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Our Pulpit.

The Story of Moses.

No. 1.

FROM JOSEPH TO MOSES.

SERMON PREACHED BY

REV. A. J. MOWATT.

In St. Paul's Church, Fredericton Sunday evening Jan. 6th 1889.

"Now there arose a new king over Egypt who knew not Joseph."—EXODUS I, 8.

I begin tonight, with the help of God, a series of discourses on the life and labors of Moses, and evening by evening, as my theme opens up and widens out, I hope it will prove both interesting and instructive. I shall not spare any effort to make it such, for I feel that the theme is worthy of our study, and ought to be of much spiritual helpfulness to us all. I am not taking it up as a subject of study simply, as one that may awaken interest and give instruction. That would be useful perhaps, and not unworthy. But we are here face to face with questions that mean so much to us, questions that have to do with our character-shaping and destiny-making. Heaven or Hell opens up to us here, and we are being saved or lost. I want to realize that as I come before you to speak to you. I want to have my soul filled with the thought of it. And the theme that is to engage our attention, evening by evening, for the next three or four months, is a salvation theme. It has to do with one of the grandest revival movements that the world has ever been the scene of. If, then, as a church and people, we are not the better for the study of the life and labors of Moses, it will be because we have not entered into it, and caught the inspiration of it.

Moses was one of the grandest characters of the olden time, a man raised up by God to do a great work for the church and world, a man that stands alone in his towering moral grandeur. There can never be but one Moses, a remark I admit more or less true of every man, but true of him in a sense in which it is not true and cannot be said of any other man. You cannot however compare those ancient worthies with one another, any more than you can compare with one another the great men of today, and say of them: "This one is greater than that one, and that one greater than some one else." They stand alone in their day, men of giant moral stature, towering high above their generation, and were, in a sense, with regard to the men of their own time, what the Christ is with regard to the men of all time. Like mountain-peaks they were the first to see the rising and the last to see the setting sun, and when all the land around was dark, they were bright, and did so much both to hasten in and keep from going out the glad light of their day.

The two men that stood the highest, sunlit peaks, both of them, in early Jewish history, are Abraham and Moses. Abraham was as great as Moses, and his name will live as long. In some respects perhaps he was the greater of the two. Still, I think you will grant this, that Moses was admitted to the council-chamber of the most High, as not even the father of the faithful, the friend of God, was. Only one other had the freedom of access to God that Moses had, and that was the man Jesus.

Moses was not what men would call a brilliant man. He did not astonish the world by the splendor of his genius.

He did not flash across the heavens like a meteor, shoot up like a coruscation. He was rather a plain practical everyday sort of man, level-headed, substantial rather than showy, a man of sanctified, almost glorified commonsense; just such a man as was needed to organize and carry through the gigantic work of piloting a nation in a great crisis of its history. He made no pretensions, was rather lacking in ambition, and had a most humble opinion of his own abilities. But when he knew what it was his duty to do he did it, and he could be trusted to do the best that could be done anywhere and everywhere. He was not by any means a perfect man. He was too good a man to think he was perfect, or near hand it. He made mistakes, as we shall see, and had to suffer for them. But he was a man whose like the world will never see again, second only to the one perfect MAN. Such, in brief, is the man whose life-story we are to tell, whose labors we are to study.

Tonight, as an introductory theme, we will sketch, in few words, the sojourn of Israel in Egypt, and tell the story of how the House of Bread became a House of Bondage. It is the necessary background of the life we are to study. If we would understand Moses, or any man, and appreciate the work he did or tried to do, we must familiarize ourselves with his times and surroundings. The sojourn of Israel in Egypt may be divided into three periods, more or less

marked, which we shall call first, second, third.

THE FIRST PERIOD.

This was of about seventy years' duration, and ended with the death of Joseph. Two years ago, you will remember, I tried to tell you, in my own way, the interesting story of Joseph's life. At an early age sold into Egypt as a slave, he came to be its chief ruler. A seven years' famine happening, his aged father and brothers with their households and effects moved down to Egypt because it was a house of bread, and were settled in a rich part of Lower Egypt called Goshen. The family of Jacob numbered at this time seventy persons, but we would make a great mistake did we suppose that these were all the people who belonged to them. Abraham had a great household of some fourteen or fifteen hundred people, and Jacob and his grown sons would not have fewer, slaves and servants and all, than three thousand. These came to be gradually incorporated into the life and strength of the young and growing nation.

Ancient Egyptian history is still in a most tangled state, but it is now pretty generally accepted by Egyptologists, that this emigration occurred towards the close of the Hyksos period. Apepi, the last Hyksos king, is believed to have been the Pharaoh who made Joseph his prime minister. The Hyksos, or Shepherd Kings, are supposed to have been Hittites, or some Asiatic tribe. They had driven their flocks and herds down into Egypt, and had gradually subdued the country. This subjugation continued perhaps two centuries and a half. Some authorities think much longer.

We can understand how the Hyksos would not be averse to such an emigration as that of Israel. Shepherds themselves, and of kindred blood, and invaders besides, they would stretch out a friendly hand to the seed of the great Abraham. And then it is held that Apepi, the reigning Pharaoh at the time, was not only Joseph's friend and admirer, but was also a worshipper of one God, and was thus specially drawn to a people of like faith with himself. At all events, it was in the most happy circumstances the people of Israel were settled in Egypt. And all through the life of Joseph they continued to enjoy great prosperity, and grew in numbers and importance.

Apepi willed to make war against the king of Upper Egypt. This war continued for years, and at last resulted disastrously to Apepi. Thenative kings combined their forces against him, and after a desperate struggle succeeded in expelling him from the country, and so the Hyksos domination in Egypt came to an end. Now, it would be interesting to know what part, if any, the Israelites took in this war. But history is silent. Joseph would be left at home to manage the affairs of the kingdom, while the king was absent leading his forces to battle; or, he may have retired in his old age from all active duties. It was stirring times in Egypt during the last half of his life, but not a line is left on record to tell us about it, and how it was with him and his people. We know where their sympathies would be, and where their interests lay, but, it may have been, that they were let alone, and lived in peace and prosperity, while war's bloody waves, in foam and fury, swept over the land, and rolled nearer and nearer to where the sons of Jacob tilled the soil and fed their flocks. It must have been difficult in such circumstances to maintain a neutrality, but possibly they may have been able to do so.

THE SECOND PERIOD.

With the death of Joseph commences the second period of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, lasting, it is believed, some two hundred and sixty years. Joseph's family was connected with the priesthood of Lower Egypt, he having married a daughter of Potipherah, priest of On, how much or how little that might mean in those early times. It is reasonable to suppose, however, that such a family connection would mean something, and may have helped towards their being allowed to enjoy peaceable possession of the land of Goshen under the new rulers. But we can easily understand how they would be made feel in many ways that they were but barely tolerated in the land, and that the House of Bread was coming to be something else, not yet indeed a House of Bondage, but not what it had been in other days, when one of their own people had the reins of power in his hands. A change was coming. Ill times were brewing for them. Askance looks and sometimes harsh words made them feel that they were despised and hated as a people.

They were shepherds, and the native Egyptians hated shepherds, for was it not shepherds who tyrannized over them for well nigh three hundred years? And then, if they were not the allies of the Hyksos during the war, they were at least in sympathy with them and their proteges, and Egypt could not forget that. Thus it was slowly coming to be hard times with Israel in Egypt, the times their great ancestor Abraham had predicted, when, in a land not

theirs, they would be afflicted for four hundred years. It is not stated what the nature of this long affliction would be, and it is held by authorities that during the second period they were not oppressed with the rigor of later years; still, it was more or less oppressive, a growing burden of distress and affliction.

And it has been suggested, too, that as they grew in numbers, for it is thought they must have grown to be a million towards the end of the second period, Goshen would be getting too small for them, and many of the younger people would be crowded out, and compelled to hire themselves out as farm-laborers and servants, and that would go against them.

Perhaps the laws, too, were gradually made to bear heavily upon them. Taxes might be increased. As aliens, aliens in the matter of religion, aliens, too, as regards their customs and habits and nationality, they were treated with a growing hardness and harshness. They would not be allowed as once to hold any office under the government, and they may have been more and more restricted with regard to their religious rites. In so many ways they could be persecuted and afflicted by their masters, without being actually reduced to servitude, and dealt with rigorously. Still, whatever the nature of the afflictions they were made groan under during the second period of their sojourn in Egypt, they did not hinder their growth in numbers, for it is said of them at this time: "And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled by them."

THE THIRD PERIOD.

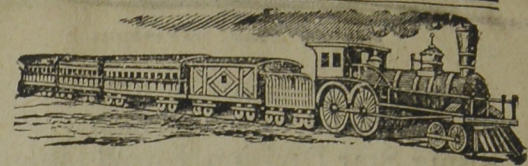
Another period opens, stretching through a century of great darkness and distress for God's people. A king has come to power who knew not Joseph, nor cared to know. There has been a revolution probably, or something of the sort, and a usurper has ascended the throne, the founder of a new dynasty. Of course let it not be forgotten that the scholars still grope in the dark here, and one says this and another says that, and therefore it would ill become me to be too sure. But as the explorations in the land of the Pharaohs are being pushed forward, the light seems to be breaking, and it is not too much to hope that we may yet know where now we can only grope and guess. Some authorities think Seti I the king who knew not Joseph; others of equal weight hold it was his son, his co-regent and successor, Rameses II, the great Sesostris of Grecian history. It may be that both father and son, Seti and Sesostris, had a hand in the cruelties inflicted upon God's people, although the probabilities are that Rameses II, or Sesostris, had the most to do, and is the king specially referred to.

It is stated upon what seems to be good authority, that the store city Pithom has been recently discovered, and it is found that Sesostris was the builder; and if so, then he was the king who knew not Joseph, and was the great oppressor of the Hebrews. And indeed from all that we know of him, it is about what we would expect of him.

Perhaps it may not be out of place here to dwell for a little on the history and character of this great tyrant, and the dynasty he was the distinguished representative of. The eighteenth or Ramesside dynasty was founded, it is believed, by the grandfather of Sesostris, Rameses I, a usurper, a man who had not a drop of royal blood in his veins. And royal blood was something in Egypt in those days. For the want of it Rameses I was never acknowledged king by the Theban priesthood and nobility. He was succeeded by his son Seti I, who lacked what his father lacked, and so was looked down upon by the blue blood of Theban aristocracy. Seti I had the good sense to remedy the defect, however, by marrying princess Tuaa.

Princess Tuaa was the daughter of Amenophis III, and Tii, his queen. This Tii, the mother of Tuaa, was a real queen, the daughter of a great king and noble queen of Mesopotamia, the country of the fair Rebekah and Rachel. Now, Rameses II or Sesostris, the son of Seti I and Tuaa, was through his mother royally connected, and in a famous tablet of syenite, called the tablet of four hundred years, he proudly traces back his lineage to the shepherd king Apepi, the friend of Joseph and patron of Israel.

Sesostris was trained for war from his birth. When a mere boy of ten years, he and all the boys of the land were put under military discipline by Seti I, his father, and even then he gave promise of what he was to be, and was looked upon as the rising star of the nation. As soon as he was old enough, he began to assist his father in every regal and ritualistic duty—sometimes holding the plate of offering, pouring the libation, pronouncing the invocation, or reciting the hymn of worship, while his father performed the sacred rites. And then his father took him to the wars, and even entrusted him on military expeditions on his own account. While still a young man he was acknowledged by the nation as coregent. But his ambition was to be a conqueror. He led a victorious



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12.50 P. M.—For Fredericton Junction, St. John and points east.

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11.35 A. M.—From Fredericton Junction, St. John and points East.

3.10 P. M.—From Fredericton Junction, Vancoboro, Bangor, Portland, Boston, and points West, St. Andrew's, St. Stephen, Houlton Woodstock and points north.

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