

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Lesson. 1.—July 3.

Exod. 1: 1-14.

ISRAEL IN EGYPT.

GOLDEN TEXT.

And they made their lives bitter with bondage.—Exod. 1: 14.

TOPIC.—Deliverance Needed.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Exod. 1: 1-14; Tuesday, Exod. 9: 5-10; Wednesday, Exod. 10: 1-13; Thursday, Exod. 10: 24-26; Friday, Job 2: 1-7; Saturday, Gen. 15: 1-10; Sunday, Gal. 4: 1-9.

NOTES BY PROFESSOR W. HENRY GREEN, D.D.

This lesson contains (vs. 1-6) an enumeration of Jacob's family which went down to Egypt; (vs. 7) their amazing increase; (vs. 8-14) the oppression which they were consequently subjected.

Vs. 1.—Now, Heb. and; connect this with the preceding book, of which it is the continuation. So Gen. 1: 1, and in almost all the historical books, the narrative is attached in this manner to the previous written history. The recapitulation of what had already been stated in detail (Gen. 46: 8) is, with the view of bringing out more distinctly the immense multiplication that followed the descent into Egypt, as in Deuteronomy 10: 22, 26: 5. "Israel" the sacred name of the patriarch, given by God himself (Gen. 32: 28) and thence applied to his descendants; and significantly here of him as the head of the nation which was now to spring from him (compare Gen. 46: 2, 8). "Jacob" was his ordinary personal name, bestowed at birth (Gen. 27: 36); and only rarely and poetically given to his descendants (Isa. 40: 27). "Children," strictly sons, who are then enumerated.

Vs. 2-4.—According to their mothers, as in Genesis 35: 23-26, six of Jacob, one of Rachel, two of each of the handmaids; Joseph is mentioned separately for the reason stated (v. 5). In respect to age, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, named in verse 4, preceded the two sons of Leah, named in verse 5, as well as the sons of Rachel. As Israel gave name to the whole people, his twelve sons severally gave name to the tribes descended from them. Notwithstanding the diversity and disparity of their mothers, and the differences, whether of personal character or of the future prominence or prerogatives of the several tribes, all are here named on a par. Joseph was the second ruler in Egypt; his brethren had sinned grievously against him and their father. Reuben had shamefully disgraced himself, and lost his birthright (Chron. 5: 1, 2). Simeon and Levi were guilty of a great crime (Gen. 49: 5). But all are enumerated together as alike belonging to the chosen people, and sharers in the blessings this involved. Levi was to be the priestly tribe; Judah the royal tribe; Joseph was to be the father of two tribes (Gen. 48: 5-19), one of which was to be especially powerful. But neither are these exalted above their brethren. Priests were not a distinct caste in Israel, as in Egypt and elsewhere (Lev. 21: 10; Deut. 10: 9). Kings were not regarded as a superior race (Deut. 17: 15-20). There were diversities of gifts and functions; but all were brethren; and by God's gracious choice they formed together the one people of God. This parity is figuratively expressed (Ezek. 48) by assigning to each tribe equal and parallel portions in the future ideal division of the holy land, significant of like participation in the blessings of Messiah's kingdom. See also Rev. 7: 4-8.

Vs. 5.—Seventy souls or persons. Jacob's entire family, including himself, as appears from the number given, although the form of expression strictly interpreted applies only to his descendants. Of these, thirty-three (including Jacob and Dinah, and including Er and Onan, who died in Canaan) are reckoned to Leah (Gen. 46: 15); sixteen to Zilpah (v. 18); fourteen to Rachel (v. 22); and seven to Bilhah (v. 25). The careful accuracy with which this enumeration was made is due to its importance in the permanent organization of the people. The grandsons and great-grandsons of Jacob, who are regarded in this list, gave names to the tribal divisions or families which sprang from them (Num. 26). Joseph's two sons only are reckoned in this list, and not, as in the case of the other patriarchs, his grandsons likewise (Gen. 46: 20), because the tribes of Joseph (Num. 1: 10; 13: 11) had just two principal divisions, Manasseh and Ephraim. The Septuagint translators, however, for the sake of uniformity, have incorporated in the list two descendants of Manasseh, and three of Ephraim, making the total seventy-five; which Stephen follows (Acts 7: 14) as the number best known to the Greek-speaking Jews, the apparent discrepancy arising simply from this extension of the list. The number

seventy thus attaching to the chosen race at this crisis in its history was perpetuated in the seventy elders, of which we repeatedly read (Exod. 24: 1; Num. 11: 16), and renewed in the national council or sanhedrin of later times (Matt. 26: 50). The same number, it has been observed, will be found by summing up the nations sprung from Noah (Gen. 10). An old Jewish writer, quoted by Lightfoot (Heb. Exercit. on Luke 3: 36), remarks on this coincidence: "Seventy souls went down with Jacob into Egypt, that they might restore the seventy families dispersed by the confusion of tongues." These familiar numbers of the old dispensation were incorporated by our Lord in the new in the twelve apostles and seventy disciples (Luke 9: 1, 10: 1).

Vs. 6.—Joseph died eighty years after he became ruler in Egypt (Gen. 50: 26; 46). Levi survived him (Exod. 6: 16); we are not informed in regard to the rest.

Vs. 7.—Immense rapid multiplication. An accumulation of the strongest words in the language to express increase. The words "be fruitful, multiply, fill the land," are identical with those in the blessing pronounced on men and animals at the creation (Gen. 1: 22, 36). Increase abundantly is the term applied (Gen. 1: 21; 8: 17) to the rapid production of the most prolific creatures. Waxed exceeding mighty refers not to physical, but to numerical strength and is the same word as in Gen. 18: 18, "Abraham shall surely become a mighty nation." The adverb is reduplicated in Hebrew "exceeding, exceedingly." This has been illustrated by the prolific nature of Egypt, of which surprising accounts are given, both by ancient and modern writers; but it is attributable beyond this to the special providence of God and his supernatural blessing (Deut. 1: 10), in partial fulfilment of his promises to the patriarchs (Gen. 13: 5; 16: 5; 22: 17), which look to an enlargement greater still when all the nations of mankind shall become the children of Abraham (Rom. 4: 23, 18). The land: that is: Goshen (Gen. 47: 6).

Vs. 8.—Arose up. The word is not used in a hostile sense as implying insurrection or usurpation, but simply that he came upon the scene. (Deut. 34: 10).—A new king. Not only another, but different in character and policy from his predecessors, as "new gods" are strange gods (Deut. 32: 16, 17), so "new tongues" (Mark 16: 17); possibly, as Josephus affirms, of another dynasty or race, which view has been variously combined with Manasseh's account of the shepherd kings, who displaced the native monarchs and ruled Egypt till they were themselves expelled. It might seem easier to account for this ignorance of Joseph if hostilities had supervened, and a monarch of another line had seized upon the throne. But the text does not require this. A long time had elapsed. Dead benefactors are soon forgotten (Eccl. 9: 15). It is unnecessary to suppose that the king had never heard of Joseph; but was entirely regardless of the benefits which Joseph had conferred upon Egypt. He felt under no obligation of gratitude to him, or of generous treatment of his kindred (Judg. 2: 10). "This king of Egypt knew not Joseph, and after him arose one who said, I know not the Lord (Exod. 6: 2). Those that are ungrateful of their other benefactors, it is to be feared, will forget the Supreme Benefactor."

Vs. 9.—The exaggerated language of alarm and apprehension respecting a people of different race and foreign sympathies (compare Esther 4: 8; Ezra 4: 12, 13); and yet, as the people of God, Israel was really mightier than their foes (Psa. 105: 24).

Vs. 10.—Come on; literally give, then used as a particle of incitement or exhortation. Deal wisely. Show yourselves wise or cunning, outwit them; adopt a crafty policy (explained Psa. 105: 25; Acts 7: 19); "deal subtilly" (but see Job 5: 12). Israel had been located in the land of Goshen, perhaps in part with the politic design of forming this a barrier against invasions from the Asiatic side; but this would be converted into a source of weakness and danger if they should ally themselves with the invaders. Fleeeth out any war. The Hebrew expression is peculiar; the noun is singular and the verb plural, showing that the subject is collective, if wars occur, as they may at any time. This indefinite sense is meant to be suggested in our version by the word any. He did not apprehend subjugation, but that they would leave the country, which would lose so many subjects and the benefits of their labor. The king knew, it seems that Israel did not regard Egypt as their permanent home. Get them up. Go up, as elsewhere of going from Egypt to Canaan (Gen. 13: 1; compare 12: 10; 46: 8).

Vs. 11.—Taskmaster: literally princes, or officers, over serfs, or those bound to labor as a tributary service. The monument often shows these overseers and the severity with which they treat those under their control. Afflict them with their burdens. Reduce their strength and

break their spirits by toilsome labors. Pharaoh. The common name or title of the kings of Egypt. Treasure cities. Elsewhere rendered "cities of store" (1 Kings 9: 19; 2 Chron. 17: 12). Not fortified places, but intended for storing grain and provisions whether for the subsistence of troops or for foreign or domestic trade (compare 2 Chron. 32: 28). Pithom. Probably the Patumus of Herodotus, and Raamses, written Raamses (Gen. 47: 11; Exod. 12: 37). Doubtless in or near Goshen, though their precise identification is a matter of dispute.

Vs. 12.—Oppression never defeated God's purpose, nor destroyed his church." The crafty tyrant fails to accomplish his end. The margin gives the exact sense of the Hebrew in the first clause. Grew, literally broke forth, burst the limits that would confine them. "Were grieved." Rendered in Num. 22: 3 "distressed." The Hebrew word is often used of disgust and loathing. Here it is applied to uneasiness and apprehension. They were filled with anxiety and alarm.

Vs. 13.—Rigor; Severity, literally, crushing force. In Ezek. 34: 4 it is rendered "cruelty."

Vs. 14.—Bondage. The same word which is twice rendered "service" in this verse. Mortar, or rather "clay," from which they were required to make bricks. There is a famous picture in the Egyptian monuments illustrative of this passage, in which foreign workmen under taskmasters are engaged in making brick. Some have judged from the physiognomy that the workmen are Israelites, and that it depicts the very scene here described. In brick: that is the construction of buildings. Service in the field. Agricultural operation, which the necessity of irrigation made particularly toilsome (Deut. 11: 10). But all this, instead of preventing them from getting up out of the land, was God's method of preparing them for their departure. So earthly afflictions are sent to loosen our attachment to our abode here, and make us sigh for the Canaan of eternal rest. "The land of Egypt became to Israel a land of bondage, though hitherto it had been a happy shelter to them. The place of our satisfaction may soon become the place of our affliction. Say not concerning any place on this side heaven. This is my rest forever."

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