Their shells were bright and clean.

This little turtle thought God did not intend him to go any higher than the mud where he first found himself; and so he stayed as much as possible at the bottom of the tank, and never went out of the water nor let himself enjoy the warm sunshine. So the green moss began to grow on his back, and the bigger he grew the more mossy he was, till he looked like an old stick instead of a living animal.

Do you suppose that boys and girls could live such lazy, useless lives that their hearts and minds would get so crusted over, that they would seem to be mossy things, instead of living, active workers in God's world?

BE CHEERFUL.

Laugh while you can. Medical authority says that there is not the remotest corner or little inlet of the minute blood vessels of the human body that does not feel some wavelet from the convulsion occasioned by good hearty laughter, and also that the "central man," or life principle, is shaken to its innermost depths, sending new tides of life and strength to the surface, and thus materially tending to insure good health to the person who indulges therein. The blood moves more rapidly—probably caused by some chemical or electric modification occasioned by the convulsion—and conveys a different impression to all the organs of the body as it visits them on that particular mystic journey, when the man is laughing, from what it does at other times. As laughter conveys new and distinct stimulus to the vital forces, who shall say that it is not the great health conserver? And so, no doubt, the time will come when physicians, conceding more importance to the influence of the mind upon the vital forces than they now do, will prescribe to the torpid and melancholy patient, a certain number of hearty peals of laughter to be undergone at stated periods. If Ponce de Leon had been a good laugh, he need never have gone in search of that perpetual fountain. The Americans, if not a joyless set, are, at least, a non-laughing race. The fourth verse of the third chapter of Ecclesiastes seems to be wanting in many Bibles in this country.—Christian at Work.

"PALESTINE BEYOND JORDAN."

This country has special interest just now to Sabbath School Teachers, as the Series of Bible Lessons which are being so generally used, refer to the Israelites passing thence into the Promised Land. Dr. Fish gives the result of his personal observation in those eastern lands, and graphically describes their present condition. He says:—

Few tourists visit this region, where we spent near two weeks. We were the first Americans that had ever been in most of the places where we went. The Jews in the northern parts of Palestine, in going up to their great feasts in Jerusalem, were wont to cross over into this region so as not to pass through Samaria.

The difficulties and perils of a journey here are not trivial. More than of any other portions of the Holy Land is this

uninhabited. With the exception of a very few mud cities, and at long, long intervals a squalid mud village, one sees no houses whatever. Of course no law, or government, prevails. The Arabs who pitch their tents by the few streams or wells of water, are emphatically a law unto themselves. They are exclusively Bedouins, the most heathenish class of the Arabs.

These Bedouins not only exist in tribes, but they are alien tribes, at variance one with the other. If a few clans enter into an alliance, it is only to fight another clan, and as a rule there is "blood between them;" i. e., they have got to settle a quarrel from the killing of somebody. Hence they are armed and warlike, and exceedingly jealous one tribe of another.

This is a chief difficulty in travel. If you get the favor of one tribe and pass their territory safely, it may be only to come into collision with the next tribe. And what care any of them for you? Four times we were interrupted by these Bedouins, and twice it seemed inevitable that we give up the journey. Their object was to extort from us heavy backsheesh. Fortunately the American Consul at Jerusalem, Dr. De Haas, was with us; yet with his influence, it seemed impossible to get along. They threatened to take our heads off if we stirred a step; and once (near the lower part of the Dead Sea) we were threatened by the Sheik with the treatment which the Sodomites of old desired to inflict upon the strangers that came into Lot's tent. Five hundred dollars was demanded by one tribe, and only by the threat that we would go back to Jerusalem and bring down soldiers and wife them all out, did they let us go. Another tribe demanded one thousand dollars. We were glad to get off with one hundred and fifty dollars which we paid as backsheesh. At another time (at Kerak) we paid one hundred and twenty dollars, the demand at first being this sum for each man. It is impossible to tell when such annoyances will cease here, as the Turkish government is utterly effete in these parts.

Among other places, we visited the ruined Moabitish town of Dibon, where Mr. Klein, in 1863, discovered the famous "Moabite stone,"—one of the most exciting and valuable of modern discoveries. Important chapters remain to be written from records yet to be exhumed in lands once possessed by the great races moving westward from the valley of the Euphrates. Certain it is that here are ruins of cities and structures among the oldest in the world.

The natural fertility of the soil east of the Jordan, and the numerical extent of the population, with the frequency and greatness of their cities, impress every traveller. Dr. Porter has just written a book on the "Great Cities of the Hauran." Indeed, they were giant cities. The ruins are prodigious. In a single day you may strike half a dozen of these old cities, the fragments covering acres and acres of ground. It is an interesting fact that the roving habits of the present population leave these ruins untouched. As they build neither temples, houses nor fences, the stones of the former edifices are unneeded and therefore unremoved. For this reason the ruins east of the Jordan are in a better state of preservation than in any other part of Palestine. Those of other cities have been transported and built into modern structures. Even Baalbeck, in its solitude, has suffered such depredations. We found some of its columns at St. Sophia, in Constantinople. But the massive stones of these ancient piles lie to-day as they laid two or three thousand years ago. Probably some of them date back to the time of Moses.

Baal worship, on the "high places of Baal," led to many of these great structures. And, in wandering through this land, one every day sees God's terrible threats literally fulfilled: "Thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof; and it shall be for dragons and for owls."

The American Baptist Weekly gives us the following as a specimen of current Methodist doctrinal poetry. Possibly the poet caught his inspiration from the pictures that some of our older readers may recollect having seen in circulation, representing John pouring water on the Lord's head:—

Even then our Master hasten'd In the turbid stream to stand, Asking John to pour the water With a herald's ready hand.

Want is a far less uncomfortable companion than debt.