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Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY.

Third Quarter.

Lesson IV. July 28. 1 Samuel 8: 4-20.

ISRAEL ASKING FOR A KING.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel: and they said, Nay, but we will have a king over us."—1 Sam. 8: 19.

EXPLANATORY.

I. ISRAEL ASKING FOR A KING. 4. Then all the elders of Israel: the heads of families and those who by age, wisdom, and natural ability were the leaders of the people and chosen by the people. Gathered themselves together. The demand was not the outcry of an ignorant and deluded rabble, but the grave and deliberate application of the elders of Israel. Came to Samuel under Ramah: to ask him to form them into a kingdom.

REASONS FOR ASKING KING. (1) 5. Behold thou art old: they wanted some one of activity, and endurance, and modern military skill, in whose military leadership they could trust. Samuel trusted more in God than in armies. (2) And thy sons walk not in thy ways. (See ver. 3.) They were judges in Beersheba, 45 or 50 miles from Samel. They took bribes and perverted justice for a reward. Even good men may have bad children. There are those who go astray under the best of influences, as Adam in Eden, and Judas among the disciples of Jesus. Sometimes children refused to be trained. (3) Now make us a king to judge us. An hereditary monarchy seemed the only means of combining the tribes into one nation, "putting an end to their mutual jealousies, and subordinating tribal to national interests." (4) They wanted a military leader, one "to go out before them and fight their battles," (ver. 20; 12, 12.) (5) They would be like all the nations. The Eastern mind is so essentially and pervasively regal, that to be without a sovereign is scarcely an intelligible state of things to Oriental peoples. The want of a royal head must often have been cast in their teeth by their neighbors as a kind of stigma.

II. THE PROPHET DISPLEASED WITH THE REQUEST. 6. But the thing displeased Samuel. Not because it was an absolutely wrong request in itself, for provisions for a king were made in the law of Moses (Deut. 17: 14-20); but (1) the request seemed to be a condemnation of himself and his administration. (2) The proposal seemed against the interests of the people themselves. No king could do to them such a king as God was, or could defend from enemies, train them in character, or lead them to prosperity, as could the king they now had, if only they would be loyal to him. (3) It was a rejection of God, as we shall see below. (4) It disappointed Samuel's hopes for his country; his splendid ideal of a holy people, self-ruled, and subject only to the eternal King of heaven.

III. SAMUEL GOES TO GOD FOR WISDOM. 6. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. Because his chief desire was to learn God's will and to do it. It might possibly be the time for the monarchy. In all ages prayer to God has been a refuge in trouble, a light in darkness; for God gives wisdom to those who seek it; gives liberally and upbraids not. "Prayer is the rope in the belfry; we pull it, and it rings the bell up in heaven." IV. THE ANSWER TO HIS PRAYER. And the Lord said unto Samuel. In what way we are not told, but in such a way as made it clear to his mind that it was God's message to him. Hearken unto the voice of the people. Their prayer was answered, although what they asked would not have been best for them if they had been different. The answer to the prayer was a punishment for their sins. If the people would not be fitted for freedom, then the next best thing was a monarchy. For they had not rejected thee: they only or chiefly. But I said, that I should not reign over them. The course of the people was a practical rejection of God as king. How ISRAEL REJECTED GOD. 1. The request, in the sense made to Samuel, was a virtual denial of the sovereignty of Jehovah, and a renunciation of their own glory as the theocratic people. 2. They did not ask God what He wished them to do, and to guide them into what was best, but demanded a king, as if they were wise enough to decide this matter for themselves. 3. They were unwilling to be such a kingdom as God had planned as the best for them. 4. It was a rejection of God's conditions of prosperity. "If may be suspected that the Israelites had grown weary of a system of government which made their welfare entirely dependent on right conduct." 5. It was a distrust of God's ability or willingness to give them the victory over Ammon (12: 13) and other enemies. They laid the cause of their present condition to God, and not to their own evil behavior. 6. Their motives were contrary to the divine motives. Pride, vanity, fashion, seems to have a strong influence. They wished to be like the surrounding nations. REJECTING GOD. People now reject God (1) by determining to follow their own wills instead of God's; (2) by refusing to perform a known duty; (3) by rejecting God's word; (4) by neglecting the influence of the Spirit; (5) by all deliberate sins against God; (6) by neglecting the worship of God; (7) by keeping Him out of their hearts and thoughts. 8. According to all the works. Their conduct was characteristic. What they had done to Samuel was only another illustration of a settled national trait—their idolatrous tendency. For proof, read their history. Several times they rejected Moses. So they also unto thee. It is in the spirit of our Lord's saying to the apostles, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord." 9. Yet protest solemnly unto them. Give them one more opportunity of showing a better spirit and making a better choice. V. THE PROPHET: THE MANNER OF THE KINGDOM. 10. And Samuel told all. As faithfully as when he bore the unwell-

come message to Eli (chap. 3: 18). The greatness of Samuel's character is shown in nothing more strikingly than that, after finding the change sanctioned by God, he not only waived further opposition, but led the movement forward, with calm wisdom, to a successful issue.

11. This will be the manner of the king. The following is a very just and graphic picture of the despotic governments which anciently and still are found in the East, and into conformity with which the Hebrew monarchy, notwithstanding the restrictions prescribed by the law, gradually slid.

12. Set them to ear his ground. To ear is an old English word, now obsolete, for to plough. It is derived from the Latin arare, to plough. We have retained arable from the same root.

13. Ye shall cry out in that day, etc. This was exactly fulfilled in the revolt of the ten tribes from Rehoboam, which was caused by the grievous burdens to which they had been subjected (see 1 Kings 12: 4).

The evils which would follow the establishment of a monarchy may be summed up under three heads: (1) luxury of the court and pomp of war, destroying the peaceful simplicity of the people; (2) diminished liberty; (3) high taxes draining the wealth of the land.

19. Nay, but we will have a king. They preferred to run the risk of future and far-off evils for the sake of the advantages they hoped would come to them immediately from a king.

This man of choice. Men are continually following the bad example of these Israelites. God foretells the terrible results of sin, and yet men choose present pleasure. Drinking men drain the intoxicating cup in the very presence of the picture of a drunkard's home and a drunkard's grave. Men will lose the hope of present good, though they heard God's warning voice, saying, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

HOMEY HOMILIES.

"Your Name and Age, Please."

By ROBERT J. BURDETTE.

So you want to go into politics, do you, my daughter?

You want to help your father and brother, and incidentally these sisterless brothers who, alone and all unassisted, bear the burdens and perform the wearing duties of citizenship—consisting largely of the wearing of strange and ill-sorted raiment by torchlight—you want to help the men, in short, to save this blessed country? Well, then, needs saving, every one; in a period. You want to understand all about the sacred right of the franchise, and the blood-bought privilege of manhood suffrage; the inestimable blessings of Protection and the incomparable advantages of Free Trade; the measureless perjury of the Republican party, the infamous treachery of the Democracy, the shamefully hypocritical duplicity of the Labor Reformers, the hopeless imbecility of the Woman Suffrage League, and the general demerit of the whole pestilent and mischievous political organization? Well, you'll find out all about it if you will only read the opposition papers. You want to go into this sort of thing, do you? You would—

Be a politician, And with the statesmen stand, A helmet on your forehead, A torch-stick in your hand?

Well, if you have resolutely made up your mind that you are going in, I don't see how you are going to keep you out. Unjust judges, we say, your brethren, who regard not woman, but have a wholesome fear of a voting man, yet are we no stronger than that other unjust judge, who, though "he would not for awhile, but afterward he said within himself, I will give my widow and my orphan, I will avenge her, lest (R. Y.) she wear me out by her continual coming." You will "wear us out" if you keep at it. For myself, Miss Novator, and you, dear Madame D'lafranchise, I don't care to wear you, and you need not care to keep you out of the political arena, if you want to come in and get your bangs and bonnet knocked about your ears.

So, you see, I am not the man who is keeping you away from the polls. Don't pick up me about it. I weakened and gave up long ago. Here—to show my sincerity and my unconditional surrender, I will give you my vote. You may take my ballot and vote, if you will cast it for the man I tell you. I'm sure nothing could be more unselfishly manly than that.

But suppose we give you the ballot, to vote it yourself and just as you please; what are you going to do with it? "Bring on the Millennium!" I hope not. We're not quite ready for that yet. If the Millennium should strike, I don't think we would be short on "rocks and mountains" and other good hiding places. "You would reform and purify politics?" Yes, I know you would, but would you? I was out in Washington Territory not long ago, where the members of the gentler and wiser and better sex exercise the citizens' right of voting. There was an election in the town, or city, I guess it is, of Walla Walla; the issue was Prohibition against whiskey. A gifted and eloquent woman came to W. W. W. T., and "stumped" the city most earnestly for the Home against the saloon. And right on her French heels came another speaker, a woman eloquent and witty, who earnestly "stumped" the city for the saloon, and urged the women to vote for free whiskey. And, I grieve to say, the women did it. I was told, by politicians and by preachers in Walla Walla, that the women who voted gave a majority against Prohibition and in favor of the saloon. The woman whom thou gavest to be with us went against us. Or more than probably, they didn't go at all.

But—now you won't get mad, will you? You will bear in mind all the good things I've been saying about you, and won't "fly out," which is neither gracious nor womanly? Haven't noticed, have you, that stump speaker, the humorous orator, the editor and the paragrapher have been any kinder than usual to the candidate of the Woman's party? You notice that they poke fun at Mrs. Lockwood, just the same, and make jokes about her vain struggles to find some man to take second prize on her ticket? That they write "funny" poetry and funny squibs about her, and declare, with insincere earnestness, that they "Will not vote for any man, But whoop it up for Boiva Ann." You have noticed that, haven't you? Well, that's what you're coming to when you get into politics. I know it isn't right, but there are so many things that aren't right, that nevertheless continue to exist, and this is one of them. High hats, and holding a parasol over a man's head, and fastening the ends of the ribs in his eyes and the corners of his mouth when he is trying to drive, is the other. There may be one or two more, but I haven't time to invent them just now. But that you will be roughly entreated if you go into politics, goes without discussion or question. You give and take like the rest of us. You will be called hard names; and I very much fear you will get to calling hard names. Men will distort your speeches, and I have a dismal foreboding that you will not always weigh your words when you report your enemy. There is a great deal of "Says I" and "Says he" in politics, and men, and eke women, are very prone to make "him say" something that will fit into their argument just as they want it. Men will lose their tempers and get angry with you, as they do anyhow, and you, O dove-like daughter of a dove-like mother—you may—I say you may, get out of patience with the men. And if once you begin to scold—er, that is, if once you begin to "reprove or rebuke with severity" (overhaul your Webster for that, lass, and when found make a note of), O, how everybody will howl and laugh and make fun of you. That sort of thing may be very efficacious on wash days, but it won't go down in politics. So, if you haven't the spirit of a martyr—not an enduring martyr, because if there is anything in this world more unendurably maddening than another, it is a martyr of the Mrs. Varden type—if you haven't the spirit of a cheerful and triumphant martyr, keep out of the whirl.

And then, don't be too confident that you will, by active participation in politics, at once introduce better, more honorable and honest ways into political methods. You will, by and by, of course, but just now—Do you happen, by the way, to belong to anything? Any society, you know, such as the men have? Something like our "Sword Swallowers of Jerico," "Ancient Order of Beignighted Patriarchs," "The Lost Tribes of Saint Anatak," or that sort of thing? Or a Society for the Propagation of some ideas, or anything of the sort—social, religious or literary. Now—look me right in the eye, never mind the young man carrying his life burden of crutch-headed cane down the street; be done that I have said—when you see officers and appoint committees, and lay out work in these societies, don't you plan, and scheme, and intrigue, and plot, and counterplot, and hold little secret caucuses, and contrive to crowd somebody out, and boost, if it may be allowed, your own name as somebody else's? Isn't there a good deal, not to say a "right smart," of this in your societies? Not very much, say, but just a considerable?

Finally, my hearers, "let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter," that which a crooked can't be made straight by crooked ways, and "that which is wanting can not be numbered" by supplying its place with another defect of the same kind. If you were—I don't say you are, but I say if you were, given to the dark ways and vain tricks of man, in your semi-political methods in your own societies, I fear you would find active participation in general politics a similia similibus that wouldn't curatur, no, not by a long chalk.—Home Journal.

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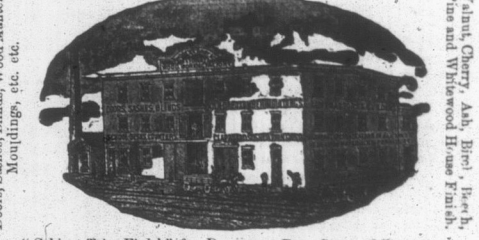
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