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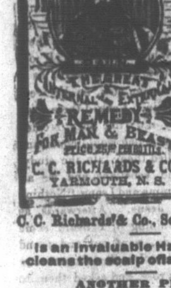

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Second Quarter.

Lesson IV. April 24. Gen. 47: 1-12.

JOSEPH AND HIS FATHER.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise.—Eph. 6: 2.

I. JOSEPH SENDS FOR HIS FATHER.—Having made himself known to his brothers, Joseph told them to hasten back home and tell his father of all his glory, and bring him down without delay to see it. And, as soon as it became known through the palace of Pharaoh that Joseph's brothers had come, there was general satisfaction; and the king charged Joseph to do as he had proposed, and send for his father without delay.

II. JACOB JOURNEYS INTO EGYPT.—Immediately the father and sons prepare to go down into Egypt.

Their numbers. Jacob and his descendants, who are named in chap. 46, numbered 70, excluding his sons' wives. 66 are first named, then four more, Jacob, and Joseph and his two sons are added. Doubtless many servants and dependants came with them, making quite a caravan.

The journey was about 250 miles along the usual caravan route; but it was a long, hard journey for an old man, with women and children and flocks and herds.

III. THE MEETING OF THE FATHER AND THE LONG LOST SON.—When Jacob drew near to Egypt, and had reached the land of Goshen, Joseph went forth in his regal chariot and met his father, and there was a true oriental meeting.

HONORING PARENTS. Joseph illustrated the fifth commandment, which was given in its present form on Sinai, more than 200 years later. The promise was fulfilled in him, for he lived long and happily in the land which the Lord God gave him.

IV. JOSEPH PRESENTS HIS BROTHERS AT THE COURT OF PHARAOH. 1. *Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh.* In order to introduce them to his superior, and to gain his permission for their occupation of Goshen. *My father and my brethren . . . are come, . . . and they are in the land of Goshen.* Goshen means "herbage," or "flowers," "the land of flowers." Goshen was a pastoral country, where some of Pharaoh's cattle were kept.

2. *And he took some of his brethren, even five men.* The rest being left to guard and tend the flocks and herds.

3. *What is your occupation?* The king's interrogation corresponded precisely with what Joseph had anticipated (chap. 46: 33, 34), and their answer accorded with their previous instructions. It was an answer which left them no room to hope for any higher place than to be rulers over his cattle.

SHEPHERDS AN ABOMINATION TO THE EGYPTIANS. So we are told in Gen. 46: 34. The reasons may have been: (1) Shepherds belonged in Egypt to the fourth or lowest class. (2) The Egyptians often suffered from inroads from sheep-stealing tribes. (3) The foreign shepherd nations were looked upon as a kind of barbarians, living in a wild, uncultivated way. (4) It is probable that most of the shepherd class who came into Egypt were the worst specimens, the banditti, the tramps.

AN OCCUPATION. All that have a place in the world should have an employment in it according to their capacity. The Christian. What is his occupation? He is "about his Father's business." Brethren, let this occupation be yours.

4. *To sojourn in the land are we come.* They did not propose to become naturalized in his kingdom, nor to trespass upon the territorial rights of the Egyptians, but wished only to be accounted as strangers and *sojourners* there.

6. *The land of Egypt is before thee.* That is, take your choice. And as you have chosen the land of Goshen, go there and dwell. *And if thou knowest any men of activity*, rather of ability, competency for the management of such affairs. He would give them the highest office which they were adapted to fill.

V. JACOB PRESENTED TO PHARAOH. 7. *And Joseph brought in Jacob . . . and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.* More must be meant by this than the usual salutation, in which each one presented to the king prayed for the prolongation of his life. When we are in the line of duty, in the path that God marks out for us, we are sure to carry blessings wherever we go.

8. *And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou?* The question was, no doubt, proposed in consequence of the indications of extreme old age visible in Jacob's form.

9. *The days of the years of my pilgrimage.* Some have thought that he called his life a pilgrimage because he was a nomad, a wanderer in lands not his own. But in reality the patriarchs spoke of life as a pilgrimage or sojourning, because they sought another country, that is, a heavenly (Heb. 11: 9-13). "The longest life is short compared with eternity, and with men's hopes, expectations, wishes, and schemes" (Job 14: 1). *And evil have the days of my life been.* For the most part the evil grew out of his own conduct. And he was to blame for it. But this was the bitterest part of the evil.

(I.) NOTE THE BURDENS OF SIN. (1) His unbrotherly conduct towards Esau; (2) his deception of his father; (3) his sharp conduct toward Laban; (4) his neglect of the training of his older sons; and (5) his partiality toward Joseph.

(II.) THEN NOTE HIS SORROWS. (1) His being driven from home; (2) the anger of Esau; (3) the ill-treatment by Esau; (4) the lameness caused by his wrestling with the angel; (5) the loss of Joseph; (6) the bad conduct of his sons; (7) the death of Rachel; (8) the famine; (9) the danger of his sons in Egypt, the imprisonment of Simeon, and the departure of Benjamin; (10) the infirmities of old age; (11) the remorse for his past sins.

(III.) BUT NOTE ALSO HIS BLESSINGS. (1) A good home; (2) a father's blessing; (3) the vision at Bethel; (4) the promises of God; (5) Rachel the well-beloved; (6) a large family; (7) worldly prosperity; (8) the answer to prayer at Peniel; (9) a long life; (10) the advancement of his son Joseph.

LIFE A PILGRIMAGE. (1) True life is a journey to heaven. (2) Therefore we should live as pilgrims, thinking more of the eternal home at the end than of the transient accommodations by the way. (3) The light of that home shall shine upon all the way. (4) It is right to make the way as pleasant as we can without interfering with the journey. (5) We should look forward to the compensations of the future life, as a counterbalance to our temptations. (6) Heaven is completion and fruition; and this life can be understood only as we see there the end and purpose of life.

VI. JOSEPH PROVIDES FOR HIS FATHER AND BROTHERS. 11. *And Joseph placed his father and his brethren* (i.e., gave them a settlement, the import of which the next clause explains), *and gave them a possession* (i.e., allowed them to acquire property). *In the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses.* The same as the land of Goshen, or that part of the land of Goshen of which they took possession.

Annie's Lesson.

It was such a pretty play-room, with yellow paper on the wall, a bright rug on the floor, a low oak book case, that had been Annie's mamma's, filled with the best of children's books. A doll's house of four rooms stood on one side; a closet filled with toys of all sorts was separated from the room by a curtain; a cheerful open-fire burned on the hearth; and everything about the room proved that it belonged to a little girl who was dearly loved, and whose parents were able to gratify every desire.

On the floor, between the window, through which the bright sunlight poured, and the fire, stood a lounge that was a bed of printed roses. On this was a little girl of ten years, whose pale face told that she had been ill. Just now the face is a very unpleasant one, for it is disfigued by frowns; and the sweet mouth, that was made for kisses, is not winning, for it was gathered into a pout. A large French doll on the floor, leaning against the lounge, and a pile of pretty books on the chair were unnoticed.

The silence in the room made the slightest sound audible. Annie raised her head as a rustle was heard, and a tall, sweet-faced lady entered.

"My darling, I'm sorry I was gone so long, but there were several things that needed attention." And Mrs. Alcott kissed the forehead of the little girl, whose face did not respond to the caress.

"What did the doctor say, mamma?"

Mrs. Alcott did not answer at once, but she took Annie's hand in hers and patted it gently.

"Dear heart, mamma is sorry, but the doctor says my little girl must keep very still for a month—perhaps longer." She looked anxiously at Annie.

A quick, passionate sob was the only answer as Annie covered her face. Mrs. Alcott smoothed Annie's hair until Annie shook her hand off. After a time Annie looked up.

"Mamma, I don't believe that Doctor knows. I'm sure it would not hurt me to walk, at least a little."

"My child, you hurt your ankle, in the first place, because you thought you knew that the pile of lumber was a perfectly safe place to play. Papa told you it was not carefully piled, but you thought it was. A broken ankle has been the result. With all this pain and weariness I hoped, dear that you had learned a lesson," said Mrs. Alcott, as she rocked slowly back and forth. Annie watched the fire, but the frowns did not disappear.

"Mamma, I can move my foot, and it does not hurt me. I'm sure the doctor does not know how strong it is."

"Annie, he says if you walk on it now, before it is perfectly strong, you may injure it so that you will be lame for life. I did not mean to tell you this, but I must tell you, in order that you may know your danger."

And Mrs. Alcott knelt down and put her arms around her little girl. Both were very still. Annie thought of the lame little children that she had pitied so much walking about on crutches. Never able to run, or jump, or play tennis! Like them! He did not know, there!

"Oh, mamma! You know we were going to do such lovely things—our class, I mean. We were going to make so many things for St. Mary's Hospital; and now all the girls will be there, and have such a good time, and I will have to stay on this old lounge till Easter, and perhaps longer;" and Annie cried as she put her arms around her mother's neck.

"Annie, I'm afraid these tears are rather selfish. You are crying for the good times you will miss with the girls. Is that so?"

Annie looked up.

"Why, mamma, you want me to help, do you not?"

"Yes; but I don't see why you cannot help as it is."

"What! all alone?"

"Yes. You know what you wanted to do, what you could do. I will get you what you want, so far as is necessary, and you can do your share at home. It would be more pleasant to have the girls, but you must keep quiet."

Annie did not seem to fall in with this plan of her mamma's. She looked at the fire without answering.

After a time her mamma said: "Have you made up your mind, Annie? I am going out this morning, and will get you what you need."

Annie looked at her, and said: "It seems so strange to work all alone, when I expected to be with the girls and Miss Hart. I don't believe I'd finish, mamma; I'm sure I'd give up before anything was done."

"Dear heart, I'm so glad you have learned your failing. Listen, dearest. This is just the season in which you may learn to overcome. You hate to work alone. In everything you do you want company. You want to do things for others, but you choose always to do that which you like to do. There is never a plan to give up something you like, or something you do not like, for others. Dearest, you must spend much of the next four weeks alone, and I pray that you will learn many lessons from it. Choose, dearest, that this Lent, in which you promised to have so many pleasant meeting, shall be one in which you will learn to give up. Conquer some fault, and let Easter be to you a real day of triumph and joy, because you have learned to conquer yourself."

"Where shall I begin? I want to be good, mamma; I do."

"I know, dearest; I know you do. Mamma will help you, and there is another who will help you every minute if you only ask him, and try to be what he wants you to be."

"I know, mamma," answered Annie, softly.

They talked long and earnestly. When Mrs. Alcott left the room Annie's face wore a sweet, peaceful look.

She was bolstered up in a comfortable position, and as soon as she was alone she reached out and took a pair of stockings, in which there were holes, from a basket, and began darning them. Before they were finished she heard her baby brother crying and worrying for his mamma. She called Nora, and told her to bring Clayton in, and she would amuse him. He came in with the tears still on his cheeks. "Bring me my box of paints, Nora, please." Nora put the box of paints down beside Annie with a look of utter astonishment. This box of paints was Annie's special treasure, and how she could allow Clayton to use them was beyond Nora's comprehension.

Annie told Nora she could go on with her work, and she would take care of Clayton.

"Nana, me paint pictures," said Clayton, putting his fat, dimpled hand on the box.

"Yes, Clayt, you shall."

Soon both children were so deeply interested that they did not notice mamma in the doorway. "Thank you, dear," was all that Mrs. Alcott said as she kissed Annie.

Annie was astonished hirself when she found how many things she could do to make the home life happier, how many things that would make her mamma's burdens lighter.

Mora thought, "Miss Annie was like a little angel there in the room, all shut up."

"Dood, tweet sister," was Clayton's cry. And the little boy grew dearer every moment to his sister, who never realized how dear he was till she began giving up pleasures for him, and found the real joy of knowing she lives for some one. Her mamma's "I you better not" was no longer met with frowns and pouts.

The work she choose to do for St. Mary's Hospital was the making of two night dresses, and this was a tremendous sacrifice, for Annie disliked sewing. She fought a great many battles with herself before they were finished. Every time she conquered, a new sense of strength came to her, and she knew that in the quiet and loneliness of her room and in her helplessness she was learning the true lesson of Lent—the power to conquer the sins inside and outside of her own heart. Easter morning, when she entered the church with the other children, singing "Christ the Lord is risen to-day," she sang it knowing that in her own heart had risen a desire to be a child of God, and that in the five weeks spent almost alone she had grown stronger to do his will, and not her own—had learned a little of the blessing that comes from giving one's self to others.—*Christian Union.*

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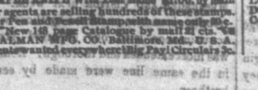

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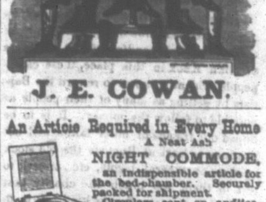

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