

SEPT. 25 1901

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The Sabbath School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter Lesson 1, Oct. 6 1901

JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT.
—Genesis 37: 12-36

GOLDEN TEXT.—*The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him.*—Acts 7: 9.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—B. C. 1729 (according to margins of our Bibles). Ten or eleven years after Jacob's return from Padan-aram.

Place.—Hebron, twenty miles south of Jerusalem, the home of Isaac. The cave of Machpelah and the Oaks of Mamre belong to this place.

Isaac.—168 years old. Twelve years before his death. A blind, feeble old man.

Jacob.—Almost 108 years old, with sons and one or more daughters.

Joseph.—17 years old, and Benjamin 10 or 11 years. Joseph left Padan-aram when 6 or 7 years old.

SUBJECT: STEPS BY WHICH JOSEPH BECAME A GOOD AND USEFUL MAN.

HIS ANCESTRAL INHERITANCE.

Joseph was born in Padan-aram, B. C. 1735, and was the oldest son of Jacob and Rachel. From his father and grandmother Rebekah, he would inherit a tendency to worldliness and an eager desire for wealth. Dogged tenacity is a striking feature of Jacob's character. There was also a deep religious nature which gradually dominated his worldly qualities and changed his character.

From his mother Rachel, Joseph inherited personal beauty, a loving disposition, and charm of manner.

FAMILY INFLUENCES.—These, also, were an intermingling of good and evil. Joseph's first seven years were spent in the home of Laban, where the influences were far from favorable. The older boys had all their youthful training in this atmosphere. Their relatives in Haran were none too pious. They came in contact with an immoral heathen community. The elder brothers grew up to be worldly, unscrupulous, overbearing.

After the family removed from Padan-aram to Canaan, Jacob's character and spirit were very much changed for the better by his experience at the fords of the Jabbok. Jacob gave more time to the training of his younger son; and Joseph inherited better tendencies and received better training from his mother. Moreover, the years of his youth were spent under the influence of his grandfather Isaac, who would tell him many a story of his ancestors' deeds of faith and lives of godliness.

Joseph gained power and usefulness by using the good things, and by resisting and overcoming the bad. In many ways he had a very hard time in his youth. But he made his hindrances into helps.

HIS POSITION IN THE FAMILY.—Another series of helps and hindrances arose from his father's intense love for him. But this love for the first-born of his best-loved wife led him to partiality. He distinguished this son by "a coat of many colors." This was probably given as a sign that he had chosen Joseph to be his successor as head of the clan. Three evils grew out of this partiality:

1. It was a wrong to the older brother. However natural it was to love Joseph, more than the rougher, more turbulent elder children, it was wrong and dangerous to be partial. It is no wonder that they hated Joseph on this account, and resented his possible authority over them.

2. It is a dangerous thing to be treated with partial favor. It is very apt to spoil. It was only Joseph's noble nature and the grace of God that kept him from being ruined by his father's unwise expressions of his love.

3. That coat of many colors came back to plague Jacob. He was reaping the fruits of his partiality.

DAILY LABOR.—Joseph did not live in idleness, but worked on the farm like the others. Daily tasks are of the utmost importance in training children.

DREAMS AND VISIONS.—Joseph dreamed two dreams and related them to the family. Both of them represented himself at the head of the clan, and ruler over all.

Some have thought that Joseph showed a taint of conceit, when he told his brothers of what he had dreamed. Are not their truer judges of character who see in this act an open frankness, unsuspicious because unconscious of evil?

A YOUTHFUL ATTEMPT AT REFORMATION.—Like most earnest young Christians Joseph made an attempt to reform some of the evils he saw among his elder brothers. They would not, of course, listen to him, and he reported them to his father. Joseph's brothers hated him for what he did. We are not obliged

to suppose that Joseph was a mere tale-bearer, or that he was actuated by an unworthy spirit. Joseph was a heroic moral reformer.

Reporting evil deeds in the right way and at the right time is sometimes absolutely necessary, and requires real courage; for it may cost popularity and esteem, and bring the hatred of evil-doers.

ENTRUSTED WITH A DIFFICULT MISSION.—Vs. 12-22. The ten brothers had wandered some seventy miles away from home with their flocks.

Jacob felt anxiety about them, and sent Joseph to inquire concerning their welfare. It was a long and dangerous journey on foot and alone, but Joseph was equal to it. When his brothers saw him coming, their envious feelings rose against him. He might be appointed heir, and so place them in a subordinate position. They proposed to one another to kill him, and report to their father that some wild beast had killed him; but Reuben thought it better that his blood should not be upon their hands, and proposed that they should throw him into some pit from which he could not escape. To this they were agreed, not knowing that Reuben's real design was to find some way to restore him to his father.

SOLD INTO SLAVERY.—Vs. 23-28. They stripped Joseph of his coat. It was the sign of his superiority. They would show it to their father to deceive him. And cast him into a pit. One of the many reservoirs excavated out of the solid rock or built of stones and plastered, for the purpose of holding rain water. They were bottle-shaped, so that it was almost impossible to escape. There are thousands of such cisterns in Upper Galilee.

The pit was empty. Joseph was safe from drowning; but his brothers left him without coat, or food, or drink, to die of hunger, thirst, and exposure. They sat down to eat bread. Joseph's brethren probably sat down to a joyous feast, regardless of the tears and anguish of the victim of their envy. And, behold, a (travelling) company. A caravan of traders. One of the great roads to Egypt passes through Dothan where they were. Ishmeelites. Called also Midianites, either both tribes were represented, or one included the other. From Gilead. A country abounding in spices. Down to Egypt.

A wealthy country, where these spices were used for incense and embalming the dead. And Judah said. Perhaps from a troubled conscience, with the desire to get rid of Joseph without committing a crime. Then there passed by (as a part of the caravan) Midianites merchantmen. The particular part of the caravan which bought Joseph.

Sold Joseph... for twenty pieces of silver. Probably in rings, and each was a shekel, or a little more than half an ounce in weight, and worth about fifty-five cents. In those days money was weighed.

Note the part this transaction played in the making of the man Joseph and his success. It was a very sad, hard experience, but was the only way to realize his hopes.

1. The change was probably necessary for Joseph himself. As a favorite son he was in danger of being spoiled. Then there were portions of his nature which would be undeveloped, except in other circumstances than at home. Joseph in all his troubles was on the straight road to prosperity. He was being disciplined and prepared for his great work.

2. All these things were used by God in carrying out his plans. He had a great work for Joseph to do. He knew that the Israelites needed the long discipline of residence in Egypt to fit them to become the people of God. Their marvelous redemption would teach them faith in God, and reveal his character and power in a new light.

3. God overruled the crime of Joseph's brothers for good. But this in no wise lessens the crime. Nor must we imagine that the crime was necessary to God's plans. But it is a comfort to know that God rules over all men, and can use even the evil which men do in such a way as to thwart their plans and bring forth good.

THE WRONGED FATHER.—Vs. 29-36. Reuben returned unto the pit. Reuben had planned to rescue Joseph, and send him home safely. When he returned he found his brother gone. And he rent his clothes. The Oriental sign of grief. And they took Joseph's coat, etc. They know that they must again meet their father, and to him some reason be assigned for the non appearance of his beloved son. They make lies their refuge. Sent the coat. By a servant. And they brought it to their father; and said. All this was done and said through their servant whom they had sent. This have we found. Almost every sin requires lying to be added to it. The sons were guilty of (1) cruelty, (2) cowardice, (3) falsehood, (4) insolence. My son's coat. Jacob's words are most touching. Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. There

was no other way to account for the bloody coat. He put on sackcloth and refused to be comforted. For years these brothers had to witness their father's sorrow.

Partly, too, was Jacob's sorrow intensified by the consciousness of his own bad example and neglect of his sons in his anxiety for worldly prosperity. He could see that his own hand had sown some of the seed of this dreadful harvest.

How People Sleep.

The European or American, in order to sleep well, ordinarily requires a downy pillow under his head; but the Japanese, stretching himself out on a rush mat on the floor, puts a hard, square block of wood under his head, and does not sleep well if he does not have it.

The Chinese makes great account of his bed, which is very low, indeed—scarcely rising from the floor—but is often carved exquisitely of wood; but it never occurs to him to make it any softer than rush mats will render it.

While the people of northern countries cannot sleep unless they have plenty of room in which to stretch out, the inhabitants of the tropics often curl themselves up like monkeys, at the lower angle of a suspended hammock, and sleep soundly in that position.

The Russian likes no sleeping place so well as the top of the big soapstone stove in his domicile. Crawling out of this blistering bed in the morning, he likes to take a plunge in a cold stream, even if he has to break through the ice to get into it.

The Laplander crawls, head and all, into a bag made of reindeer skin, and sleeps warm and comfortable within it. The East Indian, at the other end of the world, also has a sleeping bag, but it is more porous than the Laplander's. Its purpose is to keep out mosquitoes rather than to keep the sleeper warm.

While the American still clings to the feather pillow, he is steadily discarding his old-fashioned feather bed in favor of the hair or straw mattress. The feather bed is relegated to the country, and many people who slept upon it all through their childhood, find themselves uncomfortable upon it in their maturity.

The Germans like not sleep upon a feather bed, but underneath one. The feather covering used in Germany, however, is not so large or thick as the one which is used as a mattress, and the foreigner who undertakes to sleep beneath it often finds his feet suffering from cold, while his shoulders are suffering from heat.

The Old Book.

We wish that the following words from Dr. F. O. Holman might appeal to every young man and woman in our land with the force of the mighty conviction in which they are uttered:

Young man, young woman, cling to your mother's Bible! Civilization is founded on it, and civilization has a sure foundation. The old Bible is sacred with many a precious memory. Fathers have put it into the hands of their boys as they have sent them out into the storms of life, and it has led them through without shipwreck. Mothers have put it into the hands of their daughters, and it has taught them how to live quietly lives and die in holy peace. Men have read its pages when they were trembling on the brink of awful temptation, and it has girded their loins to heroic resistance, till they have preferred to die rather than to do wrong. Soldiers have put it into their knapsacks and gone out to battlefields and charged up hills slippery with blood, with larger courage because of their Bible.

And men in hospitals, groaning with pain, their life-blood dripping from their ghastly wounds, have held their mother's Bible in their fainting grasp and kissed it with lips that were pallid with death, and gone out into darkness with a smile because their mother's Bible was near. Oh, the Bible! the Bible!

I want it in my hands as I face life's hot temptations; I want it in my heart as I face life's awful sorrows; I want it in my life as I gird my loins for strenuous responsibilities; I want it under my pillow when my breath comes in gasps, and the death-dew is damp on my forehead; and I want you to put it in my coffin and read it over my grave, and write on my tomb its promise of life eternal.

Only One Drop of Red Paint.

A boy walked into a house-painter's shop one day and stood looking at the different colors. The painter had gone out for something, and the boy thought he would investigate a little.

On the floor stood a keg containing fifty pounds of thick white lead

and close beside it was a smaller one filled with Indian red all ready for the brush. In each was a wooden paddle for stirring up the paint. The boy took hold of the paddle in the smaller keg and held it up, watching the thin red stream which flowed from the end. Something startled him, and he turned quickly and let a single drop fall into the white lead. There it lay, one little red spot in the white mass.

The boy was frightened and wanted to repair the mischief which he had done, but he went at it the wrong way. The red paint had not mixed with the white, for the white was too stiff. If he had taken a little stick or the point of his pocket knife he might easily have lifted it out and there would have been no harm done. Instead, he tried to hide it by stirring it in. At first a little red streak followed the paddle round and round; soon it disappeared, but some of the lead was stained a very light pink. The boy stirred deeper and deeper, and at last he thought that the red drop was completely hidden. Every spot and streak was gone, and it seemed to him that it was all as clean and pure as ever. But the first tinge that the painter said when he came in and looked at it was, "That keg of white lead isn't very white. I wonder what's the matter with it."

Some of us have tried to do the same thing with the spots in our characters that the boy did with the spot in the white paint. Instead of removing them, we seek to hide them by mixing them up with good deeds and high motives. It's a very poor way. Root a sin out, and you are rid of it; leave it there and, no matter how well it is covered up, the Painter will find it, if no one else does.—W. D. Hulbert.

A Remedy for Nervous Hurry.

A busy housewife often feels in the morning that she has before her more work than can be crowded into the day, and loses heart at the prospect. It may not be a longer day nor more strength that is needed, but careful planning. In this a memorandum helps. If one sits down quietly and makes out a list of all the things which must be done, time will be saved in the end. As each duty is put down in black and white it falls into its right place; the planner sees what is important and what can be postponed—she gets the right perspective. The fear of forgetting something is gone; the nervous tension is relaxed, and the hindering worry disappears. Then what satisfaction in checking off each item as it is accomplished? It is not well to become a slave to the memorandum habit, for memory becoming used to a crutch will refuse to go alone; but in systematizing work and saving nervous hurry the memorandum is invaluable.—Congregationalist.

Why Some Children are Timid.

How many children have been terrified by stories of the Big Man, of the wolf that will come and eat them, of the policeman who will put them in the lockup, till their fear of the dark amounts to positive agony. Bedtime should be an hour inseparably associated with the prayer at the mother's knee, followed by a quiet talk, after which the little one settles down to a restful sleep. But, instead, how often does it happen that a child is tucked in bed with the admonition, Now go right to sleep, like a good boy, for if you don't there's a big dog over there in the corner that'll come and bite you! Go to sleep! Sheer nervous terror keeps the child awake. How can he be expected to grow anything but timid!—Arthur M. Yale, in August Woman's Home Companion.

Lay not up against your neighbor the sin of yesterday. He may have repented of it to-day.

Prosperity rarely brings out the best there is in a man. A man's adversities are often his most stimulating friends.

If you take a Laxa-Liver Pill to-night before retiring, it will work while you sleep without a gripe or pain, curing biliousness, constipation, dyspepsia, and sick headache, and make you feel better in the morning.

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The Best Pills.—Mr. Wm. Vandervoort, Sydney Crossing, Ont., writes: "We have been using Parmelee's Pills, and find them by far the best pill we ever used." For Delicate and Debilitated Constitutions these pills act like a charm. Taken in small doses, the effect is both a tonic and a stimulant, mildly exciting the secretions of the body, giving tonic and vigor.

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Yours very truly,

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