

RAY Why let all your neighbors and friends think you must be twenty years older than you are? It's impossible to look young with the color of 70 years in the hair. It's sad to see young persons look prematurely old in this way. Sad because it's all unnecessary; for gray hair may always be re-

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FOR

CHURCH Bells

The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Third Quarter Lesson 10, Sept 8 1901

JACOB AT BETHEL—Genesis 28: 10-22.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Surely the Lord is in this place.—Gen. 28: 16.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—The time is not definitely known, probably about 1780 B. C. Isaac was 117 years old, and Esau and Jacob were 57, possibly; young men, in that time of long lives.

Place.—Bethel is on the southern edge of Palestine. Bethel is about twelve miles north of Jerusalem. Thence Jacob would travel northward through Palestine, cross the Jordan, and eastward through Danascus, following Abraham's route, to the old family home at Haran, where Abraham had lived. It was the flat lands bordering the Euphrates.—Padan-aram, "the field of Syria."

THE BIRTHRIGHT SOLD.—Gen. 25: 27-34. It would seem as if the covenant inherited by Isaac was to become fruitless for lack of a child to carry on the blessing; but after long waiting two sons were born to Rebekah. God had told her that the elder of the twins should serve the younger. The elder grew up an active, wild lad, a great hunter; while Jacob was a home-lover, a steady fellow.

THE BLESSING STOLEN.—Gen. 28: 1-40. It was one thing to get Esau's resignation of the birthright, but quite another thing to get the birthright itself for Isaac was no party to the bargain. The aged patriarch (he was about 137 years old), feeling death approaching, one day bade Esau perform a last act of kindness,—go forth and get some venison for him as he had often done before, and then return to receive his blessing. The watchful Rebekah, knowing that Esau had sold his birthright and was incapable of appreciating it, dressed Jacob in his brother's clothes, covered the exposed portion of his skin with the fine, short hair of kids, and sent him in to act before his blind father the part of elder son. Scarcely was it completed when the hunter returned. But the blessing was irrevocable, and all Isaac could do, in response to Esau's entreaties, was to predict for him and his descendants a dwelling in a barren region, and servitude to Jacob's race, a servitude under which they should be restless, and from which they were finally to break away. In short, he epitomized the after history of Edom and Israel.

THE WRONGDOER PUNISHED.—Gen. 27: 41-28: 11. The scheming mother and the phant son at once began to pay the penalty for their sin. Esau was terribly angry, and threatened his brother's life. Nothing was to be done but to send Jacob away. Therefore Rebekah made the excuse that she feared the lad would marry some heathen woman, and prevailed upon Isaac to send Jacob to her brother Laban, in Padan-aram (Mesopotamia), that he might obtain for a wife one of his cousins. Rebekah never saw Jacob again. A sorrowing mother, an exiled son, a riven family,—and the punishment was only begun! And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. One of the first effects of wrongdoing is to destroy the home or to drive the wrongdoer out of it. And he lay down upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set. This is the darkest period of Jacob's life; selfishness always makes the world a gloomy place. But Jacob's enlightening was at hand. And he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows. This would be the second or third evening of his flight.

THE PROMISE CONFIRMED.—Vs. 12-17. And he dreamed. It was in a dream that Solomon made his wise choice. It was in a dream that Paul heard the Macedonian cry. The Bible is full of such instances. Jacob was humbled already, else God would never have revealed himself to him as he did. And behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. The vision conveyed to the outcast the assurance that there was communication between heaven and earth. And behold the angels of God ascending on it. The word "angel" means a messenger, one sent. Jacob was permitted to learn that the visible world was not all with which he has to do; that there is an unseen world, of which he is also a citizen. And, behold, the Lord stood above it. Or, as in the margin of the R. V., "stood beside him," near, as a friend. That was what the lonely traveler needed, to see God, and receive God's blessing. And said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. It is a great deal easier to be a child of God if one is the child of parents and grandparents who have been children of God. Every one is a Christian not only for himself and those around him,

but for all that come after him. The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. God bestows upon this fugitive the mighty pledge given to Abraham and to Isaac. Does God here justify the fraud by which Jacob obtained Esau's birthright? Certainly not. Jacob's exile from home, that very pillow of stone, testified to God's displeasure, and the long toil of twenty years was to punish the sinner still more. But God's blessing always goes to the fittest man, and the lives of Jacob and Esau prove how wise and necessary was God's choice. "The diamond, when first held aloft, in his joy, by the slave who has found it, seems only a common stone; but when cleansed from the stains of the soil, and cut by the skill of the artist, it will shine like the morning star." And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth. God would make out of his very trials a symbol of blessing. And thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. The later Jewish empire, centered near Bethel; Jerusalem and Shechem were close at hand. And in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. This was true through all their history down to the culmination of the promise in Christ,—the Jews were the constant source of blessing to the world. And, behold, I am with thee. Jacob had had time to grow lonely, and this was just the assurance he needed. Henceforth he had a companion in all his journeys. And will keep thee in all places whither thou goest. As he journeyed, he must have looked forward anxiously to Laban's reception, and to the difficulties and trials of the coming years. Now all such cares were dissipated. And will bring thee again into this land. That was the climax, that he was to get home again! And this promise also is for every Christian, though he may be homeless on earth; Christ has gone "to prepare a place" for us. For I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. God was with Jacob in the stern discipline of the following years, which was to refine his nature and transform him from the crafty Jacob to Israel, the prince. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and said, Surely the Lord is in this place. Jacob and his fathers believed that Jehovah was God of heaven and of earth but they also believed that he manifested himself in certain places, and was more accessible as the covenant God of grace in these places. And I knew it not. Why not? Because he had not been taught to recognize God's omnipresence, and because he was preoccupied with his worries. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! "Perfect love casteth out fear," but "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," of love. Come to realize God's majesty, the infinite power with which he holds the worlds in the hollow of his hand, his inexorable law that directs every star and every dust grain and will have recompense for every sin, tremble before this mighty being, and you will have taken the first step toward knowing God and loving him. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gift of heaven. What is the house of God? That place, above others, where men find God.

THE VOW OFFERED.—Vs. 18-22. And Jacob rose up early in the morning. The Bible tells us that Abraham was an early riser, and Isaac, and Joshua Gideon, Samuel, David, Mary, the Apostles. "Early will I seek thee." And look the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar. An ancient and natural custom was observed by Jacob. Such a memorial was the Mizpah pillar (Gen. 31: 45), the second Bethel pillar (Gen. 35: 14), the memorial of the crossing of the Jordan (Josh. 4: 9). Every Christian should set up memorial stones in his life; should record, not only in his memory, but also in writing, the great blessings God has bestowed upon him,—the time, place, and manner of them. And poured oil upon the top of it. With the idea of consecrating it, of marking the spot as sacred. These anointed stones became among heathen nations objects of religious veneration and worship, a form of worship forbidden by the Mosaic law (Lev. 26: 1; Deut. 16: 22) and he called the name of that place Bethel. That is, the house of God. And Jacob vowed a vow. The natural impulse of gratitude is to give something in return for the gift just received. A man who is unwilling to make vows to God and for him, a man who will not bind himself by religious covenants, cannot be much of a Christian. Saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me. This is often understood, and unfairly, as being a mercenary vow, a bargain with God. It is nothing of the kind. God had already promised these things, and Jacob knew God would keep his promise, so he said, in effect, "Since God will do all this, then he shall be my God." Then shall the Lord be my God. Some scholars

prefer the translation given in the margin of the revision: If God will be with me... and if the Lord will be my God, then this stone... shall be God's house. This vow, thus understood, was fulfilled on Jacob's return from exile (Gen. 35: 1-15) though it seems that God had to remind him of it. And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give thee tenfold. This was a very ancient custom. Abraham had given tithes to Melchizedek (Gen. 14: 20). The law of tithes is given in Lev. 27: 30-33. Are we still under that law? No answer is given in the New Testament, except, possibly, our Lord's charge against the Pharisee, "Ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law;... these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matt. 23: 23). Certainly, no Christian is authorized by "the gospel of liberty" to give less generously or systematically than the Jews, and certainly the adoption of the tenth as a minimum standard of giving need not lead us into Jewish formalism, while it would lead the church into a power she has hitherto been unable to exercise on account of shamefully meagre gifts to her treasuries. Oberlin, that poor French minister, reading of Jewish tithes, said to himself, "Well, I am sure that I, as a Christian, have three times as many blessings as the Jews had. If it was right for a Jew to give one tenth of his property to God, surely I ought to give at least three times as much as that." And he did. "The man who calls himself a Christian, and gives less than one tenth of his income to the Lord, is a meaner man than Jacob, and has a lower standard than the king of Sodom, who was ready to give more than that to God's representative."—H. Clay Trumbull, D. D.

A Child's Puzzle.

BY MARTHA C. RANKIN.

Mother, didn't you tell me that Arthur had gone to heaven to live with Jesus?

Yes, my daughter. And isn't heaven a nice place to live? Isn't it much nicer than India?

Why, yes, daughter. Heaven is a very beautiful place, and there is never any sickness or sorrow or suffering there. The Bible tells us so.

Well, then, I don't understand it at all! Understand what, daughter? What is it that troubles you?

Why, everything was so hurried answer, in a voice that was suspicious of tears. These ugly black clothes that make me want to cry every time I look at them. You say that Arthur is happy in heaven, and if he is I don't see why you wear black all the time and never go anywhere except to church! I don't believe Arthur would like it a bit! And, perhaps, he's looking right down at us now, You know, do you?

No, daughter, but don't you see we can't help being lonely and sad without him, and bright colors would make it seem as if we didn't miss him, and some people would never know that we had lost him.

But I don't see, persisted the child, I'm sure I should miss him just as much if I wore my blue dress, and you know Arthur always liked it. Mother, do you believe that heaven is as beautiful as Bermuda when the lilies are in blossom?

O, yes, my daughter. I believe it is more beautiful than anything on earth, because there is nothing in heaven to hurt or destroy things as there is here. Everything is pure and good and peaceful.

Mother, interrupted the child, why didn't you wear black and stay in the house when Aunt Helen went to India? You say it isn't half as nice a place as heaven, and I've often heard you say that you never expected to see her again, because she didn't expect to come back and you couldn't go way over there.

But that's different, dear. She may come back any time, and she is in this world and I can write to her, and she answers my letters, and she tells me how she is and what she is doing. But we can't hear from Arthur or know anything about him till God takes us to heaven too. Don't you see that it is very different?

Yes, reluctantly, I see that it's hard not getting any letters and all that, but I can't see why that makes so much difference, and if I go to heaven I'm sure I shall look down, if I can't come, and I want to see you looking smiling and happy in the pretty dresses you used to wear. You say that if our friends go to India or anywhere else in this world we can wear our pretty clothes just the same, because we don't want people to know that we miss them; but if they go to heaven, we must wear black so that everybody will know how sad and lonely we are. O, dear! I'm afraid I can't ever understand it!—Congregationalist.

Sussie Jones and They.

Sussie Jones will not lead the young people's meeting because she is afraid of so many folks. Her mother will not move into a smaller house and curtail her family expenses—as wisdom would require her to do, since Mr. Jones' death—because, What will everybody say? Sussie's brother Tom doesn't like to refuse an invitation to join in a carousal which goes straight against his own convictions and training, because he thinks, all the fellows do it, and he dreads unpopularity more than he does unrighteousness. Sussie's little brother Jack went in swimming yesterday in dangerous water, and his excuse is, The other boys all went.

Every one of Sussie Jones' family and relations—even counting all those with whom she is connected through her great ancestor, Mr. Adam—has got into some sort of trouble from just the same cause. To put the whole matter in a nutshell, they are afraid of the crowd. Their awe of number makes them do all sorts of silly, unreasonable and wicked things. It is a family trait of all the Joneses that they are willing to run counter to their own common-sense, to their own duty, to their own ideals, and to the very law of God, rather than to oppose that formidable company commonly called They.

As a matter of fact—how we wish we could whisper into the ear of Sussie Jones and her kin!—They are cowards and nobodies. They have no personalities and no convictions. They are sneaking rumor mongers and gossip-mongers. They never said anything worth listening to or obeying. They are not deserving of a place in good society, and it will be a happy day for the Joneses and all their connections when They are cut completely.—Forward.

The Bigger Fool.

BY MARTHA C. RANKIN.

Two friends were walking across a field, when they attracted the attention of a bull, which started in pursuit.

There was a tree not far off and both started for it, each trying to reach the tree first, as it was small and would only accommodate one. The successful brother shinned up as far as he could and looked down to see what would happen. The one behind being hard pressed, saw to one side a little depression, and realizing that any port in a storm was welcome, made for it. On reaching it he found it was a mouth of a cave, and jumped in just as the animal was about to toss him. The friend up the tree could not see the entrance to the cave, but conjectured that there must be one, and was thankful for his comrade's escape. The bull had no more than passed the mouth of the cave than out popped the man, and the bull, wheeling, charged him again. This was repeated several times, when the man up the tree cried out in astonishment:

Why don't you stay in the cave, you fool; you'll keep that bull around here all day and we'll never get out.

The sentence was hardly finished when the active man had to jump in to escape the bull, but when he came out he wrathfully shook his fist and said:

You are a bigger fool than I am. There is a bear in the cave.

Some men have been concerned because God is revealed in the first chapter by the name Elohim—simply God; and in the second chapter by the name the Lord [Jehovah] God. But let us remember that Jehovah is the covenant name of our God. And when M. S. is telling (as in the second chapter of Genesis, he is) about the ordaining of the covenant of works, as a matter of course he speaks of him by his covenant name, Jehovah. Any other course would excite surprise.—Observer.

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