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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A MANUAL FOR TEACHING BIBLICAL HISTORY \*\*\*

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**A MANUAL  
FOR TEACHING  
BIBLICAL HISTORY**

BY

**EUGENE KOHN**

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Baltimore, Md.*

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*To the memory of  
SOLOMON SCHECHTER  
ש"ס"ל  
this book is reverently inscribed*

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**INTRODUCTORY NOTE**

Jewish pedagogic literature is still in its infancy. While text-books for children, more or less satisfactory, have been produced by many authors during the past century, the effort to provide the teacher with proper material for his guidance in instruction is of very recent origin and the supply has thus far been very slight. The students in our several normal schools, and especially the large army of teachers, scattered throughout the country, who have not had the advantage of a normal school training, are often obliged to resort to works by Christian authors for information and guidance. While these may supply them with the facts and with the most approved method of presentation, they cannot give them the Jewish point of view which is so essential to the Jewish teacher. As the late Dr. Schechter once remarked, "We cannot have our love letters written for us. We must write them ourselves, even at the risk of bad grammar." We must place in the hands of our teachers books which will inspire them with loyalty and devotion to Judaism, which will give them the proper attitude to the Bible and to Jewish tradition, and which will provide them with an adequate understanding of Jewish strivings and ideals.

It is with this object in view that the Committee on Education of the United Synagogue requested Rabbi Eugene Kohn to prepare the work which is now given to the Jewish public. The author has succeeded admirably in his undertaking and has produced a work which contains valuable aids to the earnest teacher who is anxious to become more proficient in his calling. This volume, which is the result of considerable class-room experience, intimate knowledge of the sources of Jewish history, and arduous labor, gives correct and adequate data of the lessons treated, stimulating suggestions as to the manner of imparting each individual lesson to the average child, and, what is perhaps of greatest importance, an exalted attitude that the teacher should assume towards his work. While the responsibility of the work rests entirely upon the author, the Committee feels gratified in being able to present, as its first publication, a work that so fully responds to an urgent need. It is hoped that this book will be followed by many other volumes which may help in the better equipment of the Jewish teaching profession.

[10]

JULIUS H. GREENSTONE, Chairman,  
*Committee on Education of the  
 United Synagogue of America.*

PHILADELPHIA, June 11, 1917.

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introduction	<a href="#">13</a>
PART I	
FROM THE CREATION TO THE DEATH OF JOSEPH	
CHAPTER	
I. Creation	<a href="#">35</a>
II. Adam and Eve	<a href="#">38</a>
III. Cain and Abel	<a href="#">41</a>
IV. Noah	<a href="#">44</a>
V. The Tower of Babel	<a href="#">47</a>
VI. The Choice of Abram and the Choice of Canaan	<a href="#">49</a>
VII. Beginning of Abram's Greatness	<a href="#">53</a>
VIII. Hagar and the Birth of Ishmael	<a href="#">56</a>
IX. Abraham Entertains the Angels	<a href="#">62</a>
X. The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah	<a href="#">67</a>
XI. The Divorce of Hagar	<a href="#">70</a>
XII. The Sacrifice of Isaac	<a href="#">73</a>
XIII. The Death of Sarah and the Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah	<a href="#">78</a>
XIV. The Sale of the Birthright	<a href="#">80</a>
XV. Jacob Secures the Blessing	<a href="#">89</a>
XVI. Jacob's Dream	<a href="#">93</a>
XVII. Jacob in Aramea	<a href="#">96</a>
XVIII. Jacob Returns to Canaan	<a href="#">99</a>
XIX. Joseph Sold into Slavery	<a href="#">104</a>
XX. From Slave to Viceroy	<a href="#">109</a>
XXI. Joseph Meets His Brothers	<a href="#">113</a>
XXII. Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers	<a href="#">117</a>
XXIII. The Death of Jacob and of Joseph	<a href="#">120</a>
PART II	
ISRAEL UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF MOSES	
CHAPTER	
I. The Birth of Moses	<a href="#">127</a>
II. Moses, the Friend of the Weak and the Oppressed	<a href="#">133</a>
III. God Sends Moses to Save His People	<a href="#">135</a>
IV. Moses' First Appearance before Pharaoh	<a href="#">140</a>
V. The Plagues	<a href="#">145</a>
VI. The Exodus	<a href="#">149</a>
VII. Israel at the Red Sea	<a href="#">156</a>
VIII. From the Red Sea to Sinai	<a href="#">160</a>
IX. The Revelation	<a href="#">164</a>
X. The Golden Calf	<a href="#">173</a>
XI. The Tabernacle and its Service	<a href="#">183</a>

[12]

XII. Trials of Moses and Israel in the Wilderness	<a href="#">190</a>
XIII. The Spies	<a href="#">197</a>
XIV. More Trials of Moses	<a href="#">201</a>
XV. Israel Arrives at the Border of the Promised Land	<a href="#">209</a>
XVI. The Death of Moses	<a href="#">216</a>

## INTRODUCTION

**Purpose of Manual.** In recent years some attention has been given to the improvement of Jewish educational method so far as instruction in the Hebrew language is concerned, but the teaching of Biblical history, although it holds an important place in the curricula of our religious schools, has received relatively little attention from our educators, at least from those of orthodox and conservative tendencies. From the reform point of view some recent publications, though exhibiting the faults which all early efforts in any direction necessarily show, do mark a decided pedagogic advance on the older unmethodical way in which the subject was taught. But from the point of view of traditional Judaism they are inadequate, however helpful some of their pedagogic suggestions may be, since they are guided by a different ideal. This manual attempts to assist the teacher of Biblical history from the point of view of Traditional Judaism. For whoever considers from this point of view the way in which Biblical history is taught must come to the conclusion that not only are we not realizing to the full the educational values which the study of Biblical history affords, but we are often giving our children very false notions of the Bible characters and of the lessons which the story of their lives is intended to teach Israel. To develop a good course of study in Biblical history cannot be the work of one man nor can it be done at one time. It is hoped however that the suggestions contained in this book may assist the earnest teacher to make his instruction more fruitful of good results for Judaism. [14]

**Three factors determining method of instruction.** Every discussion of pedagogic method as applied to a particular branch of study must take three factors into consideration: the aim of instruction, the subject to be taught, and the child—his mode of thought, interests and capacity.

**THE AIM.** The first thing that we must bear in mind is that the aim of all Jewish education must be a Jewish life; that the aim of each branch of Jewish study must be formulated not primarily in terms of information to be conveyed, but of Jewish habits of thought and action to be cultivated. It follows that Biblical history as taught by a Jew who believes in the authority of the Torah and the mitzvoth over our lives must be very different from the same subject as taught by one to whom Judaism is merely a number of moral maxims and the dogma of the unity. This book, attempting as it does to treat the problem from the point of view of traditional Judaism, considers that the main object of instruction in Biblical history is to inspire the child with an appreciation of the religious ideals that have moulded Israel's life in the past, with an understanding of how these same ideals express themselves in the religious institutions of the present day, and with the desire to further the historic aims of Israel's existence through identification with the institutional life of Israel, that is through the observance of the mitzvoth, affiliation with the synagogue, etc. Particularly must we create in the child the sense of his personal identity with his people, for this is the lever by which the events of the Biblical narrative can move the Jew to active interest in Judaism. He must feel that God's choice of Israel means that God has chosen him to live a certain life, the life of the Torah, and that if he fails to live this life, he sins against God and betrays his people. He should feel proud of the heroes of his nation and inspired with a sense of the obligations that his noble descent imposes. He must be made to discover the spiritual kinship that links him with the rest of Israel in the past, present and future. Unless we can accomplish this we have not succeeded in our teaching of Biblical history. [15]

**Wrong and right conception of aim illustrated.** A lack of appreciation of these aims has often led to the treatment of the Biblical narrative as if it were merely a series of moral stories or, at any rate, of stories into which a moral can be read. According to this method the connection of the Jewish people today with the people of the Bible is almost wholly ignored and there is no appreciable difference in the way the events of the Biblical narrative are taught and, let us say, the incidents of some highly moral fairy tale or folk-lore of other peoples. To give an example I quote the following summary of a lesson on "Moses' Return to Egypt":

"So then we can learn these two noble things from our lesson; modesty adorns everybody even the greatest people, yes very often the greatest people are the most modest. And further, when we have begun to do something, let us do it with all our might and stick to it till it is finished, no matter what it is, whether a school lesson or setting a people free; whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well."

One could imagine the same moral attached to the story of George Washington or of Cincinnatus and brought home as effectively by it. The difference between the right and the wrong method of treating the Biblical narrative from the point of view of the aim of such instruction can be seen if we contrast the above with the simple summary of the same lesson in the Passover Haggadah: [16]

"Slaves were we unto Pharaoh in Egypt and the Lord our God brought us forth thence with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm. And if the Holy One, Blessed be He, had not brought forth our fathers from Egypt behold we and our children and our children's children might still be bondmen to Pharaoh in Egypt." And again: "In every generation one is obliged to regard himself as if he in person had come forth from Egypt, as it is said, 'And thou shalt tell thy son in that day saying, It is because of that which the Lord did for me when I went forth from Egypt.' Not our fathers alone did the Holy One, Blessed be He, redeem but us also did He redeem with them, as it is said, 'And us did He bring forth thence in order to bring us hither to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.'"

According to the method of the former quotation Biblical history is no more related to the child than the story of the Iliad, according to the latter it is his own history, the study of which helps him to self knowledge, to the knowledge of his Jewish self, the knowledge of the ties that bind him to his fellow Jews and the Jewish people to its God. Much more might be said of the effect upon the method of instruction of

a clear conception of the aim of instruction in Biblical history when thus conceived in terms of Jewish life, but a study of the lessons given in this book will suffice to explain this without the need of further amplification, so we may pass to the consideration of the subject-matter to be taught as a determining factor in the method of instruction.

[17]

**The subject-matter: Biblical history.** I have throughout referred to the subject-matter under the name not of Jewish history but of Biblical history and I have done so advisedly. For the term Jewish history does not commit one to that interpretation of the early history of our people which is to be found in the Bible. From the Jewish point of view the Bible, in its narrative portions as well as in its laws, is Torah, that is authoritative teaching. It does not merely recall the early events of Jewish history but it takes a distinct attitude to these events, seeing in them the revelation of a divine purpose; it not only tells the deeds of Biblical heroes but it passes judgment upon them, here approving and there disapproving; and it is precisely this attitude to Jewish history, this interpretation of the significance of historic events, which must be made an influence in the life of the child. If we were merely teaching Jewish history as such and looked upon the Bible merely as the source book of this history we might tell the story of the Exodus somewhat in this fashion:

"The children of Israel who had at the beginning of their sojourn in Egypt been well treated by the Egyptian rulers, owing to a change of dynasty were subjected to oppression and forced to do servile labor for the Pharaohs. They took advantage however of a series of calamities that visited Egypt, which their leaders Moses and Aaron interpreted to the Egyptians as signs of the divine wrath incurred by her because of her oppression of the Israelites, and so left Egypt in a body."

[18]

The above account is Jewish history but it is not Biblical history for it has nothing to say about the significance of these events as the Bible regards them. It does not tell us that Moses was sent by God, it does not know anything of the covenant with Abraham of which these events are the fulfillment, it does not therefore see in the Exodus one link in a chain of events having its beginning in the election of Abraham and its consummation in the revelation at Sinai. In the Biblical narrative what is most conspicuous is the *Ezba Elohim*, "the finger of God," in the merely historic account this may altogether be omitted.

**Must give Biblical moral to Jewish history.** Very few teachers in our Jewish schools, if any, would make the mistake of teaching the events narrated in the Bible merely as cold facts without any attempt at giving them religious significance, though frequent efforts at rationalization tend in this direction. For the most part, the aim in teaching the early history of our people is felt to be a religious one and to call for a religious interpretation of the events recorded. We are not loath to attach a moral to the stories we tell our children, but where we fail is that we imagine any moral which we can read into the story is satisfactory. We have already shown how the consideration of the aim of instruction in Biblical history, from the point of view of traditional Judaism, opposes this method and limits the moral which should be taught in connection with any given story, but the consideration of the subject-matter to be taught limits it still further. We must not only give a Jewish moral to each episode in the Biblical narrative but we must give the child the specific moral that the Bible itself attaches to that episode. If we take our Bible seriously, if we regard its interpretation of the events of our history as essentially true, as indeed part of the Torah, a divine revelation, then it becomes our duty to give this interpretation of events and not another to our children. We sometimes excuse to ourselves the perversion of the Biblical moral on the ground that because children are children they frequently cannot grasp what is really the Biblical lesson. If in any given instance this is the case, it is better not to teach that story at all to the child than to falsify it. But usually the ideas of the Bible can be brought home to the child if we but take the trouble to translate them into the language of childhood and illustrate them out of the child's own experience. It is largely due to indolence on the part of the teacher that we so frequently sin against the Biblical sense of a story. I have heard the story of Abraham's divorce of Hagar told as if it were a mere family squabble in which Sarah, by shrewish persistence finally prevails upon the meek and submissive Abraham somewhat reluctantly to send away Hagar, who had aroused her jealousy. Abraham was made a rather doubtful hero who represented the virtue of loving peace—peace at any price as the narrative showed—and Sarah was regarded as acting in a mean and ungodly capacity. Had that teacher read her Bible carefully and intelligently before coming to class she could not have been guilty of such grotesque distortion of the Biblical story, by which it is made not only trivial but ludicrous. She would then have realized that Ishmael had to be separated from Isaac for the same reason that Lot had to be separated from Abraham and Esau from Jacob, because they were not of the seed from which Israel was destined to spring; that even before the birth of Ishmael we have the prophecy told to Hagar, "And he shall be a wild ass of a man; his hand shall be against every man and every man's hand against him" (Genesis 16. 12). She would have observed that in the words of the Rabbis "Abraham was subordinate to Sarah in prophecy", that just as Isaac showed a mistaken preference for Esau so Abraham when the birth of Isaac is predicted to him pleaded, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!", and that the Bible recognizes the superior prophetic insight of Sarah by telling us that God commanded Abraham explicitly, "Let it not be grievous in thy eyes because of the lad and because of thy bond-woman; in all that Sarah may say unto thee, hearken to her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Surely, though the story undoubtedly presents difficulties of a pedagogic nature, it is not impossible to teach a child that God foresaw that Ishmael would be a "*pere adam*" (a wild ass of a man), that he did not wish the chosen people, who were to inherit the promised land, to be possessed of such traits, and that therefore Ishmael had to be sent away so that Isaac and his descendants might become the great people he had promised Abraham they would become. In this way the Bible speaks for itself and tells a story that is quite as intelligible to the child as the one that the teacher I have mentioned told, quite as intelligible and infinitely more edifying. I have given this instance at some length because it seems to me typical of the mischief that can be done by reading into the Biblical narrative any moral that may come to hand instead of the moral that the Bible itself intended.

[19]

[20]

[21]

**Need of Bible study for teacher.** This manual will endeavor in each lesson to point out to the best of its author's understanding what the Biblical moral of the lesson is. But, as interpretations are always subject to differences of opinion, a study of the suggestions contained in its chapters cannot relieve the teacher of the responsibility of a careful independent study, before entering the class-room, of the Biblical passages whose story he wishes to teach.

**The child as determining method.** And after he has mastered for himself the meaning of the Biblical narrative, he must study how to impart this to the child in a way that shall make it not only

comprehensible but interesting, and all this without sacrifice of the aim of instruction. An adequate treatment of method in teaching Biblical history from the point of view of the interests and capacities of the Jewish child is at present impossible. We need years of study and experimentation in this direction before we can do it complete justice, but a few universally recognized pedagogic principles may briefly be considered here in their bearing upon our subject. We have spoken of the need of effort on the part of the teacher to make the lesson comprehensible and interesting, and we shall therefore give some attention to two questions: (1) How can the lesson be made comprehensible? (2) How can it be made interesting? We shall treat the questions separately for the sake of convenience, though, as a matter of fact, they are inseparable; for neither can a child be expected to interest himself in what he cannot understand nor can he be made to understand anything that involves the least difficulty without giving that sustained attention which only interest can elicit from him.

[22]

**How to make lesson comprehensible. Proceed from known to unknown.** The most important rule to bear in mind in order to make the teaching comprehensible is the familiar truism that one must proceed from the known to the unknown and keep constantly defining the unknown in terms of what is already known to the child. As is the case with most truisms, the truth of this statement is more frequently recognized than applied. Take for instance the very first sentence in one of the Biblical histories intended for the use of children. It reads, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, that is the whole visible world." Was there ever a human being who did not know what heaven and earth meant and yet knew what the whole visible world meant? Contrast with this the following from another text-book:

"Once a long, long time ago there was no one living on this earth that is now so full of people.

"There were no living things at all here: no cattle, no wild beasts, no birds, no butterflies or insects of any kind and no fishes in the sea.

"Before that there were no green growing things here; no grass, no trees, no flowers.

"In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth.

"In the beginning was a time so long ago that no one knows when it was."

How much better is this way of beginning the story of creation from what the child has experienced of created objects than to begin with non existence and chaos. Few of us realize how many terms that are commonplaces with us mean nothing to the child. Particularly is this true of terms used in the Bible and descriptive of things familiar in the primitive orient but little known in the modern occident, such as altar, sacrifice, tabernacle, caravan, to name but a few.

[23]

**Avoid formal definition.** But at this point a word of caution is necessary against a too pedantic application of this principle of defining the terms that are used in the child's instruction. For example one book of Bible stories for young children prefixes to the story of creation a vocabulary which includes explanations of such words as ground, dark, light, sky, under, above, good, rest. But it must be apparent that a child who cannot without previous explanations understand such simple words as these is not in a position to profit by instruction in Biblical history at all. It is possible so to overload a story with definitions that the whole thread of the narrative is lost. We must be cautious lest our pupils fail to see the forest by very reason of the trees. Ample allowance must be made for the constructive imagination of the child, which builds up its own definitions out of the material of the narrative itself. Children have always had an understanding of fairy tales without ever having had the terms fairy, witch, king and princess defined for them. When you tell a child that the king sat on a high throne with his crown on his head, his sceptre in his hand, while all the people bowed down to him, the child, though he has never seen a throne, will recognize that it is something on which kings sit, that a crown is something that a king wears on his head, a sceptre something that a king holds in his hand, and that a king is a man who is distinguished from other men and to whom they bow, a very good working definition of a king which would make quite unnecessary any elaborate attempt to define for a child the concept of royalty. In fact, formal definition should be avoided wherever possible, and the skilful teacher will know how to make a story define its own terms in the same way as the sentence that we just gave as an instance defined for the child the four unknown terms: king, throne, crown, and sceptre. Indeed the most important idea of all, that we have to give to the child cannot be defined otherwise even to ourselves, namely the idea of God. The general rule to be followed may be laid down in these words: Never define for the child any term that the story itself can be made to define but do define every necessary term that the story itself cannot be made to define. It is worth while noting in this connection that the best definition for a concrete object is the object itself or a picture of it.

[24]

**How to make the lesson interesting. Oral instruction preferable.** So much for the question how to make the lesson comprehensible to the child. As has already been said, this in itself goes a great way toward answering as well our second question, how to make it interesting, but other considerations must also be taken into account. The art of teaching history is in great part the art of story telling. Children love stories and particularly true stories if they are well told, but this love of a child for a good story is limited, especially in earlier years, to a story that is told. The mere technical difficulties of reading, the physical inconvenience of the posture demanded, the absence of that commentary which voice and gesture supply to the story, the impossibility of asking a book questions, and a number of other similar considerations make it undesirable that the first acquaintance of a child with a lesson shall come from a text-book. Text-books have their uses, particularly in the higher grades, for purposes of review, to aid the memory in retaining what has already been taught by word of mouth, but the practice that obtains in some schools of expecting the child to learn the lesson from the book before he comes to class is bad and should be avoided.

[25]

**Some suggestions as to story telling.** If then the first presentation of a lesson must be given orally by the teacher, it follows that the teacher has to perfect himself in the art of story telling. Like all other arts, the art of story telling cannot be imparted by rule and particularly not within the small scope of this introduction. A few suggestions however may be helpful. Lewis Carrol, whose Alice in Wonderland shows a rare insight into the childish mind, makes his Alice express a preference for books with plenty of illustrations and conversation. There are two hints here that are of value to the teacher of Biblical history, the first is to use pictures to illustrate a story and the second always to prefer direct discourse to indirect. To take up the second of these suggestions first, compare the following accounts of the same

event and ask yourself which appeals more to you:

1. Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him and he ordered every man to leave him. And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known to his brethren. And he wept aloud and the Egyptians heard and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph told his brethren who he was and asked whether his father was yet alive. And his brethren could not answer him, for they were affrighted at his presence. Joseph told them to come near, and they came near, and he told them that he was Joseph whom they had sold into Egypt and that they should not be grieved nor angry with themselves for having sold him thither, for it was in order to preserve life that God had sent him before them. For the famine had been in the land for two years and there yet remained five years during which there would be neither plowing nor harvest, and so God had sent him before them to give them a remnant on the earth and to keep them alive for a great deliverance.

[26]

2. Then could Joseph not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, "Cause every man to go out from me." And there stood no man with him when Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians heard and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" And his brethren could not answer him for they were affrighted at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, "Come near to me, I pray you." And they came near. And he said: "I am Joseph your brother whom ye sold into Egypt. And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land; and there are yet five years in which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to give you a remnant on the earth and to save you alive for a great deliverance."

The reader will at once recognize in the second citation the exact language of the Bible. The first is the same passage turned into indirect discourse with no other change in its wording, yet how much it loses in force even for us adults and even in print; for children and in actual narration the story would lose even more.

**The advantage of using illustrations.** As for the advantage of using illustrations whether in the form of pictures that are distributed and passed around the class or in the form of stereoptical views, we have already suggested one advantage in that they help define for the child the meaning of some of the concrete terms not yet in his vocabulary, but they perform a still more important function in helping him to visualize the narrative. For what we see seems always a more intimate part of our experience than what we have merely heard. When Job wants to express the deeper intimacy of his new knowledge of God after God had appeared to him he declares, "I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee." (Job 42. 5.)

[27]

**When to use illustrations and what illustrations to use.** Though the use of illustrations, particularly of stereoptical views, which have the advantage of focusing the attention of the class on one thing, are a decided help, they should be used only in reviewing the lesson. The reasons for this are: 1. that the picture distracts the attention of the class from what the teacher is saying, 2. that it prevents the smooth flow of narrative by the necessity of explaining details of the picture that are often irrelevant, 3. that the interest in the dramatic dialogue of the characters which reveals their motives and, in most cases, the actual moral of the story is sacrificed to the interest in picturesque details of dress, scenery, etc., 4. that the teacher is at the mercy of the artist's conception of the Biblical narrative which rarely does it justice from a Jewish or from an artistic point of view, and often does violence to the nobler conception of the story that the unaided imagination, stimulated by the teacher's narrative, would have constructed. Pictures that represent God in human form should of course not be allowed in a Jewish school. Nor should the school use such pictures as represent anything of a mystical character in images so definite and familiar that they dispel the whole mystical atmosphere. When, for instance, the revelation on Mount Sinai is represented by two tablets of stone falling from heaven into the waiting hands of Moses, as in one familiar picture, it is hardly likely to instil the highest form of reverence. Or when, as in another picture, the ascension of Elijah is represented by a chariot drawn by horses of a brilliant red, meant to suggest fire but too definite in outline to permit of such suggestion, the child will in all probability merely be amused at the peculiar color of the horses and the picture will not have illustrated the story for him at all. It is therefore apparent that the teacher must exercise some sort of censorship over the illustrations used in teaching.

[28]

**Self activity of child.** We have several times referred to the activity of the child's own imagination in working over in his mind the material supplied by the teacher, and the recognition of the fact that the child's mind is not passive but active leads us to the acceptance of a principle of the most far reaching importance in all education, namely, that the teacher cannot impart a lesson unless he can get the child's mind of its own accord to seek that very knowledge that he wishes to impart. This is the wisdom of the homely proverb, "You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make him drink." We must stimulate an appetite for the mental food we wish to give the pupil even before we give it. How can this be done?

**Jewish symbols and ceremonies a stimulus to self activity.** When discussing the aim of instruction in Biblical history we took a hint from the Haggadah for Passover, the reading of which was mainly intended for pedagogic purpose since it is in fulfillment of the commandment, "And thou shalt tell to thy son in that day"; we may take another hint from it in this connection. The child at table on Passover eve sees before him a number of curious objects and ceremonials to which he is not accustomed. He sees the *mazzot*, the *maror*, and other symbols, he also notices the reclining attitude instead of the usual erect posture, and so he very naturally exclaims *mah nishtannah!* "How different is this night from other nights!" Then when his own curiosity has been stimulated he is given the answer to his questions and the lesson has been impressed upon him. The symbols and ceremonies of Jewish life which have their origin or explanation in the Biblical narrative are excellently adapted for this stimulation of intellectual curiosity which should precede the telling of the story. A reference to the Sabbath and how it is observed might well precede the story of creation which explains its origin and significance; a reference to the Passover observances might well precede an account of the Exodus; a reference to the synagogue might precede an account of the construction of the tabernacle, etc. These serve the double function of interesting the child in the narrative and of interesting him in those things in Jewish life which the narrative helps to

[29]

explain. Where an object of Jewish ceremonial life cannot be found with which to stimulate his curiosity, some other fact of his experience may be taken instead. Thus the story of Noah might well be introduced by reference to the rainbow, the meaning of which the teacher will then undertake to explain to the child by the story.

**The teacher's question as a stimulus to self activity.** Inasmuch as there are in every class those of the type mentioned in the Haggadah "who know not how to question", it often becomes advisable for the teacher himself to put to the class the question that he wishes to have answered. And indeed an occasional question from the teacher in the very midst of the story may go a great way toward arousing interest and securing a clearer comprehension. Thus it may be that the teacher is telling the story of Joseph. He reaches the point where Joseph's brothers come to him to buy corn and explains how Joseph, having recognized them without their having recognized him, had them wholly in his power. He then asks, "Now what do you think you would do if you were Joseph and your brothers had treated you so cruelly and then they come to you for food and you have them in your power?" At once he has the class interested in the question of what Joseph actually did and their interest in the rest of the story as well as their better comprehension of the motives that underlie it is secured.

[30]

**The pupil's recitation.** So much for the teacher's original presentation of the lesson. This completed, the child must be called upon to recite it, not primarily, as most teachers seem to think, in order to give the teacher a chance to find out whether the child had learned the lesson, but because the necessity of telling it over to the teacher forces the child to think about the subject of the lesson and once more appeals to his self activity. The questions asked by the teacher should not be merely such as call for items of information but such as require the exercise of intelligence on the pupil's part and give evidence not only of his remembering the story but of his understanding it. If for example the teacher wishes to question the child on the story of creation, such formal questions as "In how many days did God make the world? What did he make on the first day? What did he make on the second day?" etc., are not enough, as they test the memory only. He should ask such questions as these: "Why do we rest on the seventh day of each week? What was the last thing God made? Why did God make man last?" For these test not only the memory but the understanding as well. The story that the children tell when thus asked to repeat the lesson will give the teacher an idea of what points have impressed themselves on them and what have not, and on the basis of these he must question further. In general there ought to be fewer questions beginning with "what" and more beginning with "why".

[31]

**Dramatization of lesson.** Beside the repetition of the lesson by the child in the form of a recitation and the answering of questions, there are many stories, in which the interest centers chiefly in the dramatic dialogue, that children might be encouraged to dramatize in class. The dramatization must be made by the children themselves in the spirit of free play, the teacher merely offering general suggestions but the dialogue being the spontaneous creation of the children. The natural imitative instinct of children which makes so much of their play the mimicry of the activities and occupations of their adult environment, takes very kindly to this sort of make-believe. At the same time this exercise enables them to enter into the motives of the Biblical characters and to understand and remember the incidents of the Biblical narrative as few exercises can. Nor need the teacher be discouraged by the lack of accessories to dramatization such as scenery and costume. The child's imagination, which can convert a rocking chair into a boat or a table into a mountain, can easily dispense with those accessories which the sophisticated mind of the adult requires. Stories that lend themselves to such treatment are Esau's sale of the birthright, Isaac's blessing of Jacob and Esau and the various episodes of the Joseph narrative.

[32]

**The teacher's preparation.** It follows from the above discussion that the teacher of Biblical history who wishes to do justice to his subject must give careful preparation to each lesson, not only, as we have already suggested, with a view to understanding the significance of the Biblical passages that he wishes to teach, but also with a view to teaching them effectively to the child. This preparation must include 1. inquiry as to object in teaching that particular lesson to the child, 2. the effort to find some point of contact between the theme of the lesson and the previous knowledge and experience of the child such as would appeal to his interest, 3. the study of the subject from the point of view of literary and oratorical effectiveness in the presentation, 4. the attempt to find the best possible illustrations and applications of the lesson to the life of the child, 5. preparation of questions and other devices by which the child is made to work over the lesson in his own mind and give proof of having assimilated it. In the chapters of this manual the object of each lesson according to the author's opinion will be pointed out and suggestions will, from time to time, be given as to the other points that have been here enumerated. This book refrains, however, from giving a detailed plan of each lesson as it is deemed important not to put restraints on the originality and initiative of the teacher but on the contrary, to encourage free and spontaneous expression of personality both on the part of teacher and of pupil.

[33]

**Summary.** Much more might be said about the method of teaching Biblical history, but this will have to suffice by way of introduction to the more concrete suggestions that are to follow in the chapters of this book. It may be well, however, before closing to summarize the more important conclusions reached:

1. That the aim in instructing the child in Biblical history is not merely to teach him a moral such as he might learn from any edifying story but to influence his life through the consciousness of his spiritual identity with the Israel of the Bible;

2. That the events narrated must be given the same significance that the Bible itself gives them and not any convenient moral that we may wish to append to them;

3. That teaching shall be so adapted to the child as to make the lesson (a) comprehensible, (b) interesting;

(a) That in order to be comprehensible it must proceed from the known to the unknown and must define the unknown in terms of the known, avoiding however, so far as possible, all formal definition, and leaving large scope for the exercise of the child's imagination;

(b) That in order to be interesting the lesson should first be presented by the teacher orally in a style made vivid by plenty of conversation quoted directly, and that this may well be followed up by illustrations such as the showing of pictures or stereoptican views; that the teacher stimulate the curiosity of the child before beginning the lesson preferably by the introduction of some relevant object of Jewish ceremonial, but, in the absence of that, by some other appeal to the child's experience; and

[34]

finally, that the teacher encourage self activity and self expression on the part of the child by tactful questions both in the course of presenting the lesson and when the child is asked, as he should be, to recite the lesson he has learned.

These suggestions it is hoped may prove of some help to the earnest teacher of Biblical history. In the chapters which follow, an attempt is made to give them more concrete and definite illustration. Each chapter will therefore contain 1. the interpretation of the subject-matter of the lesson, 2. a brief discussion of the aim in teaching it, and 3. miscellaneous suggestions as to the way it can best be made to appeal to the child.

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## PART I

### FROM CREATION TO THE DEATH OF JOSEPH

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## CHAPTER I

### CREATION Genesis 1.1 to 2.3

Note.—The lessons in this book are necessarily divided somewhat arbitrarily, that is without exact reference to the amount that can be taught at a single session of the school. This is unavoidable at present as periods vary in length in different schools, and classes vary in age and in the mental development of their pupils. The division therefore has been purely on the basis of the subject-matter and not of the time to be spent in instruction. Some lessons may require two or even three hours for their complete presentation.

**Interpretation.** The early narratives of Genesis serve as an introduction to Biblical history by giving the Jewish view of the origin of the world in general and the human race in particular, preparatory to discussing the role that Israel was destined to play in the world. The following are some of the most significant ideas that the narrative of the creation has to tell us with regard to the world and man's place in it:

1. That God is the creator and consequently supreme over matter, nature and the world;
2. That man is the highest being in the order of creation by reason of his being possessed of the divine attributes of reason and conscience as intimated in the words "in our image according to our likeness";
3. That God loves His creatures *הַרְחֵמִים בְּמִדַּת שְׂבִיבָה* "whom he hath created in accordance with the attribute of *mercy*;"
4. That God in return desires man's love and his recognition in worship as is implied in the institution of the Sabbath.

**Aim.** In teaching this lesson to the child the aim should be to inspire him with the sense of reverence and worship, particularly in connection with Sabbath observance. The message of this as of all the earlier chapters of Genesis is a universal one, but, like most other universal aspects of Judaism, it has found concrete expression in a specifically Jewish institution, namely the Sabbath, and, as our aim is to affect the Jewish life of the child it is through association of the ideas of the lesson with the institution of the Sabbath that we must endeavor to make them effective.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** In accordance with the principle which demands that we proceed from what is known to what is not yet known, it at once becomes apparent that we cannot begin this lesson with an account of primal darkness out of which chaos and then the world was formed. In the introduction (page 22) we quoted an account of creation which began by a reference to created objects in the child's experience. In consideration however of the desirability of stimulating the child's intellectual curiosity before beginning the lesson, it would be well to introduce the lesson with a few questions regarding the distinction of the Sabbath from the other days of the week, culminating in the question, "Why do we act so differently on the Sabbath than on other days?" Then proceed to answer by telling the story of creation in the way suggested in the introduction. When the narrative is completed, again discuss the Sabbath and how it is to be observed, as in this way the moral of the narrative can best be enforced.

[37]

It is a well known fact that children are attracted by the exact repetition of certain phrases somewhat in the nature of a refrain. It is well therefore to utilize the refrain, "And there was evening and there was morning" with each of the successive days of creation.

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## CHAPTER II

### ADAM AND EVE Genesis 2.4 to 3.24

**Interpretation.** This is one of the narratives of the Bible whose real meaning in its entirety it is impossible to teach the child. To understand it, would require an experience that in the very nature of the case the child cannot have had. A partial understanding of its moral can, however, be imparted to him and the significant facts of the story be so impressed on his mind that he will remember them and, in later years, perceive their deeper meaning in the light of acquired experience. The story of Adam and Eve is the story of man and woman as exemplified in the progenitors of the human race. The Eden of blissful



innocence is lost when there awakens in man the appetite for a forbidden knowledge, for an experience of evil as well as of good, an experience which in the end leaves him conscious of his nakedness, conscious of having sinned, and of being disillusioned, conscious of being altogether in a worse plight than if he had never sought after the forbidden knowledge. Obviously this deeper meaning cannot be realized by the child, but certain elements of it can be brought home to him; he can be made to feel that the enjoyment of the good things in life is dependent upon an implicit obedience to the laws that God has laid down as conditioning their enjoyment, so that disobedience means the loss of these joys.

**Aim.** The aim of the story of Adam and Eve must then be, from the point of view of the child, the recognition of the duty of implicit, unquestioning obedience to legitimate authority. So far the moral is universal and not specifically Jewish. Were we to rest here, we would not be realizing to the full the aim of instruction in Biblical history that we had set before us in the introduction. But, though the moral of the story of Adam and Eve is a universal one, it can be associated, as was done in the case of the story of creation, with certain aspects of Jewish life. Thus the legitimate authority for which we claim implicit obedience from the child can and should be made the Torah, and particular emphasis should in this connection be laid on the dietary laws because of their analogy to the divine commandment in the lesson, "of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it." In this way the moral of the lesson is, so to speak, dramatized in the daily life of the child and is made to increase his loyalty to Judaism as a whole.

[39]

**Suggestions to the teacher.** After what has been said with regard to the aim of this chapter, little remains to be noted by way of suggestions regarding method, as the story in its Biblical form is already admirably adapted to satisfy the child's love of a good story. The moral, as we have suggested it, while it should receive due emphasis at the end of the story particularly when it is being repeated by the children and so has become the subject of class discussion, should not be made too obtrusive in telling the story itself. The words of the serpent in tempting Eve and the conversation in which God rebukes Adam, Eve and the serpent should be quoted as nearly as possible in the Biblical language. In pointing out the connection between the story and its moral as given above, do so by questioning the child rather than by simply stating it yourself. Questions that may be suggestive are the following:

[40]

When God gave Adam and Eve so many trees to eat from and everything else that they needed, was it right that they should eat the fruit of the one tree that God had told them not to eat of, just because they wanted to know how it tasted?

If your parents, who give you so many things, your food and your clothes and your toys, sometimes tell you to do this or that which at the time you don't feel like doing, how ought you to act?

Do you know of any things that we Jews don't eat because God, who has made everything we eat, told us not to eat them?

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## CHAPTER III

### CAIN AND ABEL Genesis 4.1 to 15

**Interpretation.** The story of Cain and Abel is a study of sin, remorse and repentance. There is a suggestion in verse 7, of evil passions existing in Cain's heart even before the murder of his brother, and, though the verse is obscure, it may be interpreted as giving a reason for God's not accepting Cain's offering. Not until after the deed is done is Cain made fully to realize the significance of his act and then he is stirred by remorse and fear until God reassures him of his protection. The sign that God gives Cain is sometimes construed as part of his punishment but in the Bible it is mentioned rather as evidence of God's acceptance of his repentance.

**Aim.** The teacher should endeavor through this lesson to impress on the child the danger of yielding to envy and anger and the desirability of repentance and of confession of our sins to God whenever we have done wrong.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** Sentimentalists sometimes object to teaching this story to young children because of the sordid crime that it relates. This objection however is not valid, because the very ignorance and innocence of childhood rob the story of most of its horror. Indeed, the teacher must rather guard against the child's utterly losing the sense of the tragedy of the crime, the universal tragedy by which passion leads men to commit acts which they would later gladly retrieve if they could. In order to impress this on the child the teacher must describe what the narrative of the Bible but barely suggests, the wayward character of Cain before the sacrifice which made it unacceptable. Devote some time to characterizing Cain and Abel in such a way that the child pictures the former as a sullen, discontented, envious man, who showed no true appreciation of God's goodness to him and whose offering was therefore not acceptable to God, while that of Abel, who was sincerely grateful to God, was accepted. As this is the first time that sacrifice is mentioned, explain the meaning of sacrifice as a way in which men long ago used to show God that they were thankful for his goodness in giving them their food, by not using all that he gave them but burning some on a heap of stones called an altar. Use some illustration from the child's life of how a gift is more or less acceptable according to the motive which prompts it. You might ask the children, "Which would please you more; if somebody would give you a present on your birthday because he loves you, or, because he thinks that when his birthday will come you will give him one also?" and continue, "Now when Cain and Abel brought their offering to God, God knew that Abel loved Him and always obeyed Him and gave his offering because he was really grateful to God in his heart, but Cain, who was always discontented and not very obedient, God knew brought his offering only because he thought that if he did so God might be pleased and so send him the rain necessary to make his corn grow, that he would have plenty to eat during the year. Therefore God accepted Abel's offering but did not accept Cain's". Lay stress on God's warning to Cain, "Sin croucheth at the door", which is to be explained as meaning that Cain must be very careful how he acts and that if he feels like doing wrong to Abel, he must keep back the feeling and not do it, or he might be doing something which he would

[42]

[43]

later feel very sorry for, after he could no longer undo it. Remember that the very young child has no concept of death and so relate the climax of the story somewhat in this manner; "Now when Cain saw that Abel lay on the ground bleeding and could not move or speak to him he knew that he had committed a great sin and was afraid". The dialogue between God and Cain after Abel's death should be quoted as nearly as possible in the language of the Bible, particularly Cain's attempt at first to evade responsibility in the words "Am I my brother's keeper?" followed later by his complete confession, "My guilt is greater than I can bear". In enforcing the aim of the lesson as we have given it, guard against merely making didactic statements and rather bring out the point by questions, after having concluded the narrative. The following are suggestive questions:

Why did God accept Abel's offering and did not accept Cain's?

How did Cain feel when he saw that God did not accept his offering?

What did God say to Cain to warn him not give way to anger?

When Cain saw that he had killed Abel how did he feel?

Did God forgive Cain? How did God show that He forgave him?

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## CHAPTER IV

### NOAH Genesis 6.5 to 9.1

**Interpretation.** The story of Noah is so simple as scarcely to need interpretation. The world had become corrupt, and, as God cannot abide moral corruption, it seemed better to destroy what he had created. Out of the universal destruction, however, God's providence singled out Noah, because of his moral superiority, to be saved and to start human life on a higher plane. He therefore bids Noah take with him into the ark his family and enough of the animals to assure the preservation of the different species, taking more of the clean animals which are fit for food, and, when Noah finally leaves the ark, He makes a covenant with him, the terms of which are that Noah, is to observe certain moral laws, including the prohibition of murder, and that God would never again destroy all life with a deluge and would guarantee the orderly succession of the seasons as necessary to man's existence. As a token of this covenant God shows Noah the rainbow.

**Aim.** The aim in teaching this lesson to the child should be to give him the idea of God's control over all the forces of nature and of His special providence exercised over each individual, rewarding the good and punishing the evil. As it is our purpose, wherever possible, to find some distinctively Jewish way in which the child can give expression to the ideals taught this lesson should be made the occasion for teaching the child the *berakah* (blessing) on seeing a rainbow which is associated with the Noah story. [45]

**Suggestions to the teacher.** To connect this story with the child's own life begin with a reference to the rainbow. Let children tell what colors they have seen in the rainbow, call their attention to the fact that it appears always after a storm, and then tell them that you are going to relate a story which will explain to them why God makes a rainbow in the heavens after it rains. And when you have finished the story, again connect the moral of it with the rainbow somewhat as follows:

"And so, children, whenever we see a rainbow it should remind us of this story of how God saved Noah from the flood because of his goodness, and how God promised never to destroy the whole world again by a terrible flood. And whenever we see a rainbow we should all of us say this little prayer or *berakah* which I will teach you, וְקִים בְּרִיתוֹ וַיִּבְרַח, which means "Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, King of the world, who remembers His covenant and is faithful to His covenant and keeps his promise".

The term covenant must be explained to the child in this chapter as an exchange of promises.

The story of Noah contains many appeals to the child's interest which the skillful teacher will know how to make the most of. A Noah's ark with all manner of queer little wooden animals that could be put in and taken out again has been a favorite toy with many a child now grown to manhood. A child is naturally interested in animals and, when you tell of how the animals came into the ark, ask the children to tell you the names of animals they have seen in the zoo or circus. [46]

To emphasize the moral of the story use the *haggadic* elaboration of it according to which the period that the ark was in process of construction gave the sinners an opportunity to repent, of which however they did not avail themselves but instead merely mocked Noah for trusting in God and obeying him. This *haggada* is in full accord with the spirit of the Biblical narrative and gives content to the statement: "Noah was in his generation a righteous and whole-hearted man; Noah walked with God."<sup>[1]</sup>

The episode narrated in Genesis 9.21 to 29 had better be omitted as not adapted for children.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE TOWER OF BABEL Genesis 11.1 to 9

**Interpretation.** These verses tell how the descendants of Noah in the pride of a new civilization and the acquisition of the new art of building with bricks endeavor to defeat the divine purpose of scattering them over the world and are frustrated in their plans through God's confusing their language. Its moral is the vanity of any attempt on the part of man to defeat God's purpose.

**Aim.** This lesson is not one that yields a moral which the child is able to apply immediately in his own

life. Its moral is rather for society than for the individual in its exposure of the vanity of reliance on the mere material elements in civilization. Inasmuch however as it can be made interesting to the child and appealing to his imagination it is well to teach it that it may become a part of his store of Jewish information which will receive added meaning as his experience grows.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** This lesson should be introduced by a reference to the different languages with which the child has come in contact. He can then have his attention called to the fact that, as all men are descended from Noah, they must all originally have spoken one language. This at once raises the question how it came about that there are now many languages, and, when the child is interested in this question, he has the proper mental attitude for hearing the story. [48]

The motive for the building of the tower is not given very clearly in the Bible and, in the form in which it is given, is hardly calculated to impress the story on a child's mind. It is well, therefore, to amplify the story in accordance with the *haggadah* that suggests as motive the attempt to avoid the consequences of another such flood as at the time of Noah. The sin, therefore, of the generation of the dispersion lies in the fact that instead of trying to avoid God's displeasure they tried to render themselves immune to its consequences, a moral that carries out the idea of the Biblical narrative only stating it in more explicit terms.

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHOICE OF ABRAM AND THE CHOICE OF CANAAN Genesis 12.1 to 10 and 13.1 to 18

**Interpretation.** With this lesson the history of our people begins. The Bible wishes us to see in the separation of Abram and his clan from the parent tribe, and their migration to Canaan, not a fortuitous circumstance, but the fulfilment of a divine plan according to which God was to make of the descendants of Abram the chosen people and of the land of Canaan the chosen land. Why Abram was selected of all people is not clearly stated, but one trait of his character is made very conspicuous here and in all subsequent chapters, his implicit faith and obedience. The Rabbis emphasize that, in bidding him to leave his land, God tells him merely to go "to the land that I will show unto thee", without indicating what land was meant. Again He promises him, "To thy seed will I give this land", though Abram is childless. Nor was Abram permitted to believe that his nephew Lot might have been intended by the promise, for, when Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen quarrel, Lot chooses the land of Sodom and not the promised land. In a word, God seems to have selected Abram to be the father of the chosen people because of his faith, his unquestioning willingness to submit to divine guidance. A second trait of character that is made conspicuous is his love of peace as illustrated in his relations with Lot.

**Aim.** The primary aim in teaching this lesson to the child should be to inspire him with the thought that he is one of God's chosen people, a descendant of Abram, and should prove himself worthy of his descent by emulating Abram's obedience to God through his obedience to Jewish law. The whole point of this narrative is lost if the teacher fails to emphasize the fact that Abram is the father of the Jewish people. [50]

The secondary aim may well be to stimulate interest in Palestine as the chosen land.

A third lesson that can be taught in this connection is the lesson of the desirability of peace.

The last two aims however must be brought in incidentally, the former as an indication of God's love for Abram and his descendants, the latter as showing wherein Abram was worthy of being chosen.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** As the whole point of the narrative is lost if the child is not made to feel the connection of the Jewish people with Abram, take pains to explain what is meant by descent and how a whole people can be descended from one man, by showing how a man's grandchildren are usually more numerous than his children, etc. It might be of advantage to use the blackboard for a graphic illustration of this idea. Then, after having explained how God expected to make a great nation of Abram's descendants, ask, "Do any of you know what people today are the descendants of Abram? Well, I will tell you. You and I and all who call themselves Jews are descended from Abram. That is why we always speak of him as our father Abram. Now don't you want me to tell you more about our father Abram and about the great people that came from him and to which we belong?"iblica [51]

Hereafter always call Abram "our father Abram", as he is almost invariably called in Jewish literature אַבְרָהָם אֲבוֹתֵנוּ. This will keep the child conscious of his descent from Abram, increase his interest in him and make him feel that Biblical history is the history of his own people.

As the motives for God's choice of Abram are but vaguely suggested in the Bible, the teacher must make them more explicit. Call attention to the fact that the world had again become corrupt, that idolatry prevailed—and here it becomes necessary to explain what idolatry means—in the House of Terah as elsewhere (see Joshua 24. 2), but that there was one man, Abram, who always obeyed God and who, God knew, would instruct his children to do so. And therefore God told him to leave his family and his people because he wanted to make of him a great people that would always do as he told them and not a foolish and wicked people like those among whom he lived.

The various *haggadic* tales of the persecutions to which Abram was subjected by Nimrod and even by his own father, while beautiful in themselves and interesting to children should not be taught as part of the lesson. (See foot-note to page 46.)

In order to make the narrative more vivid and impressive, God's call to Abram and his promise (Genesis 12. 1 to 3) should be quoted in the language of the Bible, as also Abram's words to Lot (Genesis 13. 9) and God's promise when Abram settled in Canaan (Genesis 13. 14 to 18).

When speaking of God's promise to give Abram the land of Canaan, the teacher may digress somewhat to describe the main geographical features of Palestine, showing children on the map where it is situated and pointing out its main topographical characteristics, if the children are of an age when they know how to interpret maps. The description of the land should be such as to create an attachment to it, dwelling on [52]

the variety of its climate, the beauty of its scenery, and its fertility. Pictures of Palestine particularly of the places associated with the life of Abram, should be shown.

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## CHAPTER VII

### BEGINNING OF ABRAM'S GREATNESS Genesis 14

**Interpretation.** Abram's blessing begins to become manifest through his military success in the campaign to rescue Lot and his family. He is accorded recognition by Melchizedek, king of Salem (to be identified with Jerusalem), and "priest of God the Most High", who gives him bread and wine and to whom he gives a tithe of the booty. The king of Sodom also recognizes his greatness and the value of his services, which he wishes to reward, but Abram rejects the proffered reward in order to be able to maintain his independence and assert his reliance on the divine promise.

**Aim.** The aim in teaching this lesson should be to awaken an appreciation of the heroic virtues of courage, loyalty and independence, and, by associating them with the founder of the Jewish people and the Jewish faith to arouse the Jewish self respect of the child.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** It is very important in telling such stories the moral of which is to be enforced through the child's imitation of the virtues of the characters whose deeds it narrates, not to tag on a moral at the end of the tale. If the child is impressed by the story, imitation is sure to result, and, by adding a moral stated in abstract terms, one only gives the child the feeling that the events of the story did not really happen but were "made up" to point the moral. But the child must be impressed by the story, and the skillful teacher will know how to make the details of the story itself so impressive as to bring home their moral. For instance, instead of saying at the end of the story, "This teaches us what a brave man Abram was since he was willing to risk his life for Lot and his family", the teacher might begin the story somewhat as follows:

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"Now when Abram was sitting one day at the door of his tent, a man came running to him all out of breath and, as soon as he had gained breath enough to speak, he said, 'There has been a terrible battle in Sodom. I and a few others have escaped but your nephew Lot and his family have all been taken away captive and no one can say what will be done to them.' Thereupon Abram called together his few followers to the number of 318 and, together with his friends and neighbors, Aner, and Eshcol and Mamre and their soldiers, followed after the enemy, trusting that God would help him, though he knew the enemy had many more men than he."

The interesting detail of how the enemy fell into the slime pits in the valley of Siddim should not be omitted as it gives greater vividness and reality to the narrative.

The child can be depended upon to respond to the appeal for his appreciation of Abram's martial virtues, but the full significance of Abram's refusal of a share of the spoils and his statement "Thou shalt not say I have made Abram rich" he will not grasp without the teacher's help. Bring out his point by asking, "Why did not Abram want to let the king of Sodom make him rich?" and if, as will probably be the case, the child will have no answer ready, explain as follows:

"The reason is this. Abram had joined the war not to get money or other riches from the enemy, for that would have been mere robbery. He had fought to save Lot and his family, and, when they were safe, he was satisfied. But the people of Sodom were, as you know from our last lesson, very wicked and their kings were all the time making war, even when there was no good reason, in order that they might become rich by what they took from the enemy. And Abram thought, if I take money now from the king of Sodom, some time later he may say, 'Abram, it is I who made you a rich man; now you must help me fight against my enemies and rob them'. Therefore Abram would have nothing to do with him and would not even take a shoestring from him. He knew, moreover, that if he obeyed God, God would give him all that he needed, and therefore he did not have to take presents from one whom he could not respect and honor."

[55]

Be sure to make clear that Melchizedek's tribute to Abram was in recognition of the fact that his victory was a sign of God's favor, and that Abram's giving the tithe was an expression of his recognition of God's help in the battle.

The lesson might be concluded by some such summary as the following:

So our father Abram became great and famous in the new land to which he had come, because God blessed him in all that he did so that he came to be called by the people about him a "prince of God".

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## CHAPTER VIII

### HAGAR AND THE BIRTH OF ISHMAEL Genesis 15.16.17

**Interpretation.** In chapter 15 the faith of Abram is once more given emphasis. God promises Abram great reward, but, being childless, he is indifferent to a reward which must ultimately pass to strangers, the descendants of Eliezer, but God explains to him that he is to have a child of his own to whom the reward is to descend, and he has faith in God's promise though for many years it remains unfulfilled.

The vision of Abram, recorded in verses 12 to 16 is significant as showing the providential character of the Egyptian bondage. We need not, however, discuss it here in detail, since its significance is only apparent in the light of later lessons and it is not intrinsically interesting to the child.

For the interpretation of the main theme of this lesson, the reader is referred to the introduction of this book, pages 19-20. It is to be noted that in giving to Abram her servant Hagar as wife, Sarai is doing an unselfish act in the hope that she may thereby help realize the promise made to Abram, and it is little wonder that she resents the arrogant attitude of Hagar, who is the chief beneficiary of her unselfish act and yet vaunts it over her as though Sarai's barrenness were a mark of inferiority and perhaps even of the divine disfavor.

The fact that, when Hagar flees from Sarai before the birth of Ishmael, she is asked by the angel to return, and that after the birth of Isaac, God not only sanctions but commands the separation, shows distinctly that the motive for the separation was that expressed in the words, "In Isaac shall seed be called to thee", and that, meanwhile, Abram was to have his faith put to the test through his attachment to Ishmael, as later through his attachment to Isaac. [57]

It is also to be noted, here as elsewhere, that the patriarchs and their wives themselves had only a dim and often incorrect idea of God's purpose in his dealings with them. Thus Sarai, realizing that she is barren, at first reasons that God's promise to Abram was intended to apply to him alone and not to her and therefore necessitated his taking another wife. When Ishmael is born, Abram thinks that he is to be the child of destiny and it is one of the tests to which his faith is put when, after the birth of Ishmael, God tells him that not this son but another, who is to be born to Sarai, is to be his heir. The point of all this is that the history of the patriarchs is not merely personal biography but that its real significance is to be understood as showing the care that God exercised in selecting the material out of which the chosen people was to be moulded. Not all of Abram's descendants were to be deemed fit for this election, but he was to become the "father of a multitude of nations" of which only one was to be chosen.

In teaching of the covenant that is recorded in Genesis 17, the ceremony of circumcision cannot for obvious reasons be dwelt on in class, but the change of Abram's and Sarai's names should be, and therefore its significance needs to be interpreted. To give a new name is a sign of ownership and interest. God shows his love for Abram and Sarai and his intention to enter into closer relations with them by giving them new names. It is to be noted that God also gives Isaac his name (Genesis 18.21) and changes that of Jacob to Israel after he shows himself worthy of the title. [58]

**Aim.** This lesson is one of a series of incidents which should impress on the child faith in the truth of God's words, which in the end are verified, though at first they often seem impossible of realization and more particularly, faith in God's election of Israel.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** There are two main difficulties to overcome in teaching this chapter; first, that the moral is such an abstract one, the whole story as we have interpreted it being conceived as a glimpse into the workings of providence in the history of Israel and the world, and second, that the incidents hinge upon family relations of a sort that a child with his ignorance of the facts of sex cannot easily comprehend.

The first of these difficulties can be largely overcome by giving much more emphasis than is usually given to the human and personal aspect of the story particularly to Abram's desire for a son and his repeated disappointments before the final realization of God's promise to him; and a little tact can overcome the second difficulty as well. To show how these two difficulties may be met, it will be necessary here to tell a great part of the story as it may be told to a class of children between the ages of seven and eight. After telling of God's promise to Abram to make of his seed a great nation as numerous as the stars in heaven and of Abram's rejoicing that he would have a son who would become after him the father of this great people, the teacher might continue somewhat as follows: [59]

But year after year passed and Abram and Sarai were already growing old, and yet God had not fulfilled His promise to Abram to give him a son out of whose children and children's children He would make a great and good nation. And Oh! how Abram did want to have a son. When he would see the children of his neighbors at play with their bright eyes and laughing faces, he would think, "*If only I had a little child like that how happy I should be and what delight it would be to watch him grow big and strong! How I would thank God for such a son and how I would teach my little boy to thank God and to love and obey Him and to be kind and good to all people as God wants us to be so that through him and his children and children's children all the nations of the earth would be blessed.*" And he would often tell his wishes to Sarai and they would try to comfort each other and one would remind the other of God's promise and would say, "*We must be patient. God has promised us a son and in His time He will send us one.*" But one day an idea came to Sarai. She thought to herself, "Maybe it is my fault that Abram has no children. God promised a son to Abram but he did not make any promise to me. Maybe if Abram married someone else, God would let Abram have a son from this other wife." Now Sarai had a servant whose name was Hagar, and she told Abram to marry Hagar too, for in those days men often had more than one wife. And Abram did as Sarai suggested and, surely enough, not long after they were married it was told to Hagar that in a few months she would bear a child to Abram. Now you would think children, would you not, that after Sarai had been so kind to her servant Hagar and had let her marry Abram that Hagar would love Sarai for it and show kindness to her in return. But Hagar showed herself at this time very mean. She felt a foolish pride because God was going to give her a son and had given none to Sarai and she used to say to her, "See, you are married to Abram these many years and yet God has not given him any children from you, but I have been but recently married to him and now I shall soon bear him a son. Doesn't this show that God loves me more than you? Doesn't this show that I am better than you? Do you think I will be your servant any more? No indeed, I am not only as good as you but better." When Sarai heard these words day after day she was deeply grieved and angry and she complained to Abram, and Abram told Hagar that she must continue to serve Sarai as before. But when Sarai wanted to make Hagar do her work, she ran away and fled into the wilderness. [60]

The above will suffice to show how the difficulties which we mention can be overcome. The passages that have been italicized suggest how the child can be given the feeling that the birth of Isaac was part of a divine plan for the good of the world. This can be still more clearly brought home by the latter part of the narrative in which God rejects Ishmael as a "Wild ass of a man." The teacher must make this quite clear to the class by asking, "Do you think that this boy Ishmael of whom God knew that he would be wild and wicked was the one whom God meant when He told Abram he would have a son who was going to be a blessing to all the world?" He must also emphasize Abram's affection for Ishmael, which made him mistake him for the son of promise, for Abram presumably did not know of the prophecy with regard to [61]

Ishmael's future. This will give the child the idea contained in the narrative that "There are many devices in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord that shall stand".

## CHAPTER IX

### ABRAHAM ENTERTAINS THE ANGELS Genesis 18.1 to 16

**Interpretation.** These verses have given no little difficulty to the ancient Hebrew commentators. The first verse contains a statement of God's appearing to Abraham but does not give any content to this revelation, and then the three angels are introduced into the narrative as if another revelation were here intended. Moreover the number of angels that appeared to Abraham when one might have served the purpose as well also presented its difficulty, since Christian theologians, connecting this verse with the preceding, tried to employ it as an argument for the trinity. There are furthermore in these verses frequent changes of number which are difficult to account for. Thus in verse 3, Abraham addresses the angels in the singular, in verse 4 in the plural. In verse 9, we read *va-yomeru* "And they said" while verse 10 which seems a continuation of this conversation begins *va-yomar* "And he said". In verse 13 God himself suddenly breaks into the conversation. A comparison with other parts of the Bible in which angels appear shows that they too exhibit similar peculiarities of style.<sup>[2]</sup>

The study of these passages shows the following characteristic features of the Biblical conception of angels which will help to clear up the difficulties of our text. The angel, as the name both in Hebrew and English implies, is the messenger of God. Inasmuch as he exists only to do God's bidding his words are the words of God and may be introduced by the words "God said" as well as by "the angel (or angels) said". This accounts for the apparent inconsistency in the use of singular and plural in our passage. The angel has no discretionary power, as appears from the statement in Exodus 23. 21, that the angel cannot forgive sin. Inasmuch as he has no individual personality or will of his own but is merely a manifestation of God's will, he has no name of his own, the name being a mark of individuality, but bears the name of God, which being a mystery, he may not reveal.<sup>[3]</sup> (Genesis 32. 3. Exodus 23. 21. Judges 13. 18.) This idea of the impersonality of the angels is carried a step further by the Rabbis, who insist that no angel ever executes more than one message and account for the number of angels that appeared to Abraham by assigning to each a separate mission; one to predict to Abraham the birth of Isaac, another to rescue Lot, and a third to destroy Sodom. But such an explanation is scarcely necessary as there are other passages in the Bible where a number of angels are mentioned for no clear reason, as for instance in Jacob's dream. As for the difficulty that we found in verses one and two, it can now be made clear by understanding the appearance of the angels in verse two as the explanation of the revelation referred to in verse one.

Regarding the significance of angels in general, we may consider the accounts of their appearances as intended by the Biblical author to convey his appreciation of the mystery of how God can communicate with mortals without loss to His divine majesty. They certainly do convey something of this appreciation to the child, for the imagination of children notwithstanding their natural tendency to conceive of God in anthropomorphic terms, is impressed by these mysterious heralds of an invisible kingdom with a sense of the majesty of God's rule.

**Aim.** This episode has always been made use of, and rightly so, to impress the pupil with an appreciation of that courteous interest in the stranger and deferential attention to his wants and desires which constitute the true grace of hospitality, but an equally important educational value, perhaps from the point of view of the child an even more important one, is its power of impressing him with a sense of the mysterious possibilities of this world, in which any passing stranger that we entertain may turn out to be an angel in disguise, who will reveal himself to us and bless us if we do not turn him from our door. The story should leave the child with the feeling expressed in the exclamation, "Is anything too hard for the Lord". The teacher must of course not lose sight nor permit the child to lose sight of the story's connection with the main theme of the birth of Isaac, the significance of which we have already pointed out in the previous lesson.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** This is a story whose educational value would only be lost by analyzing its moral as the beauty of a flower is destroyed by pulling it apart to show its structure. Tell the story simply and, as nearly as possible, in the language of the Bible itself. Be careful to give the story its characteristic picturesque setting, and begin therefore by contrasting modern conditions of housing and travel with those of Abraham's days, thus establishing a point of contact with the child's present experience. The following facts should be impressed on the child:

1. That Abraham's nomadic life, which was also the life led by many of his contemporaries, necessitated his dwelling in a tent which could be pitched wherever he wanted to make his home,
2. That traveling was to a large extent on foot over hot sand or stones,
3. That travelers were not sure of obtaining food at regular intervals, and
4. That it was consequently a great kindness to offer them rest and refreshment.

After this introduction, tell the story of how Abraham one day saw three tired travelers on the road approaching in the direction of his tent and invited them to rest, refresh themselves and partake of food. Then, in a manner which would suggest that you are confiding to the class a great secret, tell them that these men whom Abraham had invited were not really men at all but angels of God.

The incident of Sarah's laughing when the angel delivers his message and then denying that she had laughed should not be omitted as it affords an interesting human touch to the story and still more as it gives the occasion for the angel's reply which contains the moral of the story, "Can anything be too wonderful for God?" There is no need of glossing over Sarah's prevarication and certainly no need of giving it undue emphasis, but the incident should be told in such a way that her motive is made clear. Say, for instance; "Now as you know, Sarah was very old, so old that she thought herself too old to have a

little baby, and when she heard, from behind the curtain of the tent, the angel telling Abraham that in a year's time she should have a son she laughed, just as you would laugh if I told you that a rose bush would have roses in mid-winter. But the angel said to Abraham, 'Why does Sarah laugh? Is there anything that God cannot do?' Then Sarah was ashamed and said, 'I did not laugh'. But the angel said, 'Nay but thou didst laugh and Sarah was more ashamed than ever, for she knew that she had not told the truth, and she said no more.'

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## CHAPTER X

### THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH Genesis 18.7 to 19.29

**Interpretation.** The incident of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, like that of the destruction of the generation of the deluge, is meant as an assertion of God's justice. The insistence on the justice of God is made the more emphatic by the recognition of the fact that His dispensations are such as may lead us at times to call His justice into question. When, therefore, Abraham exclaims, "Shall not the judge of all the world do justice?" he is not rebuked for his presumption, but, on the contrary, God seems to prefer his attitude to one that would accept apparent injustice with complacent resignation, and God does not disdain to justify Himself to Abraham in very much the same spirit as the Book of Job represents Him as preferring the blasphemous accusations of Job to the pious apologetics of his friends. (Job 42. 7.)

The particular crime assigned as an instance of the wickedness of Sodom was a form of immorality of which strangers were the especial victims. Lot's offer to surrender to the men of Sodom his daughters instead of the strangers was not only prompted by a sense of the obligation of hospitality but by the consideration of the different degree of immorality involved in the two acts. It goes without saying that the specific crime of the men of Sodom cannot be explained to the children otherwise than as a disposition to abuse strangers, the antithesis to the attitude of Abraham and Lot towards them, and, inasmuch as the nature of the crime cannot be taught, Lot's offer to substitute his daughters for the strangers cannot be taught since this act would then appear as an attempt to remedy one injustice by perpetrating another. [68]

**Aim.** This lesson yields more than one moral for the child. The style of Abraham's plea for Sodom and Gomorrah is a very fine example of devotion in prayer and should affect the child's attitude in prayer. The lesson of hospitality taught in the story that preceded is given further emphasis by the contrast between the reception of the strangers by Abraham and by Lot, who was reared in Abraham's household, on the one hand, and by the people of Sodom on the other. This contrast between the character of Abraham and that of the people of Sodom should appeal to the Jewish pride of the child as a descendant of Abraham, the value of which pride we have had occasion to point out before. The transformation of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt is an excellent lesson in the value of prompt obedience and the danger of hesitation and inordinate curiosity.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** In teaching of Abraham's plea for Sodom and Gomorrah, do not merely give the substance of Abraham's prayer but thoroughly assimilate and impart the reverential spirit contained in such introductory phrases as "Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes, peradventure, etc." "Oh, let not the Lord be angry and I will speak", and again, "Let not the Lord be angry and I will speak but this once". In order that this part of the lesson shall affect the child's attitude in prayer, speak of Abraham's plea as a prayer by saying "Then Abraham prayed, etc.", rather than simply "Then Abraham said", but do not, of course, go into a dissertation on prayer; let the child draw his own moral. [69]

In telling of the reception of the angels in Sodom it is well to emphasize the contrast between the way the men of Sodom treated strangers and the way that Abraham and Lot treated them. The accusation of the men of Sodom, "This one fellow came in to sojourn and he will needs play the judge" is a fine involuntary tribute to Lot's moral superiority and should be quoted. The final picture in verse 28 should not be omitted as it emphasizes the connection of Abraham with these events and furnishes, so to speak, a concluding tableau to the story.

A description of the Dead Sea region of Palestine, accompanied by a good picture showing its present desolation, might furnish a good conclusion to the lesson. The following questions will test the child's comprehension of the story's moral:

1. How did our Father Abraham treat strangers? How did Lot? Where did Lot learn always to be kind to strangers? How did the people of Sodom treat strangers?

Why did God want to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah? When God told Abraham that he would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, was Abraham glad or sorry? What did he do? Can you repeat his prayer?

What did the angels tell Lot and his family not to do? Did they all obey? Why did Lot's wife look back? What happened to her because she did not obey?

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## CHAPTER XI

### THE DIVORCE OF HAGAR Genesis 20 and 21

**Interpretation.** The incident recorded in Chapter 20 is intended to show the care exercised by God in preserving the purity of the chosen seed, but it cannot be taught to children because of their ignorance of the facts of sex. Chapter 21 verses 21 to the end of the chapter may be omitted since they offer nothing

of interest to the child.

For the interpretation of the main theme of this chapter see introduction pages 19-20 and Chapter VIII. It is to be noted that God's choice of Isaac does not mean that His providence does not extend over Ishmael as well. Not only is Ishmael's life saved but God's promise to Abraham regarding Ishmael is kept as well as His promise regarding Isaac.

**Aim.** The aim in this lesson is practically the same as in Chapter VIII, to inspire faith in God's providential interest in human affairs in general and in Israel's destiny in particular. The child need not understand all the implications of the narrative at the time it is taught him but if it be taught properly the story will make its impression and he will understand them more completely later. God's hearing the voice of Ishmael should suggest to the child the value of prayer and thus influence his immediate life.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** Before beginning the narrative of this story recall to the children, by well directed questions, the previous history of the relations of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael, as we have explained them in Chapter VIII. Then point out the complications which the birth of Isaac introduced since God had promised that Isaac was to be the son to inherit the blessing of Abraham together with the possession of the promised land, and Ishmael, who was now beginning to grow up into the "wild ass of a man" according to the prophecy that had preceded his birth, would dispute this with him. It therefore became necessary for Hagar and Ishmael to be sent away after the birth of Isaac. Inasmuch as the idea of inheritance and the idea of national destiny are too abstract for children, the story must be adapted to their comprehension by putting it on a more personal plane somewhat as follows:

"Now when Hagar saw that God had given a son to Sarah also as the angel had promised and that this son Isaac and not her own Ishmael was the one to whom God told Abraham he would give the land of Canaan and whose children would be the great Jewish people, she became jealous and hated Sarah very much and even Sarah's little baby Isaac. And Ishmael too, who was now grown up into a big wild boy—you remember the angel had said he would be a wild man when he grew up—also was jealous of Isaac. And Hagar tried to persuade Abraham to give her son part of this land of Canaan that God had promised to Isaac. Now Sarah saw all this and she knew that it would not be good for Isaac to grow up together with this wild and wicked Ishmael and so she told Abraham to send Hagar and her son away to some other country where they could not do any mischief to Isaac whom God had chosen to be the father of the Jewish people."<sup>[4]</sup>

In concluding the story one might interest the child by telling him that there are descendants of Ishmael alive today who like us feel proud to be descended from Abraham, and describing some of the habits of the Bedouin Arabs, their nomadic life, their pastoral occupation similar to that of the patriarchs and also their tribal feuds and not infrequent raids for pillage which still would justify the prophecy, "His hand shall be against every man and every man's hand against him", but one should in justice say that this is not true of the large number of Arabs who have settled in more civilized communities. A picture of Bedouins in modern times would be of interest to the class and help give a sense of reality to the Biblical story.

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## CHAPTER XII

### THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC Genesis 22.1 to 19

**Interpretation.** The story of the *'Akedah*, that is the intended sacrifice of Isaac, represents the supreme test to which Abraham's faith was put. After Ishmael has been sent away and Isaac has been definitely declared to be the son of promise, Abraham is commanded by God to sacrifice Isaac. The test to Abraham's faith is not merely of the willingness to sacrifice sentiment and affection in obedience to God, but this latest command is a direct contradiction of God's previous words to him and yet he obeys.

The story can only be understood fully in the light of the religious customs of Abraham's day, according to which human sacrifice was not uncommon. (See II Kings 3. 27, also 21. 6, 23. 10 and Jeremiah 32. 35.) Viewed in this light God's asking Abraham to sacrifice his son meant nothing which to a contemporary of Abraham would have seemed essentially inconsistent with the divine character. It is God's forbidding the consummation of this act which is the innovation, so that this lesson teaches in a narrative form the same idea which later received its legal formulation in Leviticus 18. 21 and 20. 2-5. The chapter has therefore a twofold message; (1) that to be the elect of God requires of us the willingness to sacrifice any personal desire and even natural affection in obedience to him, and (2) that God's will, to which He claims obedience, is a benevolent one and does not demand or desire human sacrifice.

The idea that God does not desire human sacrifice was a great moral discovery and this narrative in our Bible gives us an interesting illustration of how such new spiritual insights in general are born; namely through the willingness to commit ourselves completely to whatever vision of truth is ours at the time. It was because Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac in accordance with his previous sense of what duty demanded of him, that this new revelation of God's will as opposed to human sacrifice was granted him. Had he, while sharing with his contemporaries the belief in the legitimacy of human sacrifice, hesitated to live up to this idea when it involved suffering for himself, he would never have been given the understanding that God does not desire human sacrifice. Our standards of morality are at all times imperfect, but it is only those who commit themselves without reservation to whatever standard they really hold that are the discoverers of new moral truths.

The part that Isaac played in the incident is but vaguely suggested in the Biblical narrative. The *agadic* elaborations of the story frequently represent Isaac as knowing what fate was intended for him and fully acquiescing in it. That Isaac probably had his misgivings is suggested by the question, "Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" At all events he must have known what Abraham's purpose with regard to him was when he was being bound to the altar and, as the narrative records no protest, the Rabbinic conception of the part Isaac played is not contradictory to the Biblical



story. The teacher is therefore justified in imparting the story in a way which would imply that Isaac lent himself willingly to Abraham's designs regarding him.

[75]

In the substitution of the ram for Isaac one gets a glimpse into the significance of animal sacrifice. It probably meant to the ancients a symbolic expression of the recognition that God had the right to demand the sacrifice of human life in his service and that it was a sign of his love and grace that no such demand was made. It suggests the important role that animal sacrifice played in history in weaning mankind from the habit of human sacrifice.

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson is to make the child feel that as a son of Abraham his love for God should be such that, like Abraham, he should be willing to make any sacrifice that his religion may demand of him. The traditional association of the *shofar* on Rosh ha-Shanah with the Ram of the Akedah suggests that this story may be used to give meaning to the New Year celebration.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** The pathos of this narrative is so deep and intense that many teachers, laboring under the notion so common in our day that children should be reared only on what is cheerful and bright and be kept far from a knowledge of any of the more tragic aspects of life, would like to omit teaching it to children all together. When therefore the curriculum of the school requires them to teach it, they tell the story in as matter of fact a manner as possible and seem anxious to get over it. This is a mistake however, for children have always had a fondness for stories containing something of the tragic, even of the weird and uncanny, as witness the popularity of Little Red Riding Hood, and the story of the Akedah is one which can, by very reason of what to our modern mind appeals as weird, impress its lesson on the child's imagination. To pass over it slightly is to spoil what is undoubtedly the climax of the whole Abraham story and ignore one of the best opportunities of deeply impressing the child with the lesson of faith, obedience and self sacrifice.

[76]

Begin the lesson by speaking of Abraham's love for Isaac, now the only son that was left him and of the hopes he cherished of seeing him grow up to be a great man according to God's promise. Then tell how God resolved to test Abraham's obedience by seeing whether he would be willing to give up that which he loved most if so commanded. Before telling of God's command to sacrifice Isaac remind the child of the prevalent custom of animal sacrifice which he had heard of in connection with Cain and Noah. The fact of the general prevalence of human sacrifice at that time should not be taught the child as it will be impossible for him to comprehend such a practice and as the story only gains in force for him by making God's demand of Abraham appear extraordinary. We need not scruple that we are violating the Biblical moral in this instance, since the Bible's denunciation of human sacrifice is not a moral that the child has need of. A reference to animal sacrifice will therefore suffice to make comprehensible the command to sacrifice Isaac. All the conversation in this story should be quoted in the language of the Bible, not omitting Isaac's pathetic query, "Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" And Abraham's evasive answer, "God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son". In telling how Isaac was bound to the altar emphasize the fact that he did not rebel although he knew now that he was to be the sacrifice, because of his obedience to God and his father and his confidence in them. When telling how the ram was found caught by its horns in the bushes, ask, "How many of you have ever seen a ram's horn?" There will probably be no response. Then show the class a *shofar* or a picture of one and ask, "What is this?" The answer will be "a *shofar*". Then continue; "Well, a *shofar* is the horn of a ram. When we hear the *shofar* blown on Rosh ha-Shanah it should remind us of this ram and of how Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac and Isaac was willing to be sacrificed when God commanded, and we should think of how we, who are sons of Abraham and Isaac, must be willing also to obey God and our parents in everything even if it should be very hard to do so, even if it should cost us our life." In order to make sure that the child has understood the motives of the story the following questions may be asked in reviewing it: 1. When God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, did he really want him to kill his son? 2. Why did God ask Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? 3. When Abraham tied Isaac to the altar did Isaac rebel against his father? When we hear the *shofar* blown on Rosh ha-Shanah what should we think of?

[77]

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## CHAPTER XIII

### DEATH OF SARAH AND THE MARRIAGE OF ISAAC AND REBEKAH Genesis 23 and 24

**Interpretation.** The incident of the purchase of the Cave of Machpelah need be mentioned only casually in connection with the death of Sarah as the political questions involved in the dialogue between the *Bene Heth* and Abraham are beyond the child's comprehension.<sup>[5]</sup>

The care exercised in the selection of a wife for Isaac from his own kindred rather than from the daughters of Canaan emphasizes again the interest of Providence in selecting the stock out of which the Chosen People was to come. Abraham's servant—presumably Eliezer, who is mentioned in Genesis 15.2—was not permitted to take Isaac out of Canaan as that would have been equivalent to a desertion of his historic mission which was connected with the Promised Land. Significant are the qualifications of the ideal wife for Isaac suggested in the prayer of Eliezer—kindness and hospitality.

**Aim.** The value of this lesson to the child, apart from its connection with the more general theme of God's selection of the seed from which the Chosen People is to spring, lies in the example of faith in God and fidelity to his trust exhibited by Abraham's servant, and of the kindness and consideration shown by Rebekah, which the child's sympathy with the characters of the story would naturally lead him to imitate.

[79]

**Suggestions to the teacher.** By following the Biblical narrative closely, you will have little difficulty in imparting it to the child. When telling of the death of Sarah, dwell on her virtues a while and then explain Abraham's concern that his son Isaac should have just such a wife as Sarah had been, one that would be worthy to be the mother of the great nation God had promised would be descended from Isaac. Then relate how, not finding such a wife among his neighbors, Abraham sent to the land from which he and Sarah had come. Explain Abraham's refusal to let Isaac go to Mesopotamia because God had told

Abraham to leave that place and had promised that in Canaan he would make of his seed a great nation. Emphasize the length and difficulty of the journey, pointing out the route on the map if the children are old enough to interpret a map.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SALE OF THE BIRTHRIGHT Genesis 25.1 to 34

**Interpretation.** (Chapter 25. 1 to 10 may be omitted as containing nothing of interest to children, except that Abraham's death and burial should be mentioned.)

The story of Jacob and Esau in their contention for the birthright and the blessing is one that is frequently misunderstood. The tendency to idealize the forefathers of the race has lead many teachers to attempt to justify the conduct of Jacob in his efforts to secure the birthright and the blessing, totally ignoring the fact that all the wretched consequences which followed naturally upon his attempt would seem to indicate that God did not approve. What these consequences were will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Other teachers sin in the opposite direction and make out Esau to be the innocent victim of Jacob's cunning and avarice. How they can reconcile this with the choice of Jacob to be the patriarch rather than Esau, how they can conceive that God's will could confirm the act of Jacob and the hand of Providence be, so to speak, forced into blessing Jacob though Esau was the more worthy of blessing, is difficult to understand. The mistake common to both these versions of the Biblical meaning of the story is that they look at it mainly as a character study of two contrasting types, whereas the moral of the story lies not so much in the characters as in the incidents, which, when given closer attention, reveal the fact that the motive underlying the whole story is not the personal contest between Jacob and Esau but the carrying out of God's plan, contained in his promise to Abraham, the plan of bringing into existence the people to whom He was to reveal Himself. And this idea is brought out, as in the story of Abraham's relation to Ishmael and Isaac, by contrasting the purposes of the human agents with God's purpose and showing how God's purpose is made to triumph by His so shaping the incidents of Jacob's life that they correct Jacob's original misconception of his mission.

[81]

Let us see how the incidents in this chapter cast light on our theme. Note in the first instance the prophecy contained in Genesis 25.23 which indicates in advance that Jacob and not Esau was intended from the beginning to be the heir of the blessing of Abraham. Note also that the prophecy speaks of "two nations" and "two peoples", showing distinctly that the events of the narrative were shaped by God with a view to subsequent history not merely to the lives of Jacob and Esau as individuals. The very fact that "the elder shall serve the younger" is to give emphasis to the divine election of Jacob, for, according to the law and custom of those days, the elder was entitled to the obedience and service of the younger. Had Jacob been the older of the two brothers his subsequent preeminence and that of his descendants would have seemed but part of the natural course of events and would not have argued divine election, but with Esau the first born the subsequent elevation of Jacob does so argue.

This, as well as much else in the story, becomes clearer to us if we understand what was meant by the birthright. In patriarchal times, the father was absolute ruler over his descendants. At his death, the oldest son took his place and inherited as even in later times, twice as large a portion of the estate as any of his other sons. (See Deuteronomy 21.17.) But this is not all that was involved in the birthright. If it were all, Jacob's desire for it would have been mere avarice and ambition and would have justified that total condemnation which many a teacher has given him. But we must remember that the first born was also the religious head of the tribe. (See Numbers 3.45.) It was therefore most natural for Jacob to assume that God's promise to Abraham, with all its spiritual implications, naturally went with the birthright.

[82]

Now let us examine the characters as they appear in this chapter. Esau is not the consummate villain that he is so frequently depicted as being in later Jewish *agada*. But on the other hand, he is not the injured hero. The story characterizes him as a skilful hunter, interested in his woodcraft, and caring little about either the privileges or the responsibilities of his birthright. To Jacob however the inheritance of the blessing of Abraham was important, perhaps a knowledge of the prophecy that had preceded his birth making it even more so. Esau had forfeited his moral right to the blessing through his failure to appreciate it. Not too much stress must be laid on Esau's words "Behold I am at the point to die and what profit shall the birthright do to me?" as these are to be regarded not as a statement of sober fact but as the exaggeration of a hungry man, for the Bible takes pains to explain Esau's attitude in the words, "And he did eat and drink and rose up and went his way. So Esau *despised his birthright*", showing that he was at the time perfectly satisfied with the bargain he had made. This takes from Jacob the stigma of having forced the bargain on Esau when the latter could not help himself. He merely took advantage of Esau's contempt for the birthright, which was sufficient evidence that he was not worthy to possess it. At the same time, Jacob's employing these means to secure the birthright does not seem, as will appear more clearly in later chapters, to meet the divine approval, because (1) this attempt to wrest the birthright from Esau through taking advantage of Esau's weakness in itself argues a lack of complete confidence in the realization of God's promise, in other words, a lack of that quality of *temimut*, of naive acceptance of God's will, which was so conspicuous a trait of Abraham's character, and (2) because he does not fully understand the spiritual character of his mission inasmuch as he regards its realization as dependent upon the legal status of the birthright, which he could, so he thought, secure by purchase.

[83]

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson is to teach the general truth that a privilege which is not appreciated becomes forfeit, and the particular truth that to be a Jew is to possess such a privilege, which we must learn to appreciate.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** Before beginning the narrative of this chapter itself, prepare the way by questions that will bring out the fact of the election of Abraham and his descendants and the choice that God exercised in selecting from among his descendants only those properly qualified. Such questions are the following; "Do you remember, when we were learning about Abraham and about how God told him to

leave his land and go to the land that He would show him, that God made Abraham a promise? What was that promise? (Note: The answer must include the idea that his descendants would be a great nation, a blessing to all the world, and would inherit Canaan.) When our father Abraham died, did this blessing go to both his children, to Ishmael and to Isaac? To whom did the blessing belong?"

[84]

After having thus prepared the way proceed as follows:

"Now Isaac and Rebekah also had two children. The first born or older was called Esau and the younger Jacob, and it was known that only one of the two was to inherit the blessing, but for a long time it was not known which one."

Then contrast the two characters emphasizing the physical prowess of Esau, which won him the more universal admiration and the preference of his father with the quiet thoughtfulness of Jacob. In order to impress the child, the contrast must be given largely in terms of their physical appearance. We continue the narrative as a teacher might tell it in class:

"These two sons, Esau and Jacob, were very different one from the other. Esau was a big strong man, rough and hairy in appearance, who delighted in all sorts of sport and exercise, especially in hunting. People admired him for his great strength and skill and most of them thought that surely this big, strong man was the one whom God had chosen to be the father of His people. And Isaac himself loved Esau more than he did Jacob, because, now that Isaac was growing old, Esau used to hunt food for him in the forest and would tell him wonderful stories of his strength and skill in catching the deer and other game that he prepared for him for food. But Jacob was very different. He was not above the average man in strength and he had no particular skill in hunting as had Esau. He was a quiet man, who used to sit for hours in his tent, while his flocks were pasturing nearby and think about the things he had learned from his father and mother and from his grandfather Abraham, about how God had made the world, and about how he had told Abraham to leave his country and go to a new land, and, above all, about the promise that God had given to Abraham to make of his descendants a great people. Which of these two sons of Isaac and Rebekah had God chosen to become the father of the Jewish people? Most people, no doubt, thought at the time that Esau was meant, because he was the stronger and more successful in the hunt, but there was one person who thought differently, and that was the mother of these two young men, Rebekah. For she remembered a prophecy that God had told her before either of the two children were born, and this prophecy said, 'Two nations will come from thee and two peoples will be born of thee and one will be stronger than the other, but the elder will serve the younger'."

[85]

The prophecy is introduced here rather than at the beginning of the story because it is well to stimulate the child's curiosity as to which of the two is to receive the blessing of Abraham before giving him any hint as to the answer. By thus beginning with a statement of the question, the child's attention is at once directed to the central theme of the narrative without which the incident of the sale of the birthright is not comprehensible. But now one comes face to face with the subject of the birthright itself. Explain, that beside Esau's strength and skill, there was another reason why people thought that Esau was to be the chosen son, and that is because he was the older, for it was the custom in those days that the oldest son enjoyed what was known as the birthright. The idea of the birthright can be explained by saying that in the days of which we are speaking the father used to be the king over all his children and their families and servants, that he used to lead them in war and judge all their disputes in time of peace, and that he was also their priest, who used to perform the sacrifices for them and lead them in their prayers and hymns to God, but that, when the father died, the oldest son got all these rights and this right of the oldest son to become priest and king after the death of the father is known as the birthright.

[86]

After the child has a clear idea of the meaning of the birthright, tell how Jacob thought that the one who had the birthright was he whom God meant to make the head of the great nation he had told Abraham about, since whoever had the birthright would be king and priest over all the others after Isaac's death. I continue the narrative as the teacher might tell it:

"So Jacob kept thinking to himself, 'If only I had the birthright! If only I had the birthright!' but Esau, who had the birthright, seemed to care very little about it. So long as there was game enough in the forest to keep him busy hunting, he bothered his head very little about what he would do when, on Isaac's death, he would have to rule the people and lead them in the service of God, and the promise made to Abraham that some day his descendants would become a great nation concerned him even less, for he thought only of the affairs of the day and to the future he gave no thought at all."

This brings us to the climax of the narrative, the actual sale of the birthright. It must be told in such a way that the child understands the point that Esau lost his birthright because he did not know how to appreciate it, and that, as a universal proposition, a privilege not appreciated is lost. This can best be done if, before telling the story of the sale of the birthright, one presents a hypothetical case somewhat as follows:

[87]

"Suppose, children, that a man owned a very valuable book which he wanted to leave when he died to one of his two children, and suppose that one of his children was a great lover of books and the other did not care even to look at a book or to take the trouble to learn to read, which of the two children do you think ought to have had the book after the father's death? Of course, the one who knew the value of the book and how to appreciate it, because we only deserve what we know how to appreciate. Now who do you think should have had the birthright, Esau, who did not care about being the father of the great people God had promised to make of Abraham's descendants, or Jacob who did care? (Answer: Jacob.) Well, Jacob thought so too and so he began planning how he might get Esau to give up the birthright to him."

In quoting the dialogue between Esau and Jacob, paraphrase Esau's words in verse 32 so as to make it perfectly clear that they are an expression of contempt for the birthright, "I am so hungry I could die. What do I care for the birthright!"

After having told the story question the children with a view to seeing whether they understand its leading ideas. The following are suggestive questions:

What promise did God make to Abraham and to Isaac?

Was this promise meant for both of Isaac's children?

Which of Isaac's children do you think God wanted to have the promised blessing? Why? (Note: If the

[88]

child gives the wrong answer, the teacher must ask a number of leading questions until the right answer is secured.)

What does birthright mean? Who had the birthright at the beginning of our story? Did Esau care very much for the birthright? Did Jacob want it? Why did Jacob want it? What did Jacob do to get the birthright?

This lesson lends itself easily to dramatization by the children. (See Introduction, page 31.)

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## CHAPTER XV

### JACOB SECURES THE BLESSING Genesis 26.1 to 28.9

**Interpretation.** In the first part of this lesson which deals with the life of Isaac, Genesis 26.3 is significant as emphasizing the idea of Palestine as a chosen land, an idea which is the more significant because it suggests that Jacob's flight from the land implied that he had somehow forfeited God's favor and that his flight was in reality a form of exile imposed on him as a punishment and discipline. Verses 7 to 12 must necessarily be omitted. Their general significance is the same as that of Genesis 20. Isaac's patience and forbearance in the matter of the wells suggests comparison with Abraham in his relations to Lot.

With regard to the incident of Jacob's securing the blessing, we have already in the last chapter discussed the significance of the main theme of this story. A few new elements, however, enter into it here. One of these is the blindness of Isaac, which, by making him more dependent upon Esau, keeps him from realizing Jacob's superior qualifications for becoming heir to the blessing of Abraham. Another new element that enters into the story is Esau's marrying the two Hittite women "who were a bitterness of spirit to Isaac and Rebekah". This gives an additional motive for Rebekah's action in trying to secure the birthright to Jacob, since Rebekah would otherwise, at the death of Isaac, become subject to Esau and his wives. It moreover gives emphasis to the fact that Esau was not to be the father of the chosen seed, since, in the case of all of the patriarchs care is exercised that their wives shall likewise be of chosen seed, of the same stock which produced the patriarchs themselves. Genesis 27.33 is significant, particularly the words, "yea, and he shall be blessed", as implying Isaac's recognition that, though the blessing was secured to Jacob by a deception, it was still an indication of God's purpose, and that he had hitherto been mistaken in wanting to confer the blessing on Esau. The same thought is implied in his assenting to Rebekah's suggestion that Jacob seek a wife from her kindred and in his repeating on that occasion the blessing, "May he give thee the blessing of Abraham", etc. As we have already explained, this does not mean that the Bible approves of the deception practiced by Rebekah and Jacob. Quite the contrary. The one immediate effect is that Rebekah has to lose Jacob; that Jacob, instead of entering immediately into possession of the land and the birthright, is a fugitive and an exile; that, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, Rebekah's hope for Jacob's speedy return is not fulfilled; and that as will likewise appear later, there is great danger of Jacob's remaining in Aramea and totally forgetting his destiny until Providence forces him to remember.

[90]

The circumstances related in this narrative as we have explained them are significant by reason of what they have to teach us with regard to Israel's mission as the chosen people. In the first place, there is implied the idea, which we have frequently pointed out before, that God's purpose with regard to his people is not fully realized by them. This is shown in our lesson by the fact that the patriarchs are represented as acting in a way which would tend to defeat God's purpose regarding them, as, for instance, when Isaac almost gives the blessing to Esau and when Jacob, through the means he chooses to secure the blessing, is compelled to flee from the Promised Land which he was to inherit. This is a very important corrective to that arrogance which faith in divine election is likely to bring with it, for it contradicts the assumption that the Jewish people is infallible. There is, moreover, implied in this story the idea that when Israel does not rightly conceive its mission, it must be taught through the discipline of hardship and suffering, as in the case of Jacob, that election does not mean immunity from punishment but, on the contrary, stricter accountability, as expressed by Amos, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities". (Amos 3.2.)

[91]

**Aim.** The child will not be expected to grasp all the implications of this narrative, but neither will they all escape him, and if the story is well told, without any undue idealization of the characters or distortion of the narrative for the sake of reading a moral into it, the story will impress itself on him sufficiently to gain added meaning as he reverts to it in later years. It is a mistake to imagine that a moral which is not formulated is of necessity not learned.

For the child's immediate benefit, however, it is well to emphasize the punishment of Jacob's deception in order to inculcate the ideal of truthfulness. But great care must be exercised in order not to make Jacob so unsympathetic that Esau becomes the hero of the story, for this would distort the Biblical moral and give rise to a misunderstanding of it which the pupil is not likely to correct in later life. It must always be made plain that Jacob had a right to want and expect the blessing, but that he should have trusted God to give it to him and should not have tried to get it through deception.

[92]

**Suggestions to the teacher.** Inasmuch as the moral of this story is dependent on an understanding of the motives on which the characters act, take particular pains to make your dramatic impersonation of the characters as realistic as possible and not to delay the movement of the plot by lengthy moralizing. This story, like the preceding one of the sale of the birthright, lends itself very well to dramatization by the class, and the success of the children in assuming the roles of the different characters will be an excellent test of your success in imparting the story.

Though one should avoid moralizing in such a way as would interrupt the thread of the narrative, the very complexity of the motives of the characters gives a good opportunity to ask such questions as would necessitate the exercise of moral judgment on the part of the class, as for instance: Was Jacob right in trying to get the blessing from his father by taking advantage of his blindness? Was Jacob punished for

having deceived his father? How? etc. But though the teacher may raise these questions, they must not be left open questions. The Biblical moral must be kept clearly in mind and convincingly presented; otherwise such questions merely develop a casuistical attitude on the part of the class, which is morally bad.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### JACOB'S DREAM Genesis 28.10-22

**Interpretation.** The story of Jacob's dream, in order to be clearly understood, should be considered in connection with the rest of Jacob's life. His life may be divided into three periods. During the first period, spent in his father's home, he endeavors by his own efforts, partly through unscrupulous means, to secure the birthright and blessing, with the result that instead of having the preeminence over Esau he must flee before him, instead of inheriting the Promised Land he is an exile from it, and instead of becoming the father of a great people he becomes subject to the tribe which his grandfather Abraham had been commanded to leave.

The second period of Jacob's life embraces his abode in Aramea. During this period, his early ambitions become more and more remote and unreal. First love, then the raising of his family and hard labor in the service of Laban draw his mind from his earlier ambitions, and it is with reference to this period that we are told, "A wandering Aramean was my father". (Deuteronomy 26.5.) But just when it would seem that the hope with regard to his future, which he had tried at first in vain to realize and had then almost abandoned, was wholly lost, God intervenes to send him once more to his land.

The third period of his life finds him in undisputed possession of the land, the prophecy of his youth fulfilled, though in a way very different from his youthful anticipations of its fulfillment.

[94]

Now Jacob's dream at Beth El is significant by reason of its position at the beginning of the second period in his life, during which he increasingly forgets his mission. It is intended to inform the reader that, though Jacob might forget, God would not and that, though Jacob's blundering devices could not secure him the birthright and blessing, God could secure them to him even when he despaired of them.

**Aim.** The aim of this story should be to impress the child with a sense of the watchful providence of God over our forefathers and us, and with the desire to express appreciation of this divine guardianship in worship. This story affords an excellent occasion for urging upon children the saying of a prayer on going to bed and on rising, in this way showing an opportunity for the child's application of the lesson in his daily life.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** Begin by contrasting the comfortable feeling of the child when he goes to bed in his own room, in his own bed, with his mother to pull the blanket over him and all the family nearby, with the way he would feel if night overtook him in a lonely wilderness with no one near except perhaps wild beasts, and he had to lie down on the ground with a stone for a pillow. After this description, give the point of the story you wish to teach, as follows: "And yet even if you would have to sleep alone in the wilderness, you would not be really alone, for God is always with us and sees us even though we do not see Him, and takes care of us, as the story I am going to tell you will show."

Then proceed with the story of Jacob, emphasizing his despairing mood when he leaves Beer Sheba, his fear of Esau, his grief at parting from his parents and home, his disappointment at having to leave the land God had promised to Abraham and Isaac and the sense of having failed after all to secure the birthright, together with the physical dangers and terrors of the wilderness. Then tell how Jacob lay down in the wilderness to sleep, and how God, who had been watching him all the time and took pity on him, sent him a beautiful dream to comfort him. God's promise in verses 13, 14, 15 should be quoted in Biblical language, as should also Jacob's exclamation "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not ... this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven". Jacob's conduct in setting the place aside for worship and his vow should also receive notice. The significance of the name Beth El should be taught the children and its location pointed out on the map.

[95]

When the story has been told and repeated by the class, ask, "How many of you, when you go to bed or when you get up in the morning think of how, while you are asleep, God watches over you and takes care that nothing bad should happen to you? Do you say any prayer to God when you go to bed or when you get up to show that you know He takes care of you and thank Him for it? What do you say when you go to bed? When you get up?" Several children should be questioned on this as each child who does say his prayers will want to be given a hearing and should be encouraged. The children might be asked to memorize in Hebrew and English the verse *וַיִּשָׁן וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ לֹא הָיָה יִשְׂרָאֵל שׁוֹמֵר* "Behold, He that keepeth Israel doth neither sl sleep" and be asked to make it a part of their night prayer.

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## CHAPTER XVII

### JACOB IN ARAMEA Genesis 29.1 to 31.54

**Interpretation.** The general significance of this period in Jacob's life has already been discussed. Note that when, after completing his term of service for Leah and Rachel, he thinks of returning to his home, the suggestion of a new contract with Laban satisfies him and he remains, so remote is now the thought of the birthright to him. And yet through persistent, persevering labor he does attain to a certain measure of power and influence and to patriarchal dignity. It is interesting to note the poetic justice which makes him during this period of his life the victim of just that sort of deceit which he had himself

practised. Nevertheless in spite of the deceit practised upon him by Laban, Jacob remains scrupulously true to his side of the contract and serves the additional seven years for Rachel although he might have been tempted to shirk, as he had been paid in advance. (See Genesis 29.27 to 30.) To be sure he has no scruples about taking the full advantage of his superior mastery of the shepherd's art in his dealings with Laban, but he was certainly under no obligations to him after the treatment he had received from him. One naturally omits in teaching this lesson to children, Genesis 29.31 to 30.24, except that the pupils should be taught the names of Jacob's children because of their significance as heads of the tribes. The incident of the theft of the *teraphim* may also be omitted because the absence of positive knowledge as to what the *teraphim* were and what part they played in the religious life of our ancestors prevents us from doing justice to this episode.

[97]

**Aim.** This lesson, together with the ones that precede and follow it, is well calculated to impress on the child the superior advantage of honest, faithful labor over craftiness and deceit. This was already taught negatively in the preceding lessons through the failure of Jacob to attain his ends by deception. It is taught in this lesson both negatively and positively; negatively by Jacob's being made to feel what it means to be deceived, and positively by the fact that when Jacob, notwithstanding the deceit practiced on him, continues to render faithful service, he is finally given the opportunity to return and claim the birthright. The idea of truthfulness is further enforced by God's example in redeeming His promise to Jacob at Beth El.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** Before beginning this lesson review briefly the preceding, emphasizing the change in Jacob's attitude since his dream at Beth El, particularly his resolution not to attempt to secure the birthright through his own cunning but to rely on God's promise and to try to live aright in the present, trusting God as to the future. The incident of Jacob's lifting the stone from the well to assist Rachel in watering the flock should be given due emphasis as children of this age are interested in feats of strength. The romantic aspect of Jacob's love for Rachel need not be emphasized as this is lost on the child. In telling of Jacob's service as shepherd to Laban, attempt to give the child an idea of what a shepherd's work actually was, how it exposed him to all kinds of weather, how he had to protect his sheep against wild beasts, how he had to draw water for them, to shear them, etc., so that Jacob's serving Laban for all these years shall have some meaning to them. As children have very peculiar ideas of the length of time, try to give some conception of how long a time seven years is by asking one of the children how old he is and then explaining that seven years is probably longer than all the time that he can remember. Explain also how the time seemed shorter to Jacob because of his happiness in being with Rachel by a reference to the child's own experience of how quickly time flies when he is enjoying himself at play. To emphasize Jacob's perseverance tell of Laban's deception, then ask, "Now if you had worked hard for a thing for seven long years and then were cheated out of it, how would you feel about it?" Then point out the moral somewhat as follows:

[98]

"Jacob too felt very angry and did not at all like to work seven more years for what should rightly have been given him then. But no doubt the thought came to him, after all, was I any better than Laban? Did I not deceive my father Isaac into giving me the blessing when he wanted to give it to Esau, just as Laban has deceived me? Maybe this is God's way of punishing me. I must be patient and work another seven years as I have promised Laban even though it will be hard and unpleasant, and then maybe God will let me go back home and bless me as He has promised."

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### JACOB RETURNS TO CANAAN Genesis 32 to 35

**Interpretation.** Note the significant contrast between Jacob's leaving Canaan and his return. When he left, he was nominally and in his own esteem the possessor of the birthright and the blessing, which he had secured through his own effort and which he thought entitled him to possession of Canaan and the preeminence over Esau. Actually, however, he had gained nothing, and was a fugitive before Esau and an exile from the land. On his return, he makes no demands whatever, acknowledges Esau as sovereign, is ready to pay him tribute and to placate him with gifts, and prays to God only for deliverance from Esau's vengeance. And yet we find him at the end of this episode, by reason of his victory over Shechem and of Esau's departure to Seir, in actual possession of the Promised Land and a recognized ruler of a now important clan.

Before entering on his more illustrious destiny, however, he must be put to the test and atone for the desertion of his mission in his flight from the land in consequence of his efforts to wrest the birthright and the blessing from Esau. This test is indicated by his struggle with the angel on the very border of the Promised Land, a struggle from which he does not escape unscathed. Just what the Biblical author wished to express by this struggle of Jacob with the angel it is difficult to say. It is sometimes interpreted by teachers and preachers as an allegorical representation of a purely subjective struggle in Jacob's heart, but such an explanation is extremely far-fetched. The episode suggests comparison with the incident recorded in Exodus 4. 24-26 and seems to imply that consecration to any high task involves exposing oneself to danger, if, in any way, one is not thoroughly qualified for the task. So long as Moses has not taken upon himself the task of leading the children of Israel from Egypt his failure to circumcize his children can be overlooked, but once he has assumed that task, he is threatened with death for his failure to do so. Similarly, when Jacob is about to enter into the land promised in his father's blessing and confirmed in the vision at Beth El, he too finds himself face to face with a divinely commissioned opponent. His victory over the angel is symbolic of his success in finally qualifying for his mission as is implied in the change of his name to Israel with the explanation of its significance, "For thou hast striven with God and with men and hast prevailed". Inasmuch as there is not mentioned here any struggle with "men", the thought is suggested that this victory is an omen of the future success of the chosen people, while the shrinking of Jacob's thigh sinew suggests that this success is not to be won without suffering and sacrifice, an interpretation frequently found in the Midrash. This representation of the experience of

[100]

a nation in terms of that of an individual who is the nation's founder is much more in keeping with the spirit of Biblical literature than the allegorical representation of abstract truths in terms of historic or biographical events. Note in this connection Hosea 12. 3-5; "The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways, according to his doings will He recompense him. In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and by his strength he strove with a god-like being; so he strove with an angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him: At Beth El he would find him and there he would speak with us". The meaning of these verses is obscure but it is evident that the prophet makes Jacob's experience typical of Israel's as a people.

[101]

**Aim.** There is in this lesson, as in almost all those that deal with the patriarchs, a remote aim and an immediate one. The remote aim is the impression which the incidents recorded will make upon the pupil when they are brought back to his mind in later years. The moral of the story in this connection is that the election of Israel is not determined by the inherent superiority of our people, but by God's purpose with regard to them and mankind, which purpose He accomplishes by so shaping their history that it instructs and disciplines them through struggle and achievement and reveals His will with regard to them and their place in the world. But this moral is too abstract and complex for the child and must only be kept in mind by the teacher in order that he should not teach the lesson in such a way as would later becloud the true meaning of the story, as, for example, would be the case if he made Jacob throughout his whole life the ideal religious hero. The immediate lesson that the child can be taught to derive from the story is that humble trust in God and obedience to His will can achieve for us what a cunning that does not scruple at deceit cannot achieve.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** Begin this lesson by reminding the class of the promise God had made to Jacob at Beth El. Then announce that you are going to tell how God kept this promise. But before doing so, question the children further as to why Jacob had to flee from Canaan if God wanted him to return and rule over it. Question until you bring out the point that Jacob had not used the proper means to get the birthright and blessing. Illustrate by analogy with the child's own experience the idea that, because Jacob had attempted to secure the birthright and blessing by wrong means, he had to be deprived of them until he finally learned the proper means on which to rely, namely faith in God. This thought might be illustrated as follows:

[102]

Suppose a teacher promised a reward to a child if he would write a composition about something the class had been taught in its lesson, and this child copied his composition from a book, thinking that in this way he would get the reward without having to work for it. What would the teacher do, accept the composition? No, she would make him write it again in his own words, and then, perhaps, if he had done it *in the right way*, the teacher might give the reward to him. So God had indeed promised that Isaac's son would one day become the father of a great people in the land of Canaan, and he meant Jacob to become such, but because Jacob tried to bring this about *in the wrong way*, by deceiving his father and Esau, he could not at once be made the head of this people in Canaan. So Jacob had to leave the land that had been promised to him and work hard those twenty years that he was with Laban, and suffer from Laban's meanness to him in order that he might learn that if he wanted God's blessing he must be patient and obedient and work honestly and then God would give him His blessing.

Then tell the story, emphasizing Jacob's submission to Esau and the humility of his prayer to God. The latter can best be brought out by quoting the prayer in the language of the Bible. (Genesis 32. 10 to 13.) In describing Jacob's wrestling with the angel do not read a far-fetched moral into it. Merely explain that God sent an angel to wrestle with Jacob and that if Jacob could make the angel bless him that would be the sign that he was strong enough and great enough and good enough to be the father of the Jewish people. The blessing of the angel should be given in direct discourse. In teaching the change of name from Jacob to Israel, call attention to the fact that we Jews are sometimes called Children of Israel or Israelites because we are all descended from Israel.

[103]

Do not fail to record Esau's departure to Mount Seir, leaving Jacob in possession of the promised land, and Jacob's fulfillment of his vow at Beth El. Whenever recalling anything from a previous lesson as in this instance Jacob's vow, try to get the children to tell it to you rather than tell it yourself. Say for example, "So we have seen how God kept His promise to Jacob to be with him when he was away from his land, and to bring him back home in safety, and to give to him and to his descendants the land of Canaan, but do any of you remember the promise that Jacob made when he awoke after that wonderful dream?" etc.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### JOSEPH SOLD INTO SLAVERY Genesis 37

**Interpretation.** In the narratives dealing with the history of the patriarchs, we have constantly emphasized that the point of view of the Biblical author regarded their lives as significant not so much as personal history, but rather as a preparation for Israel's national existence. In the story of Joseph this point of view is still discernible, though the chief interest has been transferred to the personal history of Joseph. It is discernible in that Joseph's being sold into Egypt and the settling of his father and brothers in Goshen are conceived not as fortuitous circumstances but as part of a divine plan which had already been revealed to Abraham. (Genesis 15. 13.) Still the main interest is, as we have said, in the personal career of Joseph. This narrative is preeminently a story. It is not a story with a moral, but a story abounding in morals. Perhaps the most important from the point of view of the child is that which might be summed up in the words of the psalmist, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalms 133. 1.) This is taught negatively in the first part of the story and affirmatively in the last. But such ideas as the danger of unjust discrimination on the part of parents, the evil of tale-bearing and boastfulness, the value of honest, faithful service, the nobility of resistance to temptation under the most trying circumstances, and the beauty of forgiveness and reconciliation are only a few of the many other morals taught by this story. The portion of Joseph's life that is covered by

[105]

this chapter shows how Jacob's partiality to Joseph created hostility between him and his brothers by arousing in them envy and in him a certain vanity and sense of superiority. These characteristics of Joseph at this period of his life are not given any attention by most Jewish school teachers because of the tendency to idealize all Biblical heroes, thus overlooking the obvious significance of Genesis 37. 2, but the story only gains in meaning when we see at the end how completely Joseph had outlived all such pettiness as is here ascribed to him.

There is some ambiguity in the Hebrew text as to one essential point of the story, namely as to who sold Joseph. The verses in question read:

25. And they sat down to eat bread; and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites came from Gilead....

26. And Judah said unto his brethren: What profit is it if we slay our brother....

27. Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites.... And his brethren hearkened unto him.

28. And there passed by Midianites, merchantmen, and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they brought Joseph into Egypt....

36. And the Midianites<sup>[6]</sup> sold him to Egypt.

From verse 28, taken by itself, it would seem that not Joseph's brothers but the Midianites drew Joseph from the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites, and this theory is actually maintained by some, who point out that not only would the traditional interpretation require a change of subject in the middle of the verse, which is not otherwise indicated, but it would imply the identification of Ishmaelites and Midianites, which is untenable inasmuch as Midian was a son of Abraham and Keturah and Ishmael the son of Abraham and Hagar. (Genesis 25. 1 and 2.)

[106]

But this view is also not without its difficulties, and, in my opinion, the traditional interpretation of the verses is to be preferred. For verses 26 to 27 indicate clearly that Judah's plan to sell Joseph met with the approval of his brothers and we should surely expect some expression of disappointment on their part if in the end their plan had miscarried. The change of subject in verse 28 which the traditional interpretation would require need not trouble us as such change of subject is not very unusual in the Bible. (See for instance Genesis 14. 19 to 20, 15. 13, 22. 7.) As for the identification of Midianites with Ishmaelites the fact is that racial names sometimes are extended to include other related races whom history has brought into close contact. The descendants of Hagar and Keturah are thus classed together in Genesis 25.6. Ibn Ezra, in his commentary to our passage, calls attention furthermore to the fact that this same identification of Midianites and Ishmaelites is made in Judges 8.24 where Gideon, after a victory over the Midianites, says, "'I would make a request of you, that ye would give me every man the ear-rings of his spoil.' For they had had golden ear-rings, *because they were Ishmaelites.*" The reading Medianites in verse 36 may be a scribal error for Midianites or vice versa, as the only difference is in the omission or insertion of a *yod*.

[107]

**Aim.** The aim in teaching this lesson should be to create in the child, through his sympathetic understanding of the motives that underly the action of the story, an appreciation of those moral ideals which we have shown to be contained in it.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** The story of Joseph is one which no teacher ought have any great difficulty in imparting to children, for it is a natural favorite with them. They like it because its ideas are simple and come, for the most part, within the range of a child's experience. The attitude of Joseph's brothers to him is not dissimilar to the resentment that children display at any indication of favoritism on the part of a teacher, a resentment which is invariably visited on "teacher's pet". The story appeals to them also because of the rapidity of its movement, the constant shifting of scenes and incidents, each making a new bid for their attention, and the heroic nature of the action, in which the motives of the characters whether good or evil reveal themselves not in mere thoughts and words but in deeds.

There could be no greater mistake, therefore, than to deprive the story of all its force through interrupting the flow of the narrative by tedious moralizing. The Biblical story does not stop to moralize, yet the moral is clear enough, and so it will be to the class if the teacher tells his tale with the proper feeling and spirit.

But the teacher must be cautioned, on the other hand, not to take for granted the child's comprehension unaided of even so simple a story as this. Any addition of details inserted into the narrative with a view to helping the child visualize the incidents told is always in order. In telling of how Joseph was lowered into the pit, speak of his ineffectual cries and struggles to escape, for, though children have good imaginations, they have not had enough experience out of which their imagination could reconstruct the whole situation from a mere hint or two. Similarly such words as pit or caravan need descriptive epithets or phrases to bring them before the child's eye. Moreover, the motives of the characters must be made clear by a casual reference to analogous experiences of the child, as for instance:

[108]

"Now, when his brothers saw that Joseph was better loved by his father than the rest of them they became very angry at him and instead of trying to win their father's love for themselves also, they tried to get even with Joseph, just as I have sometimes seen boys at school get angry at a classmate of theirs and do all sorts of mischief to him just because the teacher gave him higher marks than the others who were not so successful with their lessons."

But all such comparisons must be made only in a casual way and in as few words as possible lest they divert the mind of the child from the main trend of the narrative. One should not forget for this lesson the usefulness of pictures as helping to visualize the story, and there are many good illustrations of this story to be had. A still greater assistance in impressing this lesson is that obtained by permitting the children to dramatize it and act it, for this necessitates their comprehension of the motives of the characters.



## FROM SLAVE TO VICEROY Genesis 39.1 to 41.46

**Interpretation.** There are no surer tests of character than transplantation to a strange country without hope of return and degradation to a lower social stratum without hope of rising. For a great part of our moral strength comes from the consciousness that the eyes of others interested in our life are on us, that we dare not disappoint their expectations of us, and that our acts affect their happiness and honor. The person who finds himself alone in a strange land from which he does not expect to return and from which he does not expect rumors of his deeds to reach his former associates must have an iron character to maintain his loyalty to the moral standards of his earlier environment in the face of new temptations. And particularly is this true if, at the same time as he is transplanted into a strange land, he finds his social status also reduced. For the ambition to rise in his new environment, to achieve success and recognition there, might be sufficient incentive for some "to scorn delights and live laborious days", but for the enslaved in a new land this incentive also is lacking. Both these tests of character Joseph had to meet and he met them successfully. Arrived in Egypt, he wastes no time brooding over his wrongs but sets to work diligently at his tasks in such a way as to win him the confidence of his master. This confidence he will not abuse even under the most seductive of temptations and even though his fidelity to principle results in the very loss of his master's confidence in him and in his consequent confinement in the royal prison. Note that what keeps Joseph pure is the sense of responsibility not only to Potiphar, but, in the first instance, to God, so that the very fact which might lead others to sin, namely the fact that Potiphar could not know of his misdeeds, fortifies him against sin. "He refused and said unto his master's wife, 'Behold, my master, having me, knoweth not what is in the house and he hath put all that he hath into my hand; he is not greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, *and sin against God?*'" In prison he shows the same qualities with the same result of winning the confidence of people.

[110]

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson is to inspire the child with the example of Joseph's patience, cheerfulness and faithfulness under difficulties, all of which qualities were influenced by his trust in God.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** The suggestions made in the preceding chapter apply to this one as well. Help the child to visualize the narrative and to make more explicit the feelings and motives of the characters. Discuss, for instance, the loneliness of Joseph in this strange land, far from his home and all that he loved, and contrast with his early dreams of rulership his present status as a slave. Try to give the child some idea of what slavery means, not by a definition but by telling the different kinds of work that Joseph had to do for his master in field and home without any pay or fixed hours of rest and labor, and subject to unreasonable demands of task masters, etc. Then point out that, though many people under such circumstances would waste their time grumbling, Joseph trusted that God would help him and made up his mind to do the best work that he could.

[111]

The incident of Joseph's temptation by Potiphar's wife can, of course, be told only in general terms, the teacher relating how Potiphar's wife, who was a very wicked woman, wanted Joseph to help her do something that was wrong, and he refused. His refusal should be given in direct discourse and follow the general line of thought of Genesis 39.8 to 9, keeping as much of the Biblical language as possible. When Joseph is cast into prison the teacher must again help the child realize emotionally what it meant for Joseph, after all his faithful service of Potiphar, to be thrown into prison as the very result of his fidelity and teach the pupil to admire Joseph's resolution to make the best of this situation too by patient and cheerful bearing and sympathetic interest in the other prisoners. It is also well to make the child realize the sharp contrasts of which there are so many in this story and which greatly enhance its interest. When the king's butler, released from prison, also forgets Joseph and Joseph's one hope of escape seems doomed to complete disappointment, God provides the opportunity not only for his escape but for his elevation to the vice-royalty. This can be further emphasized by suggesting something of the pomp and circumstance of Pharaoh's court. I say suggesting, because the teacher should never indulge in pure description, which is always a bore to children. An occasional descriptive adjective or phrase can do the work quite as well. The narration of such incidents as the removal of Joseph's prison clothes and his being attired in fine linen before gaining admittance into the royal presence goes far to emphasize the desired contrast between prison and palace. So too the new dignity conferred on Joseph is made clearer to the child by telling him how the king gave Joseph his ring and necklace and made him ride in the chariot next his own while all the people bowed before him than by the description of his new official duties. The story might be summarized and the moral pointed out in a brief statement such as "So the Hebrew slave boy, through his faithfulness and trust in God, became the highest in rank of all of Pharaoh's subjects".

[112]

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## CHAPTER XXI

### JOSEPH MEETS HIS BROTHERS Genesis 41.47 to 42.38

**Interpretation.** In this chapter of the Joseph narrative we find that Providence has put Joseph's brothers completely in his hand; their physical sustenance is dependent on his providing them with corn, they are strangers in Egypt while he is the prime minister of Pharaoh's court, and, moreover, by reason of his Egyptian dress and speech and the change which the twenty years have made in his appearance—he was but seventeen when he was sold—they cannot recognize him and are therefore thrown altogether off their guard as to any designs of vengeance that he may cherish. The interest therefore centers on the attitude that Joseph would assume toward them.

As the Bible merely tells us what Joseph said or did but not what he thought, we are left to construe his motives from his deeds and words. Accordingly, it would seem that Joseph is at first in doubt, so he plans to detain his brothers in prison for a time on the charge of being spies, feeling that their actions under such an accusation might give some clue as to how he should treat them, and hoping perhaps that the

evil of their lot might possibly suggest the evil that they had done him. His first proposition is that one of them go back and bring Benjamin, whom he is particularly anxious to see, but he finally decides to let all but one return. He is not disappointed in the thought that their affliction might suggest their sin, as is seen from the dialogue in Genesis 42.21,22, which also gives him the information that Reuben had espoused his cause. He therefore selects as his hostage not Reuben the eldest but Simeon the next eldest. Meanwhile, he shows his real benevolent intent by giving them the corn and secretly returning the money. But even this gives alarm to Jacob and his other sons as seeming to be but a pretext for further charges.

[114]

**Aim.** The main object of this lesson is to prepare a way for the next with its moral of the beauty of forgiveness. It contains however also a fine study of conscience in that the misfortune of Joseph's brothers revives at once the memory of their sin and brings it to their minds in its proper colors.

**Suggestions.** Begin by recalling Joseph's dreams to see whether the class remembers them and their significance. Then call attention to the thought of Joseph's brothers that they were putting an end to his dreams in selling him to the Ishmaelites. "And yet", you continue, "today's lesson will show how God really brought about the realization of Joseph's dreams." This will excite the curiosity of the children and you can then proceed with the story of the famine and its effect. Make the famine appear as a providential circumstance and explain its meaning by saying that God, after the seven years of plenty did not let enough rain fall to water the corn and wheat, which shriveled up so that the people had no flour to bake bread, and there was not enough grass to feed the cattle so that they had not enough meat, etc. The term famine will then not be a mere abstraction to the child.

At the point where Joseph meets his brothers and they do not recognize him but he recognizes them, show how the dream has been already in part fulfilled although Joseph's brothers did not realize it. The chief difficulty of the teacher will be to make the children clearly understand the motives of Joseph's conduct towards his brothers, which is the most important thing in the lesson. This can be facilitated by questioning the children in a way that would necessitate their imagining themselves in Joseph's situation. For instance, one might speak to them as follows:

[115]

"Now when Joseph saw his brothers bowing down before him, he remembered how cruel they had been to him, and he thought of how wonderfully God had brought about the fulfillment of his dreams so that now he had his brothers in his power and could punish them in whatever way he would, for no one would question the acts of a viceroy of Pharaoh toward a band of strangers whom nobody in Egypt cared about. If he wanted to, he could have ordered them all to be killed, as they had thought of doing to him; or he could have sold them all as slaves, as they had actually sold him; or he could have put them all in prison, as he had been kept in prison in Egypt for so long a time; or he could have simply refused to sell them grain and they would have died of starvation. Now what do you think you would have done, had you been in Joseph's place?"

Get a number of different answers from the class. In all likelihood, the answers will propose some severe punishment. Then give a number of reasons why Joseph rejected these severer penalties, such as, 1. because his brothers were, after all, his brothers and we should love our brothers, 2. because their punishment would hurt his father Jacob and his younger brother Benjamin who were innocent, 3. because it would affect the families of his brothers as well as themselves, 4. because they might have changed since then and become better and felt sorry for their treatment of him, 5. because, if he could find some way of showing them how wickedly they had acted and how good he nevertheless was to them, it might make them feel ashamed and resolve to be better. "But," continue your narrative, "though Joseph did not want to hurt his brothers, he did want them to feel sorry for what they had done to him, so that they would never do such a thing again. So he thought 'I am not going to tell them at once that I am Joseph their brother and that I forgive them, but, without doing them any harm, I am going to frighten them with threats and see whether, when they themselves are in trouble, they won't think of the sin they did and feel sorry for it'". It is necessary to explain the motive for Simeon's detention as being to insure the return of the brothers with Benjamin.

[116]

In questioning the class about the lesson, try to find out whether the children understand its underlying ideas by such questions as these: How was it that Joseph recognized his brothers and they could not recognize him? Why did not Joseph at once make himself known to his brothers? Why did Joseph speak harshly to them and accuse them of being spies? Did Joseph's brothers know that he understood them when they spoke to each other? Why not? What is a spy? When Joseph's brothers thought that they would be treated as spies, for what deed did they think this a punishment? Why did Joseph keep Simeon prisoner? Why did Joseph return the money of his brothers? What did his brothers think was his reason for returning it? Why did not Jacob want to let Benjamin go with his brothers to Egypt? It goes without saying that one must tell the story in such a way that it shall contain a clear answer to each of the above questions.

This episode has a great dramatic interest and should be acted by the children.

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## CHAPTER XII

### JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS BROTHERS Genesis 43.1 to 45.28

**Interpretation.** Little need be said in interpretation of this story. Its lesson of the beauty of forgiveness and reconciliation is brought out so clearly as to need no further comment. In the attitude of his brothers to Benjamin, Joseph is able to put to the test any possible change of heart toward himself. The favor which he shows Benjamin at the meal that he had prepared for them may be considered as a test of whether the spirit of envy is still rife among them, and, inasmuch as they do not seem to manifest any jealousy on this occasion, they may be considered to have passed this first test. But the real test came when Joseph proposed to retain Benjamin as his slave. On this occasion Judah, the very one who had proposed selling Joseph, makes his eloquent plea in behalf of Benjamin, a speech which reveals his

deep sympathy with his father's grief, and appreciation of what the loss of Joseph meant to his father, and the willingness to sacrifice his own liberty for Joseph's brother Benjamin, who had, as the son of Rachel, taken Joseph's place in the heart of Jacob. Joseph could wish no further evidence of his brothers' change of heart and it is no wonder that he "could not refrain himself" any longer.

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson is to provide a noble example of the magnanimity of forgiveness and the beauty of filial and fraternal love.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** The story of Joseph as told in the Bible is so wonderfully impressive in its simplicity for the child as well as for the adult that the only advice one feels inclined to give to the teacher of this story is that he should model his narrative as closely as possible upon the lines of the Biblical story itself. Read and reread these chapters of the Bible and try to discover the means by which the Biblical author produces his effects on the reader's emotions. Do not permit to escape you the pathos of such situations as when Jacob reproaches his sons for having told of their brother Benjamin's existence as though they could have foreseen what would follow this disclosure; or when Joseph, brought face to face with Benjamin, cannot control his feelings and withdraws to another room to weep; or when his brothers, conscious of their innocence, offer to give their lives if the divining cup be found in their sacks and then to their consternation find it in the sack of Benjamin; or when Judah, in pleading with Joseph, mentions the effect of the loss of Joseph upon Jacob; or when the brothers bring the news to Jacob of Joseph's glory and he refuses to believe it until he is given incontrovertible proof; and a number of similar situations to which it might be possible to call attention. After the preparation for this climax which the preceding lessons afforded, the teacher who has made himself fully at home with his subject will have no difficulty in impressing the child. In this story, it is particularly important to report all conversation in direct discourse.

[118]

Suggestive questions to ask the children are the following: Why did not Jacob want to let Benjamin go with his brothers? Why did they refuse to go without him? Why did Jacob finally let them go? Why did Joseph give Benjamin a larger portion than the others at the banquet? Why did Joseph put his cup in the sack of Benjamin? Why was it Judah in particular of all Joseph's brothers who pleaded for Benjamin? Why do you think Joseph sent all the Egyptians from the room when he made himself known to his brothers? When his brothers were afraid that Joseph would punish them for their sin against him and were ashamed of what they had done, what did Joseph say to console them? What did Jacob say when they told him that Joseph was alive and ruler of all Egypt under Pharaoh?

[119]

This story too lends itself to dramatization by the children.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DEATH OF JACOB AND OF JOSEPH Genesis 46.1 to 50.26

**Interpretation.** In these chapters the center of interest once more shifts from personal biography to the destiny of Israel as a people. One is conscious throughout that his attention is being called to the close of one period and the beginning of another. The patriarchal period now draws to an end and the period of national existence commences. God's purpose is no more to be shown in the choice of individuals, but in his dealings with the people as a whole. It is not accident that Israel's national life is to begin in Egypt rather than in its own land; for just as Abraham, the father of the race, was tested by his willingness to leave his home in obedience to God, so the nation as a whole was to have a similar experience. It had to be made to realize its election by being taken as "a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and by wonders and by war and by a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors". (Deuteronomy 4. 34.) In these chapters we see the beginning of the fulfillment of Abraham's prophetic vision recorded in Genesis 15. 12-16.

Let us see how the ideas stated in the above paragraph are conveyed in the chapters under our consideration. Observe first Jacob's apprehensive reluctance about going to Egypt, which needs the assurance from God, "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again." (Genesis 46.3, 4.) Jacob before he dies reminds Joseph of God's promise given to him at Beth El in anticipation of the exodus from Egypt, "God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto me: Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a company of peoples; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession." (Genesis 48.3,4.) We may regard Jacob's insistence on being buried in Canaan as implying the same idea. His blessing to his children and grandchildren further bears out this thought and Joseph's instructions with regard to the disposal of his own body show most clearly that the sojourn in Egypt was not intended to be permanent, though, as is seen from Joseph's words to his brothers (Genesis 50.19, 20), it was divinely appointed.

[121]

But though, as we have just shown, the main interest of these chapters is from the point of view of Israel's destiny, they are not lacking in the personal interest as well. There is a sublime pathos in Jacob's humble acceptance of the divine decree which makes him, after life long struggle, end his days in a strange land, with those ambitions that he had cherished throughout life still depending on a remote future after his death for their realization. In his meeting with Pharaoh, he maintains well his patriarchal dignity. But he shows no sense of triumph in the honors accorded him and his retrospective glance over his life reveals to him little that is not disappointing; "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life and they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojournings." (Genesis 47.9.) Pathetic also is the reference of Jacob, when about to bless the sons of Joseph, to the death of Rachel, which had taken place so many years ago, as if the thought of Joseph's prosperity awakened anew his grief that Rachel had not lived to see it: "And as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died unto me in the land of Canaan in the way when there was still some way to come unto Ephrath; and I buried her there in the way to Ephrath—the same is Beth-lehem." (Genesis 48.7.) Yet he preserves his patriarchal authority over his children and grandchildren to the last, blessing Ephraim above Menassah, and not failing in his blessings to his children to recall their past sins as warnings for

[122]

the future. The devotion of his children to him and the renewed relations of affection between Joseph and his brothers complete the picture of the ideal patriarchal family where love and reverence and a common faith are the ties that bind the units together.

Genesis 47.13 to 26 is interesting in the light of what we know of Egyptian history from other sources than the Bible. The Pharaoh at the time of Joseph was, it is generally agreed, one of the Hyksos dynasty, which belonged to a Semitic tribe that had conquered Egypt. The land before that time had been held in a sort of feudal tenure by some of the old nobility. These gave constant trouble, particularly in the south, to the Hyksos rulers. Joseph's policy therefore was aimed at securing a centralization of power in the hands of Pharaoh through his obtaining all the land and reducing all others except the priests to the status of tenants. This concentration of power in the hands of a single monarch, intolerable as it would be in a modern state, was often in ancient times the very best means of securing that measure of peace from constant strife between petty principalities which was an absolute prerequisite of progress and civilization. Of course the child is not interested in such problems and this whole incident should be omitted, but it is well for the teacher to bear these truths in mind lest his modern political and economic theories prejudice him against the character of Joseph.

[123]

**Aim.** There are two aims which the teacher should bear in mind in this lesson, one relating to the historic interest we have shown it to contain and the other to the personal interest. In accord with the former the teacher must give to the child those historical and religious ideas contained in this chapter which summarize the significance of the patriarchal period and prepare the way for their next year's work, namely the idea of how God was making a great nation of Jews in accordance with his promise to the patriarchs by permitting them to multiply in Egypt, at the same time reminding them that they were not to become Egyptians but would one day be brought back to their land. But the aspect of the lesson that can impress itself most readily on the children is the more personal one with its picture of the ideal family life as a sort of final tableau to the drama of Joseph that they have been learning. Of particular value is the example of reverence for parents which it holds before them.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** The most valuable help that the teacher can get in teaching this lesson also comes from the study of the Biblical story itself. Note that in the Bible although it is made clear that the settlement in Egypt was brought about in accordance with a divine plan for the development of the chosen people, this is nowhere stated in abstract terms but we are allowed to infer it from the words and acts of the characters and the events as they shape themselves. In teaching children, who have no power of forming abstract notions, no other method is possible. It is necessary, however, for this very reason to take more pains to make the meaning of the words and acts of the characters clear to the child. Thus in speaking of God's appearing to Jacob at Beer-sheba with his reassuring message, one must first state what the Bible leaves to our own power of inference, Jacob's reluctance to go to Egypt and the reason for his reluctance. One might say for example:

[124]

"So Jacob made ready to leave Canaan and go to meet his son Joseph, whom he so longed to see once more. And yet, in spite of his anxiety to meet Joseph, he felt sorry to leave this land of Canaan where he was born, where his father and mother and his dear wife Rachel were buried, and where God had promised him that his children would become a great nation. Perhaps he also felt sorry because he remembered hearing of a prophecy that God had told to Abraham, saying that his descendants would become slaves to a strange people in a strange land, and he thought "Maybe now my children will be made slaves in Egypt." But that night as he slept God sent a dream to cheer him. He dreamt he heard God speak to him and say "—etc.

Again, when telling of Joseph's going to meet his father, emphasize the love that made him hasten to welcome the patriarch and the pride with which he introduced his aged father to King Pharaoh, as well as the solicitude for his father's and brothers' comfort implied in the preparations for their reception in Goshen, the most fertile part of Egypt, in the delta of the Nile.

[125]

In speaking of the desire of Jacob and Joseph to be buried in Canaan, explain the reason to be their wanting to remind their descendants of God's promise to bring them out of Egypt to their own land, Canaan. In telling of Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Menassah, it is not necessary to touch upon the preference given to Ephraim as this is only significant in the light of the subsequent history of the tribes and, by the time the child gets to that part of the history, he will have forgotten this incident since there is nothing in it intrinsically interesting to children, but do not ignore Genesis 48.20, "And he blessed them that day saying: 'By thee shall Israel bless, saying: God make thee as Ephraim and as Menassah.'" In this way it is possible to establish a point of contact between the child's home life and the lesson by pointing out to him that these very words are part of the blessing with which his parents bless him on the Sabbath. This will serve to make him realize that he is one of the people whose history he is learning. It would also be well to ask how many children say *Ha-mal'ak ha-go'el* in their night prayers and to explain that this is part of Jacob's blessing to Ephraim and Menassah. (Genesis 48.16.)

Help the children visualize the imposing funeral rights in connection with the burial of Jacob as showing the honor paid to him by the Egyptians as well as by his own children. They should be given some idea from the map of the length of the journey and the route taken. Do not take for granted the children's comprehension of the renewal of the fear of Joseph's brothers after their father's death, but explain that they thought perhaps Joseph had failed to punish them until then merely in order to spare his father, but that after his father's burial he would have no more scruples, just as Esau refrained from killing Jacob while his father lived but threatened to do so after his death.

[126]

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## PART II

### ISRAEL UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF MOSES

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# CHAPTER I

## THE BIRTH OF MOSES

### Exodus 1.1 to 2.10

**Interpretation.** The children of Israel, settled in the rich pasture land of Goshen, had become a numerous people. At first they prospered, but then there came a change with the accession to the throne of the "Pharaoh who knew not Joseph." This Pharaoh was, in all probability, not only of a different dynasty, but also of a different race from the Pharaoh of Joseph's day. The Pharaoh of Joseph's day was probably a descendant of the Hyksos invaders of Egypt, a Semitic tribe of shepherds like the Israelites. The true Egyptians, however, who were an agricultural people, and held shepherds in abomination, perhaps because many of their practices conflicted with the religious notions of the Egyptians, which included the worship of sacred cattle (see Exodus 8.22), finally overthrew this Semitic dynasty. As a consequence, the Israelites were looked upon with suspicion and hatred as a dangerous element in the state. The very services that they had rendered to the old dynasty would now be held against them by the new, and instead of being a favored race, they came to be looked upon, in spite of their long sojourn in Egypt, as alien and hostile, and were subjected to persecution and oppression. Persecution, at first took the form of enforced labor in the erection of the public works of the Pharaohs but when the Israelites seemed to thrive in spite of this, resort was had to the drastic measure of murdering every male infant. At this point, the Biblical story shows us how Providence prepared redemption for Israel by sparing the life of the infant who was destined to become the liberator. Of the general religious significance of the Egyptian bondage, as interpreted in the Bible, we have already spoken in preceding chapters. [128]

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson is three-fold, first, to inculcate in the child the ideal expressed in the words, "And a stranger shalt thou not wrong neither shalt thou oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt;" (Exodus 22.20); second, to encourage him to maintain his national Jewish aspirations in the diaspora, as did his fathers in Egypt, and, finally, to inspire him with faith in God's providence, as illustrated by the way in which God saved the infant Moses.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** Begin by recalling the story of Joseph to the class; how the Israelites who settled in Goshen—point out its location on the map—became a numerous people, and enjoyed, for a long time, the favor of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, in gratitude for all that Joseph had done for Egypt at the time of the famine. Then dwell on what the children of Israel, who were, for the most part, simple shepherds, learned from the Egyptians, who were not only skillful farmers, but great builders as well. This can best be done by showing pictures of the Egyptian monuments and pointing to the skill required in order to erect them in an age before the use of steam and electricity was known. "But", the teacher should emphasize, "although the children of Israel learned much from the Egyptians, they did not copy them in everything. In one respect, they were far in advance of the Egyptians,—in their religion. They knew that there was one God, whom they could not see, who made the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them, but the Egyptians worshipped many gods. They had sacred bulls and sacred cows and sacred cats, and even a sacred bug—a kind of beetle. The Israelites in Egypt understood that they were not to become Egyptians, but that God would some day lead them out of Egypt to their own land of Palestine, as He had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So they continued to speak their own language, Hebrew, and to maintain their religion." [129]

Explain how the insistence on keeping up their own religious practices and their own language, and the refusal to join in the worship of the Egyptian gods, aroused the hatred of many of the Egyptians, and paved the way for the edicts of the "new Pharaoh", that "knew not Joseph". This can best be done by reference to modern instances of similar antagonism, which may have come within the range of the child's experience or observation. Speak, for instance, as follows:

"When the Egyptians saw that the children of Israel would not become like them, but kept up their own religion and language, many of them came to dislike the Jews, for there are some people who never like anybody who is very different from themselves. Some of you may know boys who like to tease and annoy Chinese, because of their strange appearance, dress and language, or who are unkind to negroes, merely because they are black, or who like to torment foreign children that cannot speak the English language. You well know that there are some people that are unkind to Jews for no better reason. In this free country nobody would think of doing us any real harm, nor would our laws permit it, but there are some countries where the very laws of the land try to make the life of the Jew unhappy, merely because he is a Jew. Many of you may have heard something about how Jews used to be treated in Russia not so long ago. And that is exactly the way the Egyptians began to feel towards our forefathers, when they saw that they would not worship the gods of the Egyptians, and that they kept up their own religious practices and spoke their own language; and when a new Pharaoh arose who had forgotten all about Joseph and the good he had done to Egypt, a man from an altogether different family than the Pharaoh of Joseph's time and from a different part of the country, the Egyptians began making laws against the Jews. Pharaoh, who particularly hated the Jews, made a law that they should all have to work as slaves in the building of his great treasure cities", etc. [130]

The rest of the story is simple and offers no difficulties to the teacher. The only thing that needs to be emphasized is that, in telling of the birth and rescue of the infant, Moses, the teacher must remember that he is preparing the way for the story of the Exodus and must emphasize that Moses was saved because God meant him to redeem His people, not that his rescue was a lucky accident. He can do this by speaking of God as suggesting the ideas upon which the characters act. For instance, in telling how Miriam saw Pharaoh's daughter take up the basket, one might say, "Then God put a wise thought into the heart of Miriam and she ran up to Pharaoh's daughter and asked", etc. Again, one might say, "Now when Pharaoh's daughter saw the little crying baby God filled her heart with pity for the helpless little infant," and one might conclude the lesson by saying, "In this way God saved the baby, who, when he was grown up into a man, was to deliver his people from the oppression of Pharaoh." [131]

So much for the presentation of the lesson. In discussing it with the class afterwards, do not fail to suggest by suitable questions the duty of maintaining our Jewish practices even in the face of the ridicule and opposition that they sometimes call forth. The application of the story's moral should be given in terms of the child's own experience. For instance, one might say: "When our fathers in Egypt sacrificed to

their God and would not sacrifice to the Egyptian animal gods, did the Egyptians like this? Did the Israelites, when they saw that the Egyptians hated them, because they were different in race, language and religion, give up their language and religion in order to appear like the Egyptians? Do you think the Jewish child today ought to feel ashamed and give up his Jewish religious practices, because his Christian friends may think them strange or may not like them, or may not treat him with as much kindness if he shows that he is a Jew? Sometimes Jewish boys go to school on Jewish holidays, because their Christian friends do not stay at home. Do you think this right? Do you think it right to sing Christian songs in school, because you are afraid not to do so? No teacher will ever force you to sing a song that is Christian if you explain politely that you do not want to do so because your religion forbids it. If you were asked to take part in a Christmas celebration at school, what would you do? If a Christian boy offered you some of his luncheon to eat and you were not sure that what he gave you was *kosher*, what would you do? In those countries where the Jews are treated badly today, merely because they are Jews, as their fathers were treated in Egypt, have they given up their Judaism on that account, or do they still keep it up? What would you do if you lived in one of those countries?"

[132]

Do not, however, dwell too much on anti-Semitism, as it is not morally helpful to the child to feel resentment too keenly. It would be producing the very opposite effect to the one desired if we were to arouse in our pupils a feeling of animosity towards the Gentile. The emphasis must be put wholly on the positive virtue of maintaining religious loyalty in spite of the hostility which it may, at times, arouse.

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## CHAPTER II

### MOSES, THE FRIEND OF THE WEAK AND OPPRESSED Exodus 2.11 to 23

**Interpretation.** The chief interest in the narrative contained in these verses lies in the light they cast on the character of Moses and the traits that made him the ideal emancipator, leader and legislator of his people. The first of these is his sympathy with their suffering and his sense of kinship with them, which leads him, though a prince of Egypt by rank and education, to go out among his brethren and look upon their burdens. The second, is his indignation at anything in the nature of injustice, whether perpetrated by an Egyptian or an Israelite; and, finally, there is shown his chivalrous zeal in the service of the weak and oppressed, which sends him on a mission like that of the ideal knight-errant, "to ride abroad redressing human wrongs", and which even in a strange land, leads him to interfere in the cause of the shepherdesses of Midian against the rude shepherds.

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson is to cultivate in the child, through his admiration of Moses, those traits in Moses' character which we have shown the narrative in these chapters to illustrate.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** Try to bring out the nobility of the course of action that Moses took by calling the attention of the children to other possible courses that he might have taken. Moses, having had wealth and luxury at his disposal, might have given up his life to enjoyment; because of his superior education, he might have looked down with contempt upon his more ignorant brethren and held aloof from associating with them; fearing the reproach of his Hebrew origin, he might have avoided such association for prudential reasons. But he did none of these things. He felt that if he had been so wonderfully saved, and he alone been given advantages that the rest had not received, it was because God intended him to use these for the good of all his people. It is well, in pointing out the courses of conduct open to Moses, to use illustrations from modern life, thus:

[134]

"How many children who receive all they need from their parents and spending-money in addition, think only of spending it on sport and amusement, and never stop to consider the needs of the poor children who have not even food or clothing or a warm room and to share their money with them. But Moses was not like that; although, being brought up as the son of Pharaoh, he might have lived a life of ease, idleness and pleasure, he preferred to go about among his poor brethren and help them with their burdens. Moreover, though Moses had received the best education that an Egyptian could receive in those days, he did not let that make him conceited. No matter how educated or how noble one may be by birth, one should not keep aloof from the lowly and common people. So Moses, though a learned prince, was never too proud to associate with the ignorant slaves, his people."

In teaching of how Moses slew the Egyptian, do not fail to bring out the heroic character of the action by emphasis on the motive of Moses, namely, his violated sense of justice, and on the perils to which he must have known in advance that this act would expose him.

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## CHAPTER III

### GOD SENDS MOSES TO SAVE HIS PEOPLE Exodus 3.1-4.31

**Interpretation.** The time now being ripe for God's fulfilling His covenant to redeem Israel from the bondage of Egypt, He makes His purpose known to Moses and entrusts him with the mission of announcing the redemption to the elders of Israel and demanding it of Pharaoh. But Moses hesitates. He doubts his qualifications for the task, asking, "Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" And God's answer is, "Certainly I will be with thee." But this does not yet satisfy Moses, he wants a guarantee of Divine aid in God's statement, "I am יהוה." For in asking God for his name, Moses was not merely seeking information. There is no space in this book to take up a discussion of the critical questions raised by these verses. The interpretation given by Wiener<sup>[7]</sup> seems the most reasonable. He calls attention to the fact that among primitive people—and the

narratives of the Pentateuch had to be made comprehensible to a primitive people—the name of a person, and, more especially, of a god, was regarded as having certain powers which were conferred upon anyone to whom he revealed his name. When Moses asked for the name of God, it was, therefore, as a sort of positive irrevocable guarantee of success, but God, at this juncture, refuses to say directly, "I am יהוה" and gives the evasive reply, "I am that I am." Then Moses, dissatisfied, declares that the people will not believe him, and God replies by showing him the miracle of the staff turning into a serpent, etc. Still Moses hesitates, pleading lack of eloquence as an excuse for not going, and God promises to inspire his utterances and to commission, also, his brother Aaron, who was eloquent, to assist as his spokesman. The significance of this dialogue of Moses with God is usually explained as contained in what it reveals to us of the characteristic meekness of Moses. It does, indeed, illustrate this conspicuous trait of his character, but if it were the chief aim of the Biblical author to commend the meekness of Moses we should scarcely be prepared for the statement (Exodus 4.14), "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." The main purpose of the Biblical author seems rather to be to emphasize the apparent impossibility of the task which Moses was asked to accomplish in order that the miraculous character of the deliverance be the more evident. It is significant that before Moses goes to speak to Pharaoh, God refuses the revelation of His name, but after he has gone on his mission God does reveal it (Exodus 6.2). It would seem that He resented Moses' refusal to go without a special guarantee. The moral of the narrative is perhaps most clearly brought out in God's rejoinder to Moses, "Who maketh a man dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? is it not I, the Lord?" Exodus 4.11.

[136]

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson should be to inculcate in the child faith in God's power and providence as revealed in Jewish history. The teacher should endeavor to make the child, through admiration of the heroism of Moses in attempting the apparently impossible in the service of God, feel with deep conviction that in His service, there can be no failure. He should try to get not only the child's intellectual assent to the idea that God can accomplish anything that He purposes, but he should arouse an emotional appreciation of that heroism begotten of faith which leads great men to undertake what would, to others, seem impossible.

[137]

**Suggestions to the teacher.** Inasmuch as we wish to inspire in the child by means of this lesson, a faith in divine providence, we must guard against any attempt at rationalizing the miracles recorded in this and subsequent chapters. It is faith in God's power over nature and His use of this power in the interests of justice and righteousness that this lesson should teach, and no philosophic explanation can bring home this truth to the child so well as the simple, impressive narration of the miracle. A belief in the supernatural and transcendent power of God is essential in Judaism, and the miracle tale is the best means for emphasizing this doctrine. To be sure, it may be necessary at an older age, to modify and deepen one's conception of the miraculous, but the only means by which the child can conceive of God's transcendent power, providentially exercised, is through the simple, straight-forward narrative of miracles He performed. No attempt, for instance, should be made to identify the voice that addressed Moses from the burning bush with the voice of conscience. It must remain an objective voice. God's reply to Moses' inquiry as to His name, "I am that I am," is sometimes made the occasion for the teacher to indulge in an attempt at a philosophical discussion of the nature of God. We have already suggested in our interpretation of the passage that these words were probably never intended to convey such meaning. They are not an answer to the question, "What is Thy name?" but a refusal to answer it, and, therefore, it is not in place to interpret their significance as revealing anything of the nature of God. Apart from this consideration, however, such abstract theological discussion is above the mental power of the child and should always be avoided. It is, therefore, best to teach the verse without any comment, as this by itself tends to preserve the atmosphere of mystery and awe which envelopes the whole episode.

[138]

In telling of the dialogue of God and Moses, the Biblical language can be used almost throughout, and, at any rate, the speeches should be given in direct discourse. Be careful to aid the child to an appreciation of the reason for Moses' hesitation, both because this is necessary to a proper understanding of the character of Moses, and because it prepares the way for a better appreciation of the miracle of the Exodus. For instance, in telling of the call of God to Moses, one might continue somewhat in this wise: "When Moses heard God say, 'Go and I will send thee to Pharaoh, and do thou bring my people, the children of Israel out of Egypt', his heart sank. How could he, one man, and a stranger, go before this cruel and powerful king of a mighty nation, surrounded by courtiers, guards and soldiers, and say to him, 'Let these thousands of slaves who are building your cities go free?' Would Pharaoh pay any attention to him? So Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?'" The teacher can also make the emphasis of the narrative clearer by the questions he asks after the presentation of the lesson, as, for instance: "What did God ask Moses to say to Pharaoh? Do you think Pharaoh would let Israel go just because Moses asked it? Why not? (Draw out the idea that Pharaoh was used to being obeyed, not commanded, and that the slavery of Israel was profitable to him.) Did Moses think that Pharaoh would obey him? What did Moses say to God when God told him to go to Pharaoh? Why did not Moses want to go? How did God answer Moses when Moses said that he was not a good enough speaker?"

[139]

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## CHAPTER IV

### MOSES' FIRST APPEARANCE BEFORE PHARAOH Exodus 4.29 to 6.8

**Interpretation.** The first step that Moses takes seems to contain a promise of success. He and Aaron succeed in interesting the elders of Israel in the prospect of deliverance, but the hope which this initial success raised in the heart of Moses was soon destined to be disappointed, for Pharaoh not only refuses the moderate request of a three days' journey into the wilderness, but also imposes new and impossible burdens upon the Israelites. This has the immediate effect of discrediting Moses and Aaron in the eyes of the people, even in the eyes of the Israelite overseers, who had sought to intercede for their brethren with Pharaoh, and who now reproach Moses and Aaron as the enemies of the people. In utter despair he lays his complaint before God, and at this juncture God vouchsafes to him that revelation of His name,

which He had at first withheld, and assures him of the fulfillment of the covenant with the patriarchs. Moses was not to be discouraged by the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, for even this was but to emphasize the miraculous character of Israel's escape. This is the significance of the verses in Exodus 6.1 and 7.3-5.

**Aim.** The aim of this chapter is the same as that of the preceding. In addition, it should be utilized to teach reverence for the name of God.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** Before beginning this lesson recall by a few questions the main points of the previous lesson, laying especial emphasis on the difficulties of the task Moses was called upon to perform. Then tell how the hopes of Moses were raised by his meeting Aaron, and still more by the reception accorded him by the elders of Israel, who remembered hearing of the prophecy that Israel was to be led out of Egypt and go to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The conversation between Moses and Pharaoh must be given in direct discourse, and in the language of the Bible. The children must be made to realize the dilemma in which the Jewish overseers of the work found themselves, in that they were held accountable for the impossible tasks that they were required to exact from the people. Their petition to Pharaoh and Pharaoh's retort must also be given in direct discourse and in language approaching that of the Bible, but somewhat more explicit, so that the motives are clear to the children, thus: "Now, when the Hebrew overseers of the work saw that they were being brutally beaten because the children of Israel could not do the impossible and make bricks without straw, they thought that they would come before Pharaoh and reason with him; so they came and said: 'Oh king, wherefore dost thou do so to thy servants, no straw is given to thy servants, yet thou sayest to us, see that they make bricks, and when they do not make the number of bricks thou dost require—for they cannot make the same number if they must take the time to gather the straw themselves—the blame is put on us, their overseers, and we are unjustly punished.' Pharaoh would not listen to reason, but grew red in the face with anger and said in a blustering voice, 'You are idle fellows, idle! that is why you look for excuses not to work, saying: Come, let us sacrifice to the Lord! And now, go to your work and straw shall not be given to you and you shall furnish the same number of bricks as before, when the straw was given'."

[141]

[142]

This prepares the way for the explanation of the change in the people's attitude to Moses, as shown in Genesis 5. 21. The words of the overseers to Moses should be paraphrased somewhat, because the children might not understand the figurative language, thus: "May the Lord appear and judge you, for you have given us a bad name with Pharaoh, and instead of keeping your promise to free us from Egypt you have given Pharaoh an excuse to treat us worse than we have ever been treated before." Then proceed to describe the feelings of Moses when he heard these words, how it must have seemed at the time that the goal for which he was striving seemed farther away than ever. Not only had Pharaoh not granted his petition, but the one effect of his pleading was to add to the burdens of the people, which he had sought to relieve, so that his own people now turned against him.

This brings the teacher to the narrative of God's revelation of his name to Moses, the significance of which I explained in the preceding chapter. In teaching it to the child, the chief aim, as already indicated, should be to inspire reverence for the name of God. A second aim should be to impress the child with the greatness of Moses. This can be very easily done by presenting this lesson somewhat as follows: "Then God told Moses His name, His name which he had not told before to any other man, not even to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He had made himself known to them as God Almighty, and by many different names, but His real name he had not told them. This name, children, you have never heard, though you have probably all seen it." (The teacher then lets them open their prayer-books at the  $\text{יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$ , or, if they have no books with them, he has a book ready which he opens at that place. He lets one of the children read the first verse of the  $\text{פְּתִיחָה}$ .) "Now you all know that we read the third word in this verse 'adonoy', but that is not what the four letters of that word יהוה spell, is it? You would expect the word to be spelt יהוה wouldn't you? Well, those four letters that make this third word of the  $\text{אֱדֹנָי}$  spell the name that God told Moses, but we, none of us, say that name. Instead, we say 'adonoy', which means 'The Lord', because it is not respectful to call God by His name."<sup>[8]</sup> The teacher then asks one of the children what his father's name is, his mother's. "When you speak to your father and mother, do you call them by name? What do you call them? When people speak to a king they never call him by name, but they call him, 'Your Majesty.' A judge in a law court is never called by name, he is called, 'Your Honor.' The President of the United States is not addressed by name, he is addressed as 'Mr. President.' This is all done as a mark of honor and respect, and for the same reason we do not call God by His name but speak of Him as the Lord, God, the Eternal, and so forth, in order to show our respect and reverence for God. But when God saw how faithfully Moses had obeyed Him, even though this obedience had brought him nothing but sorrow, He loved Moses so much that He told him His name, to show that He treated Moses as a friend who might call Him by name as friends are used to call each other. He wanted to let Moses feel that it made no difference even if Pharaoh was his enemy, and if the Israelites themselves turned against him, because Moses still had one Friend who would always stand by him, God himself. He told him, therefore, His name, and gave him permission to use it in speaking to the children of Israel that they might all know that God was with him and would help him, and He said, 'I am the Lord; and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name I made Me not known to them'," etc., to the end of verse 9. In discussing the lesson with the children, point out the sinfulness of taking God's name in vain, even as applied to the other names of God beside the tetragrammaton (יהוה).

[143]

[144]

## CHAPTER V

### THE PLAGUES Exodus 6.9 to 10.29

**Interpretation.** The meaning of these chapters is plain. They contain the narrative of that contest between Pharaoh and his court with all their magic devices on the one hand and Moses, armed with the name of God, on the other. The reader should not fail to note the dramatic portrayal of the impotence of blind, tyrannical rage which vacillates between half-hearted concessions that cannot satisfy opposition



and blind fury that merely invites opposition. With the second plague Pharaoh is ready to satisfy Moses' demand, but he remains of this intent only until the plague is removed, then in his apparent security, the habit of tyranny immediately reasserts itself, and he again refuses to let Israel go. With the fourth plague, Pharaoh offers as a compromise that the Israelites may sacrifice to their God in Egypt. This compromise Moses rejects, stating boldly as his reason that such a course would involve slaying the "abomination", *i. e.*, the gods, of the Egyptians, a thing which the Egyptian people would not suffer. Thereupon Pharaoh consents to let the Israelites go, "Only do not go afar off," but with the removal of the plague this concession is again withdrawn. After the seventh plague, Pharaoh, in accordance with the insistent demand of his court, is ready for further concessions. He is ready to permit the men to go, provided they leave the women and children as hostages biding their return. When this concession is rejected, his fury leads him again into a mad defiance. The ninth plague makes him seek once more to appease Moses and Aaron. He is ready now even to let the women and children go, only the cattle must remain in Egypt. But Moses is firm; the cattle were needed for sacrifice. Nothing less than a complete exodus of all the people with their possessions for a three days' journey into the wilderness to worship God on His holy mountain would satisfy Moses. Indeed, he even suggests that the king himself provide animals for the sacrifice. Then Pharaoh in a rage commits his final indiscretion, declaring to Moses and Aaron, "Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in the day thou seest my face thou shalt die." This closes all negotiations between them. Moses accepts his ultimatum. "Thou hast spoken well; I will see thy face again no more." Henceforth, not even a three days' journey into the wilderness will suffice. Pharaoh had pronounced his own sentence, a sentence which the arbitrary and tyrannical always pronounce upon themselves when opposed by the protagonists of reason and justice.

[146]

**Aim.** The aim of this chapter, as of all those leading to the event of the Exodus, is to inspire the child with faith in God's providence as exercised over Israel in particular, and over mankind in general, in the interests of liberty and justice.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** It is sometimes suggested in books on the teaching of Biblical history that the story of the plagues be passed over lightly, without much attention to detail. This would be a mistake. The story of the plagues has a great fascination for young children, the same sort of fascination which the works of fairies and witches in their favorite fairy tales exercise over them. The skillful teacher will make the most of the native interest in the marvelous by employing it to increase the spirit of reverent awe which he must endeavor to associate with the thought of God. In telling each of these plagues, it is not enough to describe what happened, but the teacher must assist in making the child realize what the plagues meant to Egypt. Thus, in teaching the first plague, dwell on how indispensable water is and what distress results if people are deprived of water for any length of time.

[147]

The interest of the children in the plagues must not, however, be merely due to their interest in the marvelous. Endeavor to interest them primarily in the contest between God and Pharaoh. All the conversations between Pharaoh and Moses must be told as nearly as possible in the language of the Bible, so that the child is made to feel the strength of the firm insistence of Moses and the weakness of Pharaoh's vacillating and temporizing attitude. Unless at the end of the lesson the child is filled with admiration for Moses and contempt for Pharaoh, the teacher has not taught the lesson well.

Inasmuch as there are so many allusions to the ten plagues in Jewish and general literature, the child should be taught to remember them in their proper order. This can be done best by naming each plague in a single word or brief phrase, as in the Passover Haggadah, and writing them on the blackboard thus:

[148]

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|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Blood.                   | 6. Boils.                |
| 2. Frogs.                   | 7. Hail.                 |
| 3. Gnats.                   | 8. Locusts.              |
| 4. Flies.                   | 9. Darkness.             |
| 5. Pestilence among cattle. | 10. Death of first-born. |

## CHAPTER VI

### THE EXODUS Exodus 11.1 to 13.16

**Interpretation.** These chapters relate the climax toward which the narrative from the birth of Moses until this point has been leading, the exodus from Egypt. They also contain the laws associated with the commemoration of this event. The narrative begins by telling of God's promise that the next plague would be the last, and His command to the people to prepare for the exodus. Before they were permitted to leave, some expression of their faith in God's deliverance and their readiness to follow His guidance was required; therefore, we have the command to take a lamb on the tenth day of the month, which was to begin their new era, and sacrifice it on the 14th, and eat the flesh of it in family groups on that night, together with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, which thereafter were to serve as symbols of the bondage and of the liberation from it. The blood of this sacrifice, they were to sprinkle on the doorposts of their houses in order to testify by this ritual to their desire to be included in the "Army of the Lord" that was to depart on the morrow, and all who did not testify thus to their adherence to Israel's cause were to meet with the same fate as the Egyptians with whom they had chosen to identify themselves. The Israelites were to eat the lamb while standing with their loins girt and staves in their hands, in readiness for the signal to depart. The rabbis call attention to the fact that the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb in Egypt by the Israelites was a very bold expression of their faith, inasmuch as the sheep was among the sacred animals of Egypt. When Pharaoh suggests to Moses that the Israelites could sacrifice to their God in Egypt, he replies, "Lo, if we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us?" (Exodus 8. 22.) But by this time Pharaoh and Egypt had been so humiliated by the plagues which did not even spare their sacred river Nile, that the Egyptians feared to attack the Israelites, while the children of Israel had recovered their lost confidence in Moses, and in the God in whose name he spoke to them.

[150]

Among the laws and observances associated with the events of this chapter are: 1. The law ordaining the first of Nisan, as the "New Year for months", in commemoration of the inauguration of the new era in Israel's history; 2. the annual sacrifice of the Paschal lamb which was eaten in the family circle together with bitter herbs and unleavened bread to recall the similar observances of the Israelites before leaving Egypt;<sup>[9]</sup> 3. the celebration for seven days<sup>[10]</sup> of the festival of Passover by the previous removal of all leaven and abstention from it during the festival and by the eating of unleavened bread in commemoration of the haste of Israel's departure that did not allow them to make other provision; 4. the duty of narrating these events to one's children, which gave rise to the recital of the Haggadah on the night of Passover; 5. the sanctification of the first-born of cattle and of men in recognition of the providential character of the tenth plague, the latter custom surviving in the practice of "pidyon ha-ben", "the redemption of the first-born", and, 6. the injunction to make of this command "a sign upon thy hand and frontlets between thine eyes" which led to the inclusion of the passage containing these words, and the command to sanctify the first-born among those enclosed in the *tephillin*, thus making them a theme for daily reflection. In addition to these practices, it is noteworthy that the Sabbath and holidays, even those having other historic associations, are characterized in our liturgy as מְצַרִּים לְיִצְיָאֵת זְכָר

[151]

"memorials of the Exodus from Egypt." The multitude of observances that are thus designed to keep us mindful of the Exodus testify to the importance of the leading idea associated with this event for the Jewish people at all times, namely, the identification of the cause of Israel with the cause of God, "And I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God, and ye shall know that I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." (Exodus 6. 7.)

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson should be to make the child conscious of his identity with Israel and of the debt of gratitude and loyalty that this imposes upon him in view of God's redemption of Israel.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** The association of the Exodus with the observance of Passover is the obvious method of establishing a contact between the subject to be taught in this lesson and the Jewish child of today. Nevertheless, it is better not to employ the observances of the Passover as the technical "point of contact" with which to introduce the original presentation of the lesson, as that would delay too long the actual narration, but to use them to introduce the discussion of the topic by the class after the teacher has told his story.

[152]

To introduce the narrative itself a reference to previous lessons is sufficient, as the last few lessons have all anticipated the events told in these chapters. This the teacher can best do by a few introductory questions, as, for instance; "Why did God send the plagues of which we learned in our last lesson against Egypt?" (Draw out the answer that it was not merely to punish the Egyptians but to compel Pharaoh to free the Israelites.) When, after the ninth plague, Moses refused Pharaoh's offer to let the Israelites go on condition that they left their cattle and possessions behind, what did Pharaoh say? How did Moses answer? The teacher then continues:

"When Pharaoh had driven Moses and Aaron from him and told them never to come before him again or he would have them put to death, it was plain that there was no use arguing with him any more. God had given him many chances to change his attitude and let the Israelites go in peace, to serve Him in the wilderness, but Pharaoh would not listen and now God decided to send one more plague upon Egypt, so terrible that Pharaoh would be forced to let the Israelites go."

In telling of the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb and the sprinkling of the blood on the doorposts, guard against leaving the child with the notion that God really required a sign in order to distinguish the Hebrew from the Egyptian house. This can be done by explaining that God wanted to test the faith of the Israelites in the expected exodus by their readiness to make these preparations. The sprinkling of the blood on the doorposts was to be a sign that the inmates of the house wanted it to be considered a Hebrew house, but if they were willing to remain in Egypt and would not trust God to lead them out, they would naturally not make these preparations, and would deserve to be treated like all the other Egyptians.

[153]

Call attention to the change in the attitude of the people to Moses and Aaron since God had shown His power in the plagues, for at first they would not listen to them "for impatience of spirit and for cruel bondage", and now they obeyed the minutest prescriptions of Moses in anticipation of the exodus.

After completing the narrative try to bring home its moral in connection with the celebration of Passover, so that this celebration in its annual recurrence may, by association of ideas, reinforce the lesson you are teaching. Speak to the class somewhat as follows: "Can you imagine how happy our forefathers felt when they received the signal to leave Egypt? Think of what a change it meant to them. No longer would they have to rise up early in the morning, work, work, work all day for Pharaoh, and receive nothing for their labor. No longer would they have a taskmaster standing over them with a whip ready to beat them cruelly if they did not finish the required number of bricks, although they may have been too old or too sick to do so. No longer would they have to do whatever the Egyptians commanded them and have to fear even to sacrifice to their God, lest the Egyptian idol-worshipper might stone them. To be sure, in the wilderness into which they were going, and even in the Promised Land to which God was leading them, they would have to work hard as shepherds and farmers, but they would be tending their own flocks and herds and working on their own farms. Nobody now could order them about, for his selfish purpose, and they could obey and serve their God without interference, could rest on His holy days and could sacrifice when and where they would. Do you not think that if you had lived in Egypt in those days, you would have felt happy and thankful to God and ready always to do His wishes for having brought you forth from slavery to freedom? Would you not feel every year, when the fifteenth of Nisan came, that you would want to celebrate it as a great joyous holiday on which you would thank God for the happy change He brought into your life, and do you not think that if you had children, you would never tire of telling them the story, particularly on the anniversary of the great event so that they, too, should thank God for the freedom that they are permitted to enjoy? Well, that is what our forefathers did. Every year they celebrated the going out of Egypt and they told the story of the departure from Egypt to their children and taught them to celebrate it, and so the observance of this day has been kept up to our own time, and I hope you will one day teach your children to observe it. Can any of you tell me the name of this festival? When our fathers told the story of God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt they tried to have

[154]

everything at hand that would remind them of all that had occurred on that great day. In order to remind them of the lamb that they had slaughtered, they used in olden times to sacrifice a lamb, and they ate it in their family groups just as they had done in Egypt; and later, when sacrifices were no longer offered, they had, as we have today, as a reminder of the same, a roasted bone of a lamb on their table the first two nights of Passover. To remind them of the haste in which they left Egypt without being able to leaven their bread (the teacher must explain the meaning of the word leaven), they made it a law to eat *mazzot* during that festival. Can you tell me of some of the other things on the Seder table on Pesah? (As they are mentioned, let the teacher explain their significance.) When you saw all these things at the Seder table, didn't you always feel like asking what they all meant? How many of you have ever said the *הַמָּחַזְזֵי* on Seder night? Well, that contains a number of such questions. When you were through reading them your father began to read from the Haggadah, did he not? He read the answer, which explains why we celebrate Pesah, and this is the way it begins: 'Slaves were we in the land of Egypt, and the Lord, our God, brought us forth from thence with a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, and if the Holy One, blessed be He, had not brought forth our ancestors from Egypt, we and our children and our children's children might still have continued in bondage to the Pharaohs in Egypt. Therefore, even if we were all great scholars, all men of understanding, all learned in the Torah, it would, nevertheless, be our duty to tell about the departure from Egypt, and the more one tells about the departure from Egypt, the more one is to be praised.'

[155]

The children should be encouraged to discuss very freely the celebration of the Passover, as observed in their own homes, as this is an excellent opportunity of correlating their school instruction with their home life.

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## CHAPTER VII

### ISRAEL AT THE RED SEA

#### Exodus 13.17 to 15.21

**Interpretation.** With this chapter a new period in Jewish history begins, the formative period, during which the unorganized horde of refugees from Egyptian bondage is given the character of a great nation through the providential circumstances of its history and the inspired genius of its leader. The period is one that is replete with miracles. Modern rationalism may attempt to explain them away, and it is quite possible that events which, had we experienced them, we might have ascribed to the operation of natural laws, were felt by our ancestors with their more limited knowledge of nature to be miracles, and were regarded as such. But, however we may represent to our minds the incidents that took place, we must recognize in them the hand of Providence and not merely a historic chance. We may, if we wish, regard the parting of the Red Sea as a tidal phenomenon, the pillar of cloud and flame as a volcanic cloud, but we must, in that case, believe that this tidal phenomenon and this volcanic cloud were designed for the guidance of our people. No teacher who lacks the faith that the various vicissitudes of our people in the wilderness were intended to preserve them and to prepare them for their historic career, as the standard-bearers of the Torah, can fittingly teach this period of our history for, without such a conception, a majority of the events recorded would be meaningless.

[157]

The chapters of this lesson contain experiences and reflections that are typical of the whole period of the wilderness. Note at the outset the explanation for the roundabout route of the Israelites, which states the fundamental reason for this whole period of trial and vicissitudes. They were not to go to the Promised Land by way of Philistia, because that way was too short, and they might have been tempted, at the first rebuff, to return to Egypt, since only that which has been won at the cost of effort and sacrifice can be fully appreciated. The importance of taking this psychological factor into consideration is evident from the conduct of Israel at the Red Sea, when the first obstacle that comes in their way leads them to murmur against the leadership of Moses, and to compare disparagingly their present situation with what had been their lot in Egypt. This is a state of affairs which we find again and again in the history of this period, and it emphasizes the providential character of those events, which could convert this horde of slaves with the stamp of slavery on their hearts into a conquering nation conscious of a great historic mission.

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson is to inspire the child with the belief in God's providence exercised over His people, Israel.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** Begin the lesson by pointing out that God had fulfilled His promise to free the Israelites from Egypt. But where were they to go now? Recall by questions, God's promise to the patriarchs to give Canaan to the Israelites. Recall also Jacob's desire to be buried in Palestine and Joseph's similar request. Then locate Palestine and Egypt on the map, and show by the scale of miles how far apart they are. Observe that if the Israelites could cover twenty miles a day in their journey, it would take them a little more than two weeks to complete the journey. "But," you continue, "God did not lead them directly to the land of Canaan, because the people were not prepared to keep a land of their own." One may use the following illustration to make the reason clear:

[158]

"If one opens the cage of a canary bird that has been born and raised in a cage it will not immediately fly out and away; for some time it will stay in the cage afraid to leave it, then it will timidly go out a little way and if anything frightens it, will hurry back into its cage. Now, the Israelites had been in Egypt like a caged bird. They were not free to go where they would and do what they would. Then all of a sudden they were free. But they were so used always to being told by the Egyptians what they should do, that they were afraid to do things for themselves, and, indeed, did not know how. God knew that if they came to Canaan, and they saw there an army of the Canaanites coming against them to battle, they would be so frightened, that, instead of fighting them boldly and bravely, they would at once go back to Egypt and become slaves to Pharaoh, just as the bird goes back to the cage when it is frightened. God, therefore, decided not to take them at once to their own land, but to lead them in a roundabout way with many turnings and twistings, so that they would not know how to return to Egypt if they wanted to do so." (Show on the map the direct route possible to the Israelites and the actual route that they took.) "And

now I am going to tell you something that happened which will show you how, at the very first difficulty, many of the Israelites wanted to go back to Egypt and how God saved them from their troubles."

[159]

Then tell the story of their wanderings, guided by the pillar of cloud and fire, Pharaoh's pursuit and the crossing of the Red Sea. Lay emphasis on the dilemma which faced the Israelites at the Red Sea, and on their consequent state of mind, which is revealed in Exodus 14.10-12. These complaints should be quoted in the language of the Bible. The children might be required to memorize Moses' reply, which sums up the message of the lesson, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." Read to the class the song of Moses and encourage the memorizing of favorite verses from the song.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### FROM THE RED SEA TO SINAI Exodus 15.22 to 18.27

**Interpretation.** The significance of the events which took place at Marah, in the wilderness of Sin, and at Rephidim is the same as of those recorded in the preceding chapter. The antagonism felt towards Amalek, which made him the arch-type of all Israel's historic foes, is to be explained by the fact that he was the first to go out of his way to oppose Israel, attacking it where it was weak at a time and in a manner which, because of the lack of any obvious provocation, impressed the Israelites as a direct attempt to defeat God's purpose in having brought them from Egypt. This is suggested by the words, "The hand upon the throne of the Lord; the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Exodus 17. 16.) Thus, Ibn Ezra says in his commentary to Exodus 17. 14, "The reason for God's saying, 41 will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek', is because he provoked the Lord, for the dukes of Edom had been terrified with the dread of Him on account of the miracles which He had performed in Egypt and at the Red Sea, and so, too were Moab and Philistia, and behold this Amalek, hearing of the mighty deeds of the Lord in behalf of His people, Israel, came from a distant region to fight with Israel, and dreaded not the Lord, as it is written (Deuteronomy 25. 18), 'and he feared not the Lord.'" The incident of the Israelites being victorious, so long as Moses' hands were raised, is to be explained as the rabbis explain it in the Mishnah (Rosh ha-Shanah III. 8). "Could the hands of Moses in any wise make or break a victory that we are told, 'And it came to pass when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed'? This can only mean to tell us that so long as the Israelites looked upward and subjected their hearts to their Father in heaven, they prevailed, and when not, they fell."

[161]

The visit of Jethro is recorded as a contrast to the preceding episode. Jethro is the type of the "righteous proselyte" who, seeing God's purpose in exalting Israel, seeks to identify himself with Israel's cause.

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson is the same as of the preceding.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** The teaching of this lesson presents no great difficulties, the events narrated being in themselves interesting to children. Try to aid the child in realizing the hardships of wandering through the wilderness by a description of the geographical features of the wilderness, the lack of roads, of water, of food for man and cattle, the fear of wild beasts, and of marauding tribes like Amalek, the lack of housing facilities, etc. Endeavor to make the child realize how the Israelites felt, when contrasting these conditions with those that existed in the fertile Nile valley. This will help them to understand the murmurings against Moses, and what a thankless task it was that Moses had assumed in leading the Israelites. Do not fail to appeal to their hero worship by pointing out the unselfishness of Moses in continuing to lead the people in spite of their ingratitude. In teaching of the double portion of Manna, which they gathered on the eve of the Sabbath, one may associate it with the two loaves of bread used at the Sabbath meal in the child's home. In telling the story of Amalek's attack, it is well to mitigate the harshness of the Biblical injunction to remember what Amalek did to us, by associating with it the moral taught by the following Midrash:

[162]

"To what may the children of Israel (at this juncture) be compared? To a child, who was being carried on his father's shoulders through the street and whenever he saw any object he desired he would say to his father, 'Buy it for me', and his father would buy it for him. This happened once, twice, thrice. While they were proceeding thus, the child saw his father's friend and asked him, 'Have you seen anything of my father?' Thereupon, the father offended, said, 'Fool! you are riding on my shoulders, and whatever you want I provide for you and yet you dare ask this man, "Have you seen anything of my father?'" So what did the father do? He put the child down and refused to carry him any further. Just then a dog came and bit the child. Even such was the conduct of Israel. When they went forth from Egypt, God at once surrounded them with clouds of glory. They desired Manna; the Holy One, blessed be He, gave it them. They desired quail; He gave it them. Whatever they needed, He gave them. Nevertheless, they began to doubt and said, 'Is the Lord among us or not?' (Exodus 17. 7.) Thereupon, the Holy One, be He blessed, said to them, 'As ye live, I shall make it known to you. Behold the dog is coming and will bite you.' And who is the dog? Amalek, as it is said, 'And Amalek came', " etc.

In teaching this and similar lessons, it is important to locate all places on the map, as this gives greater reality to the stories. The association of a legend with a particular place has always had the effect on simple minds of making it appear more worthy of credence, and it is well to utilize this psychological fact in order to give a sense of reliability and reality to the Biblical narrative. To show pictures of the places mentioned, is even more valuable an aid, which should also be applied wherever possible.

[163]

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## CHAPTER IX

### THE REVELATION

## Exodus 19.1 to 20.18

**Interpretation.** The event which is the subject of this lesson is without exception the most important event in Jewish history, and from the point of view of Judaism, in the history of the world. All previous Jewish history leads up to it; all subsequent Jewish history harks back to it. In the story of the Patriarchs, the central theme is the choice of the material out of which that nation is to spring, which will accept the Torah, and commit itself to live for and by it. The central theme of the story of the exodus is the preparation of the people for this event, God's purchasing Israel, to use the Biblical phrase, from his masters, that he might serve God alone. And the central theme of all subsequent Jewish history is the struggle to make the principles of this Torah dominant over Israel and to guard its ideals, and the institutions to which it gave rise against foreign aggression on the one hand, and foreign seduction on the other. The event of the great Revelation is therefore of the utmost significance.

What took place at Mt. Sinai? Something of the awe which set bounds about the mountain that the people dared not break through, must be ours, as we approach this subject. We must realize that an event such as this cannot be recorded in the terms of our daily experience. We can only guess and guess feebly at what the experience meant for our forefathers from the records that they have left us, clothed in all the poetic imagery of our Bible narrative. At Sinai, in the midst of most impressive natural surroundings, thunder, lightning, earthquake, fire and smoke, the people became conscious of God's presence, as they had never been conscious of His presence before. And while thus impressed with the infinite power of the God who had led them out of Egypt that they might worship Him there in the wilderness, they entered into a covenant with Him. Under the inspired guidance of the greatest of all prophets, they were made to realize that this God demanded obedience to law, as the condition of His continuing to be their God and to lead them as His people, whom He had redeemed from Egypt.

[165]

And the content of this revealed covenant is the Decalogue, the most significant moral code in the world's history, which has exercised an influence upon mankind more profound and beneficent than any other. After insisting upon the recognition of the God who redeemed Israel from Egypt as the sole source of all authority and the sole object of worship, and endeavoring to secure the acknowledgment of these claims by enjoining reverence for God's name, this code lays down laws governing all the most important human relations. It insists on the sanctity of the home, both in the tie between husband and wife, and between parent and child. It insists on the sacredness of human life, and guarantees the right of property, which is essential to human development. It demands truth and justice in the administration of law. It concerns itself little with ceremonial forms, but it insists, nevertheless, on the observance of the Sabbath, without which man cannot attain to full human dignity and to the consecration of life but sinks to the level of a beast of burden or an automaton, mechanically securing the means of life with no leisure to contemplate its ends. Nor is the Decalogue merely concerned with man's overt acts, but demands purity of motive, for it condemns covetousness equally with theft and adultery.

[166]

The revelation on Mt. Sinai, meant to the soul of Israel, what the experience of the prophetic call meant to the prophet, when he first heard the voice of God appointing him to a mission of which he had not dreamed before. Israel left Egypt a fugitive horde, it came to Sinai and was there transformed into a great nation, conscious of a historic mission that distinguished it from and exalted it above other peoples, to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19. 6.) Israel has not always been true to this mission, has perhaps never lived up fully to all its implications, but from that time to this Israel has never quite forgotten it, has never lost faith in it.

In emphasizing the significance of the Decalogue, one must, however, not lose sight of the fact that the Ten Commandments were not the only laws that were revealed to Moses on Sinai, and that the Sinaitic covenant involved not merely obedience to the Decalogue, but obedience to all other laws to which Judaism attributes a divine origin. According to tradition many of the oral laws, which are not contained in the Bible, were *halakah lemosheh misinai*, "Laws revealed to Moses on Sinai". Historic criticism may suggest a later origin to most of these and even to many laws in the Pentateuch, but there is nothing in the Biblical narrative that limits revelation to the Decalogue, and, according to Jewish belief, all of the Torah is revealed.

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson should be to inspire the child with reverence for the Law, and faith in its divine origin and authority over him.

[167]

**Suggestions to the teacher.** The teacher may well begin the lesson by calling the child's attention to the reading of the Sefer Torah in the synagogue. Ask whether the Sefer Torah is, in appearance, like any other book, and let the children tell the obvious differences. Inform them of differences of which they are not aware, as for example, that it is always written by hand and on parchment, with ink especially prepared for the purpose, etc. Then continue somewhat as follows:

"Now, do you know why we always treat this book differently from other books, why we take such pains in writing it, why we write it always on strong parchment rather than paper which can tear easily? Why we dress it, so to speak, in velvet or other beautiful coverings? Why we decorate it with silver or gold ornaments? Why we keep it in the most beautiful part of the synagogue? It is because this book is different from all other books. This book contains the word of God, which God himself taught to the people of Israel in ancient times, and which was handed down from father to son until the present time. It contains the history that we have been learning, but it contains much more. It contains laws and commandments that God wants us to keep, and whoever obeys all these laws and commandments is a good Jew. In the lesson that we shall take up today, we shall learn how God began teaching these laws to our fathers, and we shall learn some of the most important of these laws of God, which are so important that all the civilized nations have made them a part of their law."

[168]

The great task of the teacher in this lesson is to create that atmosphere of awe and reverence, with which the Biblical narrative invests the episode of the Revelation. The mere explanation of the meaning of the Ten Commandments is not enough to effect this, because the significance of their content is in large part beyond the child's comprehension, and their form is too abstract to appeal to him emotionally. The point of contact that we have suggested will aid somewhat by associating with the Revelation the reverence that the child sees paid to the Sefer Torah in the synagogue.<sup>[11]</sup> A close following of the Biblical narrative suggests other devices. The people of Israel were to prepare themselves for three days, and the necessity for this preparation kept them in an attitude of conscious suspense and attention. The narrative

of these preparations will have a similar effect. Attempt to arouse the children's curiosity as to what God was going to tell Israel before you begin to tell them the Ten Commandments. Exodus 19. 3-6 should be quoted and explained. The fact that Moses and Aaron were required to set bounds about the mountain beyond which none but he whom God called could pass, also adds to the impressiveness of the occasion, which will not be lost upon the children. Finally, the concomitant disturbances of nature, the thunders, lightnings, quakings, and flame, and thick darkness, and the voice of the Shofar waxing louder and louder, together with the picture of the trembling people at the foot of the mount and Moses going up alone into the "thick darkness where God was" must be told in such graphic terms as to impress them deeply on the imagination of the child. Instead of telling the children the Ten Commandments in the usual conversational tone that you would naturally employ when addressing children, it would be well in this instance to read them the Biblical account from Exodus 19.16 to 20.21, and require that when you come to the actual reading of the Decalogue, the class rise as the congregation does when it is read in the synagogue and remain standing until the reading of the Ten Commandments is completed.

[169]

The children will, of course, understand very little of the meaning of the Ten Commandments from the reading, but they will understand and absorb the reverential attitude of the teacher towards them. After the reading, however, it devolves upon the teacher to explain their significance as far as this can be done to children. Avoid, however, too lengthy and discursive treatment, as the child will be impatient to go on with the story. A more detailed treatment of them should be taken up later in the course, either when the children are taught to translate the Decalogue in their Hebrew work, or in connection with the instruction about the significance of Shabuot, or as part of the work of a Bar Mitzvah, or Confirmation Class, or on several or all of these occasions, but not as a lengthy interruption to the "story" of the Bible in which children in their early years of school are most interested.

The First Commandment can be explained, however, very easily as implying the grateful worship of God by Israel and obedience to all His laws as the first duty of the Jew in view of what God had done for his people in Egypt.

[170]

The Second Commandment need not present any difficulty as the sin and folly of idolatry, the worship of the creature instead of the creator, is easily grasped by children. As the child will not be tempted to idolatry this need not be given much time.

The Third Commandment, however, should receive more attention than it usually does. Nothing is more conducive to that spirit of reverence, which it is the aim of this lesson to cultivate than the conscious avoidance of God's name, except in association with a truly religious thought. Profanity is a common vice of children, as well as of adults. Children, especially during the habit-forming age, should be made to feel that it is a sin and should be avoided.<sup>[12]</sup>

The Fourth Commandment is also of the utmost importance to childhood. As this is not the first time that reference to the Sabbath has been made, the teacher may take a knowledge of the general significance of the Sabbath for granted, and should mainly dwell on the significance of the phrase "to keep it holy" by asking the children what we do to keep the Sabbath holy, i. e., different from other days and devoted to Jewish thoughts. Take occasion to admonish the children not to attend theatres, moving picture shows, etc., on the Sabbath, and urge their attendance at services.

The Fifth Commandment is, of course, the first law of childhood. In discussing it with the children, try to get from them suggestions as to how to honor parents. Encourage such rules of family etiquette as never to contradict father or mother, never to sit in father's or mother's seat at table, always to rise and give either of them a seat if the other chairs in the room are occupied when they come in, and the like.

[171]

The Sixth Commandment needs no prolonged discussion.

The Seventh Commandment must be explained to mean that husband and wife must always be faithful and kind to each other.

The Eighth Commandment needs some discussion, because children are often prone to petty thieving. In the moral code of many children stealing means taking money or objects of great value, but the appropriation of small objects, such as pens, pencils, chalk, etc., does not come under the same category. Moreover, stealing only means taking something from somebody's hand or pocket, and does not include the appropriation of an object which the owner has carelessly left where another might claim it under the law of "Finding's keeping", which, according to the code of childhood, is often held to apply even when the finder knows to whom the object found belongs. The teacher's duty is, therefore, to take this opportunity of enlarging the child's concept of theft and developing his property sense, a sense which is naturally defective in children, since they neither earn nor hold property in their own right. Avoid, however, abstract and purely theoretic discussion and make your point by presenting concrete hypothetical examples for the exercise of their moral judgment, as, for instance:

[172]

"I am sure that none of you would take from anybody money or anything else that you thought of great value, but suppose you saw a little stump of a pencil that a boy had left on his desk, and you just wanted it, or a piece of chalk from the blackboard, or some fruit or candy that you saw in your neighbor's desk, would it be right for you to take it? If you saw some money on the street and you did not know how it came there, would you take it? If you saw some money fall from a man's pocket on the street, would you take it? If you found a pocketbook and when you opened it, saw that it had a card with the owner's name and address on it, what would you do? If you found a pocketbook or some money, or some pencils or books in this school, what would you do, etc.?"

The meaning of the Ninth Commandment must be extended to enjoin truthfulness in general. By methods similar to those used in explaining the Eighth, the teacher must extend the child's concept of lying to include any kind of conscious deception, the silent lie equally with the spoken one.

The Tenth Commandment is a little too subtle and refined for the child's grasp and need not be dwelt on at length. The teacher need only explain that to want to steal, even if we are kept back from stealing because we are afraid of the police, or afraid of our teachers, or of any punishment, is just as wrong as to steal.

# CHAPTER X

## THE GOLDEN CALF Exodus 32.1 to 34.35

**Interpretation.** The people of Israel could not at once rise to the height of that conception of God, which had been revealed to them at Sinai. So long as Moses was with them to tell them the word of the Lord, they found it possible to believe in God, though they did not see Him, for He spoke to them daily through the mouth of His appointed servant, Moses. But Moses had vanished into the thick darkness, and days and weeks had passed without his return. This made it increasingly difficult for them to experience the reality of the invisible God, who had led them from Egypt. They, consequently, demanded some image to which they might look and which might keep them in mind of the object of their adoration. Their intention was not so much to exchange the God who had led them from Egypt for another as to image Him forth as an aid to their devotion. They, no doubt, spoke in good faith when they declared, "This is thy god, O Israel". That they should worship Him in the form of a bull (for the calf must be understood to be the small image of a bull, small by reason of the precious metal employed) is not surprising in view of the common conception of the divinity in that form, both in Egypt and in Canaan. Aaron reluctantly yields to their importunities, and the people rejoice in having a God who can go before them.

But Moses could not yield. To have done so would have meant to have surrendered all that had been gained in a spiritual way by the Exodus and the Revelation. The apostasy of the whole people, which this act threatened, would have rendered his entire mission fruitless. His sense of despair is well conveyed by the Biblical narrative in the incident of the breaking of the tables of stone on which the words of the Decalogue were inscribed. A radical remedy was needed and Moses did not hesitate to apply it. The support which he received from the tribe of Levi was a justification for its claim to be the priestly tribe.

[174]

It is in connection with this event that the character of Moses is shown in its most sublime aspect as the perfect intercessor. His zeal did not hesitate to apply the utmost rigor in punishing the offenders who would not rally to his call, but once the necessary punishment had been administered, his one thought is of his people, how they might still be enabled to fulfill the mission to which they had committed themselves on the day of the Revelation. God suggests destroying the people who had forfeited their claims to redemption and making of the descendants of Moses a chosen people, but Moses, the ideal leader, to whom his charge is dearer than himself, is not satisfied. Rather would he share in the punishment of his guilty people than enjoy a selfish salvation and glory from which they are to be excluded. (Exodus 32.32.) Then God yields to his plea and agrees to let the people return to the land of their fathers and to drive out their enemies from before them in accordance with the terms of the covenant He had made with Israel after the Revelation. There it is said (Exodus 23.20 to 22) "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Take heed of him and hearken unto his voice, be not rebellious against him; for he will not pardon your transgression, for My name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed hearken unto his voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies and an adversary unto thine adversaries." God's reply to Moses, therefore, is (Exodus 32. 33) "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book. And now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee; behold, Mine angel shall go before thee; nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them."... And the Lord spoke unto Moses: "Depart, go up hence, thou and the people that thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt unto the land of which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, saying: 'Unto thy seed will I give it', and I will send an angel before thee and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people; lest I consume thee in the way." (Exodus 33. 1-3.)

[175]

The general significance of angels has been discussed in a previous chapter.<sup>[13]</sup> It is to be noted, however, that the notion prevailed that various nations were presided over by special angels delegated for that purpose. Thus Israel was conceived as having been led out of Egypt through the agency of an angel, who was furthermore entrusted with the task of leading the people to the land of Canaan. But angels, as we have previously shown, were conceived of as not having any discretionary power, and this angel of the covenant was only entrusted with leading Israel to the Land of Promise if the people would be faithful to the covenant. In the case of any infidelity they had been specifically warned "He will not pardon your transgression." With the sin of the golden calf, therefore, Moses at first fears that Israel is totally doomed, but he is reassured by God's statement that the punishment which must come will be meted out to each individual sinner on the "day when I visit" and will not involve the immediate destruction of the whole people; that on the contrary, the angel would continue to lead them to their land. But this no longer satisfies Moses. The sin of the golden calf had convinced him that the people were too weak to live up to the covenant that they had accepted at Sinai, and that if their destiny was to be presided over, as that of other peoples, by an angel, who could not forgive any breach of the covenant, they were sure to be destroyed. He, therefore, pleads for a more intimate relation with God, which would exempt Israel from the operations of the natural law of retribution, by providing for the people's forgiveness in view of the higher tasks that it undertook to perform without apparently possessing higher qualifications. If Israel is merely to be led to the realization of its secular destiny through the conquest of Canaan, but is not to be more closely identified with God's cause, by God's going in their midst, Moses prefers to stay in the wilderness. (Exodus 33. 15.) God's declaring, "I will not go up in the midst of thee", (Exodus 33. 3) although it comes immediately after God's renewal of the promise to send His angel to lead Israel to the land of Canaan, is made the occasion of mourning and repentance. Moses removes his tent, in which he was wont to commune with God, and which was consequently known as the Ohel Moed, "The Tent of Meeting," (see Rashi and Ibn Ezra ad loc.), from the camp, upon the principle, according to Rashi, that מְנַדֵּה לְרַב מְנַדֵּה לְתַלְמִיד "The disciple must have no dealings with one who is under the ban of the master." God refusal to enter the camp of Israel, Moses construes as obligating also his own withdrawal from the camp. Here he pleads with God for a clearer knowledge of His ways that he may be able to lead the people as God had charged him to do. He wants God to make known to him the angel whom He had determined to send with him. It is then that he receives the assurance that he had sought, "My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest." (Exodus 33. 14.) He is further vouchsafed a revelation of

[176]

[177]

God's attributes, which assures him of God's readiness to forgive sin, though not to condone it, (Exodus 34. 6, 7), and is instructed to hew out new tablets for the Decalogue in place of those he had broken. Exodus 33. 22, 23 presents difficulty because of the anthropomorphic terms used with reference to God. The general thought it wishes to express, however, seems to be that nobody can grasp the true personality of God, but can only realize by reflection and, as it were, retrospectively, that he had been in God's presence, can, as the Bible expresses it, only catch a glimpse of His retreating form.

**Aim.** The aim in teaching this chapter should be to arouse in the child an appreciation of the meaning of loyalty and faithfulness, a lesson which is taught negatively by Israel's disloyalty in worshipping the golden calf, and positively by Moses' loyalty in interceding for his people rather than in remaining satisfied with his individual enjoyment of God's favor.

[178]

**Suggestions to the teacher.** There are many lessons with regard to sin and repentance and the attributes of God and other theological topics, which are taught in these chapters, but they are all beyond the comprehension of children. They have, therefore, been excluded from our formulation of the aim in teaching this lesson, and the teacher should omit details of the narrative that do not emphasize the aim of the lesson, however interesting they may be from the adult point of view. Thus the narrative of Exodus 33. 12 to 23 should be omitted, and much of the dialogue between God and Moses as well. Moreover, the whole discussion of the part played by the angel of the covenant and Moses' plea that not an angel but God himself lead the people, though we have dwelt on it at considerable length in our foregoing remarks for the benefit of the teacher, need not be taught to the child.

To connect the lesson with the previous one, begin by asking one of the children to repeat the Second Commandment. Then explain how, in the absence of Moses, the people began to find it difficult to believe in a God whom they could not see, and, recalling the images of the gods they had known, demanded an image of their own God in violation of their pledge to obey the Decalogue. The conduct of Aaron in yielding to their pleas need not be condoned or explained away, as the only extenuation the Bible suggests is the importunity of the popular demand. This, however, the teacher should endeavor to make his pupils realize by telling them how every day the people would come to Aaron and would say to him, "Where is Moses and where is the God who spoke to us, and who, Moses said, would lead us to the land of our forefathers? We want to see Him. Make an image of Him for us." And though Aaron would refuse them, they would come again the next day and the day after, and insist that he make them an image of their God like the idols, to which they were used, until one day Aaron became weary of their demands and told them that if they wanted an image of God, they should bring all their gold and jewels, their earrings, bracelets and rings, out of which he would make them an image.

[179]

Attempt to make the child realize the heinousness of the offense involved in the making of the golden calf, as idolatry is so remote from the child's experience, that he is not likely to be much impressed by the significance of it. Emphasize not merely the disobedience involved in violation of the Second Commandment, but the blasphemy involved in conceiving of God in animal form. The emotional attitude which the teacher should endeavor to create should be that which led our forefathers always to speak of the gods of other nations as the "abominations" of the heathen. This can be done by describing, as it were, God's feelings at witnessing the behavior of Israel, as, for instance:

"When God saw what the people were doing, how they danced and sang about the golden calf, and shouted, 'This is thy god, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt', He was very angry. Only forty days before they had heard His voice telling them, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image', and they had promised, 'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do', and there they were worshipping a molten god that they had made with their own hands, an image of a calf; as if a calf or anything like it could have sent the ten plagues against Egypt, could have divided the waters of the Red Sea, could have spoken to them the words of the Ten Commandments from the midst of the flaming mountain. So God wanted at first to destroy them altogether, and He said to Moses, who was still with Him on the mountain to learn His law, 'Go; get thee down, for thy people that thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt have dealt corruptly; they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten calf and have worshipped it and have sacrificed unto it and have said, 'This is thy god, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.' Behold they are a stiff-necked people and my anger is kindled against them, and I will destroy them, and I will make of thee a great nation.'"

[180]

Give the children to understand the cause of Moses' breaking the tablets of the law by making them feel with the despair of Moses, when, descending from the mount with the tablets in his hand, he saw the people in the very act of violating the laws written upon them. Of what use were the tablets of the law if the law itself was not held sacred?

Moses' motive for ordering the death of the offenders must be explained as not being due to hatred, but to his realizing that if such a measure were not taken, the rest of the people would be led into further sin, which would necessitate the destruction of the whole people as punishment for their wickedness, just as a surgeon may amputate a limb to save a life. Call attention to the fact that Moses first gives the people a chance to rally about him if they repented of their participation in the worship of the golden calf, a chance of which Aaron and the whole tribe of Levi availed themselves. The purity of Moses' motives is seen from his willingness to accept the same punishment as his people, if God is indisposed to forgive them, rather than enjoy a reward and honor in which they do not share.

[181]

While endeavoring to impress the child with the sublimity of Moses' character, be careful not to attempt abstract characterization, but tell the story in such a way that the child appreciates the significance of Moses' acts and words. Do not say, for example, "Now Moses, though he was zealous, in punishing those Israelites who had proved disloyal, was utterly unselfish in his love for Israel." Say rather, "Now, when Moses had put to death those who had persisted in worshipping the golden calf, he prayed to God to forgive the sins of the rest and not to destroy the whole people. For, though God had offered to spare Moses, who had not sinned, and even to make of his descendants a great nation instead of the Israelites, who deserved to be destroyed, do you think that this made Moses happy? No, for Moses, although he had not hesitated to punish his people according to God's command, loved them as a father loves his children, even when they do wrong, and it hurt him to think that God was angry with them, even though he himself enjoyed God's favor. So he said, 'O Lord, if thou canst forgive this people, forgive them, but if not, do not make of me and my descendants a great nation, but blot me out of thy book', that is to



say, 'Let me die and be forgotten like the rest of these people whom I have led, and whom I love so dearly.' So God, moved by his loyalty to his people, promised to forgive them and to continue to lead them to their land."

Do not fail to mention the fact that when Moses came down from the mountain his face shone, as such a circumstance adds to the child's reverence for his hero.

The following are some suggestive questions which may help to bring out the point of the lesson for the children:

Why did the children of Israel want Aaron to make them a golden calf?

In doing so, what commandment did they disobey?

Why did Moses break the tablets of stone?

How were the Israelites punished for their sin?

What did God threaten to do to Israel for this sin? and what did he want to do to Moses because he had not sinned?

Did this please Moses? Why not? What did Moses pray God to do?

Did God grant this prayer? How did God show that he had forgiven Israel?

How did He show that He was pleased with Moses?

## CHAPTER XI

### THE TABERNACLE AND ITS SERVICE Exodus 25.1 to 31.11 and 35.4 to 40.33

**Interpretation.** The Biblical passages dealing with the construction of the Tabernacle and the nature of its appointments and the services conducted therein are scattered through a number of chapters of our Bible, but for pedagogic purposes it is best to consider them together. Before discussing any details we must realize the significance of the Tabernacle in general. We are to see in it the parent of the temple and the synagogue and understand its significance in the light of the importance of these institutions to later Judaism. "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them". (Exodus 25. 8.) Our rabbis paraphrase this by the words, "that I may cause My *Shekinah* to dwell among them." Inasmuch as the *Shekinah* meant the Divine Presence made manifest, we may render their meaning in more modern terms by declaring that the function of tabernacle, temple and synagogue is to make us realize the presence of God, for though we may theoretically admit His existence without such institutions, we should not feel the reality of His presence were it not brought home to us by the organized worship that they cultivated. But even if it is possible to realize the presence of God merely by the direct communion of the individual without any organized communal worship in a community sanctuary, the God we should then worship would not be the God of Israel and our religion would not consecrate life to the service of His Torah. And just as the Tabernacle, to which every animal that was to be eaten had to be brought for sacrifice, weaned the people from the habit of sacrificing "to the satyrs," (Leviticus 17. 7) so in later times the Temple was the center of the national worship as against the rival cult of Baal and Astarte associated with the "high places", and so today the synagogue is the institution upon which we must depend to guard the purity of Jewish religious thought from the influences of our non-Jewish environment. In view of the significance of the Tabernacle and its daughter institutions, we cannot begrudge the space that our Bible gives to its construction and its ritual. [184]

It is impossible for us to understand the precise symbolic significance of all the ceremonial objects and decorations of the Tabernacle, but the very attention that is given to these details is expressive of an appreciation of the aid to devotion which is to be found in an appeal to the aesthetic sense of the worshipper. Some of the symbolism is, however, quite obvious. Thus it is evident that the placing of the Two Tables of the Law in the Ark which was kept in the Holy of Holies, and was made of choice wood covered within and without with gold and guarded by the figures of cherubim wishes to testify to the sanctity of the Law as the very center and soul of Judaism. The prohibition to any but the high priest to enter the Holy of Holies, and the insistence on ritual purity and provisions for the washing of hands and feet in the brass laver served to remove the worship from the plane of the commonplace and profane and aided in creating that atmosphere of reverence and awe which is indispensable to true worship. The clouds of smoke from the incense suggested something of the mystery of God as is seen from its association in rabbinic tradition with the "cloud of glory". *עַל הַכַּפֹּרֶת* "For I appear in the cloud upon the ark-cover" is construed by the Rabbis to mean the cloud of incense. [185]

With regard to the garments of the priests, the appearance on the breast plate of the names of the tribes of Israel emphasizes the representative capacity of the high priest as *צִבּוֹר שְׁלִיחַ* or agent of the congregation, whereas the diadem with the inscription *לִיהוָה קֹדֶשׁ* "Holy unto God" was the symbol of his consecration to God.

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson should be to interest the child in the synagogue and public worship and more especially to develop in him the sentiment for beauty, dignity and decorum in the service of God.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** The obvious point of contact between the lesson and the child is the child's experience of synagogue worship, an experience which it is the duty of every Jewish school to provide. Begin the lesson by calling attention to the fact that Jews everywhere gather together on Sabbaths and holidays and even on week days to pray to God in houses called synagogues set aside for that purpose. Then question the children as to the appearance of the synagogue that they attend, particularly as to how it differs from other buildings designed to hold large numbers of people, so as to interest them in the distinctive features of synagogue architecture and adornment, such as the Ark, the Reading Desk and the Perpetual Lamp. The children's answers may call attention to certain features peculiar to their own synagogue which they imagine to be characteristic of synagogues in general. Their [186]

errors can be corrected in an interesting way by showing them pictures of a variety of synagogues in different lands and different architectural styles.

This done, call attention to the fact that our fathers in the wilderness needed a house of worship just as much as we do and therefore when Moses was on the mountain speaking to God, God said to him, "Let the children of Israel make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." Explain the word "sanctuary" as meaning a holy place, "like our synagogues." "But how" you continue, "were the children of Israel to build a house of worship in the wilderness when they were wandering from place to place and the pillar of cloud might any day move on and they would have to follow? They could not take with them on the march a building of wood and stone and they could not build a new one at every place where they stopped for a few days. But God gave Moses the idea of a sanctuary that suited their purpose admirably, because they could take it with them. Have you any idea what sort of a building that was that they could carry with them wherever they went?" If there is no response, continue. "When an army is on the march, the soldiers cannot build houses over night for themselves to sleep in; what have they for shelter?" (The children will probably know that soldiers encamped live in tents.) "Well, the children of Israel when they were wandering in the wilderness had to live in tents and in huts that they could take apart and put together again and carry with them from place to place, and so their sanctuary had also to be a sort of tent that they could take apart and put together again. But it was not an ordinary tent. Its curtains were made of the finest cloths, with beautiful colored designs woven on them by the most famous artists of the day. The wood that was used for the poles on which the curtains rested was the very finest wood that could be obtained, and everything that was in the tabernacle was to be as beautiful as the hand of man could make it."

[187]

Dwell on the enthusiasm with which the Israelites responded to the call for the material and labor needed in the construction of the tabernacle, and on the praise that the Bible bestows on its artists, Bezalel and Aholiab, whom God filled "with the spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all manner of workmanship". (Exodus 35. 31.)

After this general introduction, it is well for the teacher to show a picture of the tabernacle to help the class visualize it.<sup>[14]</sup> But this will show only the exterior. Draw on the blackboard the plan of the tabernacle showing not only the division into fore-court, sanctuary and holy of holies, but also the location of the brass altar, the laver, the altar of incense, the table of show-bread, the menorah, and the ark of the covenant.

Then proceed: "I have shown you a picture of the outside of the tabernacle, now let us walk in here where the curtains are drawn aside to admit us. We find ourselves in a large open court. It is not at all like the synagogues we are used to. It has walls to be sure, but they are of curtains, and as for a ceiling it has none at all, except the blue sky above. Nor are there any seats, but everybody stands during the service, which consists for the most part of the sacrifice of an animal on the altar, accompanied by the playing of musical instruments, and the singing of hymns by the Levites,<sup>[15]</sup> (men of the tribe of Levi) to whom the care of the sanctuary was entrusted. After the sacrifice, which is performed by Aaron or one of his sons, the *cohanim* or priests bless the congregation with outstretched hands in words which are still part of the service and which your parents say when they bless you on Sabbath and holidays, 'The Lord bless thee and keep thee, the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee, the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace,' (Numbers 6. 22-27.) But this part of the tabernacle is not the holy part called the sanctuary or holy place. Into this holy place which is separated from the outer court by curtained walls, and which had a sort of roof, not of wood, but of ram's skins dyed red and of badger skins, only the priests, who are themselves holy, because their whole life is given up to the service of God, may come. But we know from what the Bible tells us exactly what it contained." Then describe the furnishings of the sanctuary and continue. "The most holy part of all, however, only Aaron, or, after his death, the chief priest of his time, called high priest, was permitted to enter, and that only once a year on the great Day of Atonement, or else when God would call him. And the Holy of Holies, as it was called, contained nothing but a beautiful ark or box, of which I shall show you a picture, and in this beautiful gold covered, and artistically decorated ark there were placed the two tables of stone that God had given Moses, with the ten commandments engraved on them."

[188]

[189]

Do not depend too much on description which easily grows tiresome, but show pictures of all the important objects in the sanctuary and of the priestly garments.

In the discussion which follows the presentation of the lesson, again associate the tabernacle with the synagogue, this time emphasizing points of similarity rather than of difference. Thus the position of the *sefer torah* in the *aron* which occupies the most conspicuous place in the synagogue is analogous to the position of the Tables of the Law in the ark in the tabernacle. Similarly the *ner tamid* is the analogue of the *menorah*, etc.

But just as the presentation of the lesson was not merely by the spoken word, so the reproduction of it should not be in words only, but the class should be encouraged to draw pictures of the sanctuary and its objects, and the best drawings should be hung about the room. In this way the impulse to bring art into the service of religion may at once be utilized by enabling the children to employ art in embellishing the religious school which should also be made to appeal to them as a *mikdash me'at* "a minor sanctuary."

## CHAPTER XII

### TRIALS OF MOSES AND ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS Leviticus 10.1-7. Numbers 9.15-23, also 11.1 to 12.16

**Interpretation.** We have grouped in this chapter a number of episodes in the wandering of the children of Israel, because any one of them is too small to occupy a single lesson and because all deal with the same general theme, though with significant variations—rebellion and its punishment.

With regard to the episode of the death of Nadab and Abihu, recorded in Leviticus 10. 1 to 3, the Bible describes their offense as the bringing of "strange fire" into the sanctuary. This offense in itself seems

disproportionate to the punishment, consequently, the rabbis in commenting on the passage try, on the one hand, to ascribe the punishment of the sons of Aaron to sins not expressly recorded in the text, as for instance the sin of being intoxicated during the service, which they derived from the fact that the prohibition of drinking before the performance of a sacrifice immediately follows the narrative of this incident, or, on the other, to regard Nadab and Abihu as martyrs, who died by the divine decree to exhibit the sanctity of the tabernacle and its ritual without really having incurred the divine displeasure. This interpretation is based on Leviticus 10. 3, "Then Moses said unto Aaron, 'This is it that the Lord spoke, saying: 'Through them that are nigh unto Me I will be sanctified and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace." To be sure this verse may be construed to mean that Nadab and Abihu had been punished for their failure to sanctify God, but in view of the fact that the Hebrew term for martyrdom is "*kiddush ha-shem*" "the sanctification of God's name" and in view of the fact, furthermore, that it would be expected of Moses under the circumstances to say something consoling to Aaron, who was himself innocent, rather than to emphasize the wickedness of his sons this view of the incident must not be lightly dismissed. In fact, the simple reading of the text suggests a combination of these two interpretations. In taking "strange fire", i.e., fire that had not been taken from the divinely kindled flame on the altar (Leviticus 9. 24.), Nadab and Abihu had abused their priestly prerogative, making themselves the masters of the ritual of the sanctuary instead of its servants. But such a ritual transgression might have been forgiven were it not for the importance of the occasion, the consecration of the tabernacle, and for the dignity of their office which demanded that they be exceptionally circumspect in their conduct. Their punishment was, therefore, more severe than the offense would warrant in the case of any other than a consecrated person. Its severity was in proportion to the holiness of the sanctuary that had been violated and of the priestly office that had been profaned rather than to the heinousness of the offense in itself, and it expressed God's desire to impress upon the people the sanctity of the tabernacle and its ritual. In dealing with Nadab and Abihu God was acting in accordance with the rabbinic statement to the effect that "with the righteous God is exacting even to a hair's breadth," and the rabbis could, therefore, view the death of the Sons of Aaron somewhat in the light of martyrdom.

[191]

[192]

The remaining incidents, with the exception of the prophesying of Eldad and Medad are, as we have already said, examples of rebellion and its punishment. They are interesting instances of the trials of Moses in his leadership of the people. Their moral is the duty of loyalty to legitimate authority. The punishment of the people at Kibroth-hattaavah is an excellent example of how inordinate desire brings its own punishment, and suggests, as one of the grounds for loyalty, submission and discipline, the fact that what we most desire is not always what is most beneficial for us, a very important moral for children.

The sin of Miriam is described by the Rabbis as *lashon ha-ra'* "slander," Its lesson is that it is wrong not merely to rebel against righteous leadership, but even to detract from the honor that is due to noble characters. The charge that Aaron and Miriam brought against Moses was not the charge of any moral offense or offense against the Law, for the Torah expressly prohibits intermarriage only with the people of Canaan, the construction of the law to make it applicable to all intermarriage only dating from about the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. According to a Jewish tradition the Cushite woman whom Moses had married is identical with Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro. This would, of course, be untenable if Cush necessarily meant Ethiopia, as it is usually rendered, but it is generally thought that there was an Arabian Cush as well, in which case the identification is possible. Miriam's resentment was, therefore, not on religious grounds. The incident is probably recorded in the Bible because of the opportunity it gives of revealing the patient and forgiving character of Moses.

[193]

The same is illustrated even more strikingly by Moses' reply to his overzealous disciple Joshua, when he was told that Eldad and Medad had been prophesying in the camp. His only reply is "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets". Inasmuch as prophecy was a gift bestowed upon the council of seventy elders (Numbers 11. 25), whom Moses had been commanded to appoint, the fact that Eldad and Medad, who were not among the seventy, nevertheless "prophesied" might very well have been construed as indicating a presumptuous and rebellious attitude. According to a tradition which has considerable support from Numbers 11. 26, the number of men originally chosen were seventy-two, six from each tribe, but of these two were to be eliminated by lot and Eldad and Medad, rather than put anyone else to possible embarrassment, refused to go to the tabernacle when the lot was taken. This much of the *haggadah* is at least implied in the verse, that Eldad and Medad had originally been designated for this assembly of elders for they were *ba-ketubim* among those "recorded" but did not join the rest, for they had not gone out "unto the Tent and they prophesied in the camp." If we assume that their not going to the tabernacle was a voluntary refusal to hold office their conduct stands in striking contrast to the conduct of Korah and his followers.

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson is to teach children the duty of obedience, discipline and self-control. The contrast between the attitude of Nadab and Abihu and that of Moses points out the desirability of a humble and modest attitude, especially on the part of those in authority, whereas the punishment of the rebellion of the people at Taberah and Kibroth-hattaavah and of Miriam for her unjust criticism of Moses teach the need of submission to righteous authority and loyalty to disinterested leadership.

[194]

**Suggestions to the teacher.** A brief review, by question and answer, of the previous lesson, will serve as a point of contact for the story of the sin of the sons of Aaron. Tell how, after the tabernacle had been completed, there was a great celebration continuing for eight days, during which time Moses taught Aaron and his sons, who, as priests, were to perform the sacrifices for the people and in general to lead in the service, exactly what they were to do, when, where and how to kill the animals that were sacrificed, how to make the incense that had to be burnt, how to arrange the shew-bread and prepare the cakes of the meal-offering, etc. On the eighth day God himself, with fire from heaven, lit the wood that had been piled on the altar and thus started the fire there, which the priests were commanded never to let die out, but always to keep burning. Be careful to impress the children with the sinfulness of Nadab and Abihu's conduct, which the bare narrative of the facts as recorded in the Bible will not accomplish. This can be done by suggesting something of the solemnity of the occasion and of the frivolity of their attitude in this wise:

"Now Aaron and two of his sons, Eliezer and Ithamar, listened very attentively to all the instructions they had received from Moses and were determined to carry them out exactly. They felt that as priests, chosen from among all the people to lead in the worship of God, it was for them to set an example of faithful obedience to all He said, the small things as well as the great. But the two other sons of Aaron,

[195]

Nadab and Abihu, felt differently. They, too, were proud of their new office as priests, but instead of feeling that they must lead the people in obedience to God's laws as taught by Moses, they felt that they as priests could do as they pleased with the service and did not have to follow the directions of Moses. So when they were told to burn the incense with fire lit at the flame of the altar that God had kindled, they said to themselves, 'What difference whether we burn the incense with this holy fire or with any other', so they took 'strange fire', that is fire that they themselves had kindled, and brought it into the sanctuary to show that they as priests could perform the service in whatever way they pleased. At this God was very angry. Had an ordinary Israelite disobeyed in some small particular it would not have been as great an offense, but Nadab and Abihu were priests whom God expected to lead the people in obedience and who now had set an example of disobedience on the very day of the dedication of the tabernacle to God's service. It was just as if a teacher had left her class for a time in charge of a monitor whom she trusted, and then found out later that this monitor had himself disobeyed her and had set an example of disobedience to the class in her absence. Do you not think the teacher would be more angry at her monitor than if he had never been appointed to that office? That is why God was now so angry at Nadab and Abihu and resolved that as they had set an example of rebellion and disobedience He would make their punishment an example so that others should be duly warned not to do as they had done." Then follows the story of the death of Nadab and Abihu. Do not fail to dwell on Aaron's resignation in recognition of God's justice.

[196]

In discussing the incident that gave its name to Kibroth-hattaavah it is well to give other examples to show that what we most desire is not always best for us and to have the children give examples, as this is a moral of particular importance to childhood, suggesting as it does a reason for that deference to elders upon which the training of children is dependent. The case of the glutton who craves foods that are not good for him, of the drunkard who craves drink that proves his ruin, of the child who prefers truancy or the pursuits of pleasure to diligence in study, etc., may all serve as examples of sins, the very indulgence in which effects their own punishment. But dwell particularly on the fact of the child's not knowing what is for his own good as well as his parents know, and the consequent duty of the child to defer to their judgment.

The narrative of Moses' relations to Eldad and Medad presents no difficulty. In telling Miriam's sin and punishment the emphasis should be rather on the forgiving and magnanimous spirit of Moses than on the pettiness of Miriam's attitude. Point out how hurt Moses must have felt at Miriam's unjust accusation, which implied that Moses was trying to arrogate authority to himself but how, nevertheless, he felt no satisfaction when God punished Miriam but prayed that she be healed and forgiven. God's vindication of Moses (Numbers 12. 6-8) should be quoted in Biblical language.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SPIES

#### Numbers 13.1 to 14.45. Deuteronomy 1.20-46

**Interpretation.** Little need be said by way of interpretation of this episode, as the Biblical narrative makes its point very clear. It shows us the consequences of a lack of faith and of a lack of that courage which faith inspires. As a substitute for this courage born of faith, not even the fury of despair can avail. This is illustrated by the disastrous defeat of the Israelites when, spurred on by their fear of facing the punishment for their previous cowardice, they finally do rush to the attack contrary to the advice of Moses, leaving the ark of the covenant behind them. The story is, moreover, significant as showing the providential purpose of the forty years of wandering through the wilderness—namely, the rearing of a new generation inured to hardship and imbued with the hope of future triumph. The faults of this slave people that needed correction are graphically illustrated in the picture the Bible draws of the reception with which the words of the ten spies and of Joshua and Caleb respectively met: the panic and rebellion, the ineffectual wailing, the clamor for a new leader to lead them back to Egypt and the threats to stone their present leaders. The sublime devotion of Moses is again pictured to us in his pleas for the people and his refusal of a glorious future for himself and his seed in which Israel should have no share.

**Aim.** The aim in teaching this lesson is to thrill the child's heart with admiration for the virtues of faith and courage. It should help to establish in his mind the association of his religion with all the heroic virtues that are dear to the heart of boyhood.

[198]

**Suggestions to the teacher.** Before telling this story, read over the Biblical account in Numbers and Deuteronomy carefully in order to get the spirit of the Biblical narrative. The Bible does not stop to moralize, but tells its tale graphically and dramatically, and so should the teacher. The words of the ten spies on the one hand, and of Joshua and Caleb on the other, should be given in direct discourse and in Biblical language. Attempt to help the child picture in his mind the scene in the camp when the spies returned and rendered their report. Aid him to realize the psychology of the people by bringing to his attention what it meant for them, a people untrained in warfare, to fight against the Canaanites, secure in their fortified cities. It will be more difficult to enable the pupils to grasp the motive for the rash assault which the people did finally undertake. This one must do by bringing before their eyes pictures of the hardships of the prospective wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness, which made them unable to face further wandering as an alternative to a possible defeat by the Canaanites. Try to make the class view the situation through the eyes of the Israelites at that time. This can be done by speaking to them somewhat as follows:

"When Moses had told the people that they would be punished by having to wander forty years in the wilderness until all of them had died and a new generation had grown up to take their places, they were more terrified than ever. Frightened as they had been at the thought of making war against the giant Canaanites in their walled cities, they were even more frightened at the thought of having to wander forty long years more in the wilderness, all the rest of their lives in fact, and never even seeing the land which God had promised to their fathers where, all this time, they had thought that they would at least find rest from their hardships and toils. They thought of all they had endured until then on the journey.

[199]

The scorching heat of the desert sun by day, the biting cold of the desert winds by night, the hunger and the thirst, the long marches over treeless rocky hills and valleys. But all that time they had been cheered by the thought that some day the end would come and they would be able to find rest in their new land, the Land of Promise. But even this hope was now taken away from them and they felt that anything would be better than to wander in the wilderness until they died. Even to be killed in fighting the Canaanites seemed better now. So they said, 'Lo, we are here and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised; for we have sinned'."

It may also prove difficult to help the child understand why this change of front was not acceptable to God. The child does not naturally analyze motive and would not see, unless it is called to his attention, why, since as a matter of fact the Israelites did go up to attack the enemy, they were punished by being driven back. This can best be done by suggesting analogies with situations within the range of a child's experience. One may in discussing this topic, after having completed one's narrative, raise this very question. "Why did God say he would not be with them if they went up to attack the enemy after they had changed their mind?" and, not receiving a satisfactory answer, one may explain in some such manner:

[200]

"If the Israelites had decided to attack the enemy immediately when they had heard Joshua's and Caleb's words, God would have been with them and helped them to win the victory. But, at that time, when God wanted them to go they were unwilling. They did not believe that He would help them. Later when they wanted to go, because they were afraid to wander forty years in the wilderness, it was too late. God was not then willing. The time to obey a command is when it is given and not after one is threatened with punishment for disobedience. If a teacher were to give a boy some school work to do and he refused, until she told him to stay in after school to do it and only then he agreed to do the work rather than stay in, do you think the teacher would be satisfied with that? No, she would say justly, 'You had your chance to obey when the other children had, now if you are sorry show it by taking the punishment you deserve'."

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## CHAPTER XIV

### MORE TRIALS OF MOSES

#### Numbers 16.1 to 17.26, also 20.1 to 13 and 21.5 to 9

**Interpretation.** The central idea that runs through all the important episodes of these chapters is the immensity of the problem of leadership that confronted Moses, and the contrast between the selfish and fickle passions of the people, passions that were constantly menacing the very existence of Israel, and the sublime patience and constancy of Moses, although on one occasion his sorely tried patience can stand the strain no longer and he commits the sin by which he forfeits his right to enter the Promised Land.

The difficulties against which Moses had to contend before the event narrated in the preceding lesson, were multiplied after that event. If the people before that time had been restive and discontented whenever confronted with a difficulty, though they could always console themselves by looking forward to their journey's end in the Land of Promise, it was but natural that thereafter their dissatisfaction would be greatly intensified. They had threatened to appoint another head to lead them back to Egypt, and though at the time this may have been nothing but an idle threat, the opposition to Moses soon found a leader in the person of Korah, the son of Izhar. Though he was himself a Levite, he coveted the higher office of the priesthood to which Aaron and his family had been appointed, but, with the instinct of the true demagogue, posed as the champion of the people against the arbitrary authority of the Levitical priesthood, and of Moses in appointing Aaron and his sons as priests. He said to Moses and Aaron, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them and the Lord is among them; wherefore then do ye lift up yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" (Numbers 16. 3.) Moses' reply to Korah shows that he saw through this pretentious championship of the people to the envy and ambition of Korah, which were his real motives. "Hear now, ye sons of Levi; is it but a small thing unto you that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them; and that He hath brought thee near, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee? and will ye seek the priesthood also? Therefore thou and all thy company that are gathered together against the Lord—and as to Aaron, what is he that ye murmur against him?" (Numbers 16. 8 to 11.) But Korah's championship of the claims of all Israel to the priesthood won him a large following among the other tribes, particularly among their ambitious leaders. Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, all of the tribe of Reuben, are his particular henchmen, and he had also succeeded in winning over to his cause two hundred and fifty of "the princes of the congregation, the elect men of the assembly, men of renown." The sedition had spread so far that nothing could have prevented the reversion to a complete state of anarchy, save the destruction of all those that took part, in a way so striking that it would reveal clearly the divine purpose. This was provided for by the ordeal that is narrated in the text. But the disaffection had spread so far that many of the people resented the death of Korah and his followers and were inclined to hold Moses responsible for it, until the miracle of the blossoming of Aaron's staff convinced them. It is necessary for the student of the Bible to understand the extent and purport of Korah's rebellion lest he conceive of the punishment of Korah and his followers as visited upon them merely because of an offense of "lèse majesté", and, consequently, as utterly disproportionate to the offense.

[202]

[203]

The narrative of the sin of Moses and Aaron for which they were prohibited from entering the Promised Land does not make very clear to the modern reader precisely what the Bible views as constituting their sin. One possible interpretation, however, is that Moses by his words, "Hear now, ye rebels, are we to bring you forth water out of this rock?" (Numbers 20. 10) which were followed by his striking the rock and his failure to speak to it as God had commanded prevented the providential character of the water's flowing from being apparent. The incident might have been interpreted by the popular mind as if Moses, by the magic of his staff, had himself caused the water to flow, as is suggested by his use of the first person, "Are we to bring you forth water," and by his failure to comply literally with God's command. He, thus permitted an opportunity of sanctifying God's name to pass by yielding to passion and thinking at

the time of his personal grievance more than of his service to God. Inasmuch as this partook of the nature of the sins of that generation of Israel, he and Aaron were to take their share also in the punishment of Israel and were not to enter the Promised Land.

[204]

The thought suggested by the punishment of Nadab and Abihu recurs again in this connection, viz: that the greater the man and his responsibilities, the more circumspect must he be in his conduct.

The incident of the brass serpent must be interpreted in the light of the rabbinic comment on that subject to which we have called attention in connection with the holding up of Moses' hands during the battle with the Amalekites.

"Is it then in the power of a serpent to slay or to bring to life? But so long as the Israelites gazed heavenward and subjected their hearts to their Father in heaven they were healed, and, if not, they were destroyed." (Rosh ha-Shanah III, 8.) By looking up to the brass serpent that Moses had been instructed to make, the people testified, as it were, to their faith in God's power to heal them from the serpent's bites. It is interesting to note that when, at a later time in the history of the people the serpent itself became the object of reverence and of idolatrous worship, it was destroyed by order of King Hezekiah, in accordance with the teaching of the prophets (2 Kings 18. 4).

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson is to develop an appreciation of disinterested loyalty, steadfast faith and even temper, and a contempt for selfish ambition, uncontrolled passion and faithlessness.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** The method to be used in accomplishing this aim is not that of drawing an abstract moral from the events of the narrative, but one must tell one's story with feeling for its hero, Moses, in such a way that the pupil identifies himself with his hero and feels toward the enemies of Moses an almost personal hostility. Before the child reaches adolescence, analysis of character is not natural to him, and the discussion of men's virtues and vices fruitless, but imitation of character is natural, and hero-worship is the lever by which he may be moved to acquire a love for virtue and a disgust with vice.

[205]

In order to put the character of Moses in a heroic light make the class appreciate the depth of the ingratitude and treachery against which Moses had constantly to contend, and how difficult this made his task of leadership. Begin by calling on a child to tell the story of the preceding lesson. Then call attention to how sad Moses must have felt when after all he had done for the people they were ready in the face of every difficulty to disobey and rebel, and how much Moses must have loved and pitied them to have prayed to God for their forgiveness rather than simply accept from God the promise of a happy future for himself and his descendants. Call attention to the fact that this was not the first time that the people had disobeyed Moses and rebelled or murmured against him, and ask the children to tell other instances. Draw from them as many instances as possible since this not only helps in an interesting way to refresh the children's memory of what they had already learnt, but also to understand what is to follow. Then continue:

"Just as the murmuring of the people against Moses, when they heard the report of the ten spies was not the first instance of their rebellion against their patient leader, so it was not the last. In fact, it became harder for Moses to lead the people now than ever."

The reason for this can best be explained by an analogy drawn from the experience of children, as for example:

[206]

"You know that when a baseball team wins one game after the other everybody praises the captain and all the members of the team are ready to obey him, but if he loses one game after the other, they all begin to criticise and find fault and everybody feels that he himself would have made a better captain than the one who had been chosen, although it may not at all have been the captain's fault that the team was unsuccessful. So it was with the Israelites. So long as they still hoped that Moses was going to lead them to a land flowing with milk and honey, they were ready in the main to obey him, except when they were afraid on account of some special hardship and feared that he would never get them there after all; but when Moses himself told them that they would have to wander about for forty years in the wilderness until all the grown men of that day should have died, they were very bitter against him. Instead of blaming themselves, and their own cowardice and lack of faith in God, they blamed Moses, like the losing team that blames its captain instead of its own poor playing. And so they thought of appointing a new captain, another man than Moses, to act as their leader."

At this point introduce the character of Korah to the class and tell them of his envy of Moses, of his coveting the position of Aaron, and of his subtle attempts to secure the leadership by telling the people that they were all everyone as good as Moses and Aaron, for they were all members of a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

After describing success of Korah's propagand, and pointing out the helplessness of Moses and the extreme danger of his position, tell of Moses' decision to entrust his vindication to God. If Korah and his followers wished to claim the priesthood, let them act as priests, each burning incense in the censer that he held in his hand, and God would show whether he wanted to accept them as priests or not.

[207]

The judgment that was pronounced upon Korah and his followers will then mean for the child the just punishment of disloyalty and will reinforce his detestation of the qualities displayed by Korah and his like, but if the teacher fails to prepare the way by enlisting the child's interest in the situation as it developed between Moses and the people, by some such method as we have suggested, the story will mean little more to him than the account of an earthquake. From the point of view of religious education, a knowledge of the manner of Korah's punishment is not of so much consequence as an understanding of the sin for which he was punished.

In telling the story of the sin of Moses and Aaron, guard against appearing to detract from the character of Moses. If the previous lessons have been properly taught the child should by this time have developed an intense admiration for Moses and would be inclined to resent any disparagement of his hero, even to the point of secretly feeling that the sin of Moses was no real sin and that his teacher's treatment of him was quite unfair and was merely an attempt to apologize for God's not letting him enter Canaan. The rabbis say that the reason for God's mentioning the sin of Nadab and Abihu was to keep us from inferring that their death was a punishment for other and more grievous sins. One cannot help feeling that the narrative of the sin of Moses had a similar purpose, the very fact that Moses was so

[208]

severely punished for so apparently slight an offense, being meant to show the esteem in which he was held and how much God expected of him, in consequence. At any rate, this is the spirit in which it were best to approach this subject. The emphasis should be on the provocation to sin and on Moses' pious acceptance of his punishment and his readiness to continue leading the people to the Promised Land even after he could not expect to share in their final triumph. The liturgy for Simhath Torah contains the words, "Moses died. Who shall not die?" The sentiment that the teacher should seek to arouse by this lesson is somewhat similar. "Moses sinned, who can be sinless?" If Moses, who is described as the meekest of men, could sin in a moment of passion, how much more should we guard ourselves against sin and especially when under the influence of passion.

In telling of how the people who had been bitten by the serpents were healed when they looked up to the brass serpent that Moses had made, guard against letting the child attribute any magic to the image of the serpent itself. This can best be done by telling them the explanation of this episode suggested above in our interpretation. One might also associate the incident with what they had learnt of the influence of the hands of Moses in the battle with the Amalekites. Moreover, it might be well to tell them of how the people's false conception of its significance in later times led to its destruction by a pious king of Judah.

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## CHAPTER XV

### ISRAEL ARRIVES AT THE BORDER OF THE PROMISED LAND Numbers 21.1 to 3 and 21 to 35, also 22.1 to 24.25, also 31.1 to 54 and 32.1 to 42

**Interpretation.** The wandering through the wilderness, which in this chapter draws to a close, has had its desired effect in producing a race capable of giving battle. Its powers are put to the test by the necessity of pushing its conquests through the territory of Sihon, King of the Amorites, and of Og, King of Bashan.

The command to conquer these nations and the Promised Land itself may present religious difficulties to some. Indeed, such wars of conquest are responsible for the charge frequently brought against religion in general, that it brought bloodshed and persecution into the world. This would, however, be an entirely wrong conception of the significance of this *milḥemet miṣwah*. We must bear in mind that warfare was the normal state of the ancient world. If we ask why God so ordained, we can give no answer any more than we can to the general question of why God suffers evil to exist and then desires man to contend against it. But no religious person really believes that God desires the evil. Similarly we must not construe these chapters to assume that God desires or ever desired war but merely that, warfare between the nations being inevitable in an age when there were no peaceful methods of settling national and tribal disputes, God desired Israel to be victorious because her civilization was superior to that of Canaan. Even the command to exterminate the inhabitants must be construed in the light of the fact that otherwise the only alternative was perpetual warfare between the races on the land or an assimilation of Israel to the native races with the loss of the hope that Israel's victory held out to the world. Again and again are we told in the Torah that the sole justification for Israel's conquest is the sinfulness of the nations of Canaan, and that Israel's sinfulness would subject it to the same treatment as was meted out to the Canaanites. In the very chapters that we are considering now it is to be noted that the command to conquer the land applied originally only to Canaan, to which the people laid claim by virtue of inheritance from the patriarchs who had dwelt there, and that, therefore, all that was originally demanded of the trans-Jordanic lands is the right to pass through without doing any injury in transit. It is only when this is definitely refused that the Israelites are permitted to resort to arms.

[210]

The story of Balaam and Balak is significant as a poetic expression of the invincibility of Israel. Balaam is sent for by Balak to curse Israel because of the reputation that this heathen prophet and sorcerer enjoyed. Though tempted by the bribes offered by Balak he knows that God will not suffer him to pronounce an effective curse upon Israel and at first refuses to go. He is, however, finally permitted to go, after due warning, both before he sets out and again when the angel opposes him on the way, not to speak anything save what God puts into his mouth. The final result is that he blesses Israel and curses Moab.

The reader should not be troubled by the apparent admission that a magic power attaches to a formula of curse or blessing, as the point of the story is not to teach that curses are or are not effective, but that, whether they are or not לא יִשְׁכַּח וְלֹא יִשְׁכַּח וְלֹא יִשְׁכַּח וְלֹא יִשְׁכַּח which, though usually translated otherwise, may fittingly be rendered as no enchantment against Jacob and no divination against Israel." (Numbers 23.23.) In rabbinic tradition the story of Balaam's dialogue with his ass is the classical text for the preaching of humane treatment to animals. It is still capable of yielding that moral.

[211]

The incident of the oath taken by the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh has a very obvious moral in its insistence on Jewish unity and cooperation. "We will not return unto our houses until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance". (Numbers 32. 18.) The fear of Moses that the premature settlement of the trans-Jordanic tribes might lead to division in Israel was certainly well-founded in view of subsequent events when the development of local tribal jurisdictions almost threatened the existence of the nation in the days of the Judges.

**Aim.** To strengthen the child's faith in God's choice of Israel.

**Suggestions to the teacher.** In telling of the wars of Israel all harrowing details would naturally be omitted and the emphasis put not on the fight, but on the victory which Israel won by the help of God. A good point of contact for beginning the story could be obtained by recalling the narrative of the report of the ten spies and of the punishment to which Israel was sentenced by reason of its acceptance of this report.

Then show how God's punishment was adapted to the offense in that it gave Israel the opportunity to rear a generation of brave men in the free atmosphere of the wilderness. Be sure that the child

[212]

understands the advantage of the training in the wilderness for the new generation, over the experience of their fathers in Egypt. It will not suffice to state the thing abstractly, but make your point clear by repeated illustration as follows:

"Many years had now passed since the children of Israel had sent the ten spies and had been told that they could not enter the Promised Land until all the full grown men of that day should have died. During these years almost all of that generation who had been afraid to go up into the land had died and their sons and daughters, who, at that time, had been children, or had not yet even been born, had now grown up to manhood. And they were a very different generation from what their fathers had been. In the first place they were different in appearance. Their fathers, who in youth had been slaves to Pharaoh, had grown up with backs bent by the burdens they had to carry. Many of them had been permanently weakened and even deformed by the hard treatment they had received in Egypt. But their children, who had grown up in the wilderness and had lived all their lives out of doors, with plenty of fresh air and healthful exercise, and with no one to make them work at labor that was too hard for them, grew up straight and sturdy, broad-shouldered and muscular, like well-trained athletes. They were as different in appearance as a poor peddler whom you may see carrying his pack on his shoulders is from the strong and vigorous farm hand.

"Nor did they differ in appearance only, but also in character. Slavery had made cowards of their fathers. The slightest act of disobedience to the task-masters bringing instant punishment, they had learned to fear every enemy. No doubt their fathers had been warned in childhood never to attack an Egyptian no matter what he did, because they would in the end have to suffer for it. And so their fathers had become accustomed to thinking of themselves as too weak to fight and when they saw the Canaanite warriors they said, 'We are like grasshoppers compared to them.' But their sons who had grown up in the wilderness did not know the meaning of fear. They were used to hardship and dangers, for the wilderness was beset by all manner of wild beasts and wild men also, and this had trained them to be brave. Moreover they saw from childhood up how God at every step helped His people, how He helped them at the Red Sea, how He fed them on Manna, etc., and they said to themselves, 'Since God is with us, we need not fear, what can man do unto us.'"

[213]

You are now in a position to tell of the campaigns against Sihon and Og, stressing the overtures of peace, the rejection of which justified the invasion, and enlarging on the Israelites' sense of triumph which resulted from their victories, in which they saw the beginning of the realization of God's promise to give them the land of Canaan.

This is a good point in the narrative at which to trace the route of Israel's marches through the wilderness and to locate the important places on the map.

In telling the story of Balak and Balaam be careful not to leave the child with a superstitious belief in the efficacy of a curse, not only because superstition is in itself evil, but because the association of religion with superstition becomes very dangerous to the former when the child reaches an age at which he will in all probability see the unreasonableness of the superstition. Make it plain that Balak's sending for Balaam to curse Israel does not mean that Balaam actually possessed this power, but merely that Balak believed him to possess it in accordance with the superstition of his day. The point of the narrative should lie in the discomfiture of Balak, which teaches that when God is bent on blessing, no human being can effectively curse, and that God had destined Israel for blessing. Do not make this explanation as a digression from the story, but weave it into the narrative itself by suggestion as follows:

[214]

"Now Balak, the king of Moab, had heard that there lived in Mesopotamia, a famous sorcerer named Balaam, and that whomever this Balaam blessed would be sure to have good luck, and whomever he cursed, bad luck, and, being very superstitious, as were most of the people in his day, he believed that Balaam really had this power, and so he sent presents to him to persuade him to come to Moab and curse Israel for him so that the Israelites should be defeated in battle."

Do not attempt to rationalize the miracle of the ass's speaking to Balaam. If the child wants to know how it was possible for the ass to speak, answer that it is no harder for God to give an animal power to speak than a man. No baby is born with the ability to speak and we only learn to speak when God gives us the power and intelligence. By answering the question in this manner one attaches to the commonplace the mystery associated with the supernatural. By attempting to rationalize, one would reduce everything to the level of the commonplace. At a later age, when the pupil has developed a concept of natural law, this answer may not prove satisfactory, but it would be absurd to attempt a philosophic reconciliation of the natural and supernatural for children at an age when they lack the concept of either.

[215]

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## CHAPTER XVI

### THE DEATH OF MOSES

#### Numbers 27.12 to 23. Deuteronomy 31.14 to 34.12

**Interpretation.** The Biblical account of the death of Moses in its impressive simplicity scarcely needs comment. It brings to a fitting end the story of the life-struggle of the greatest of the prophets. There is an infinite pathos in the thought of his never having set foot on the soil toward which he had been leading his people for forty years in the face of ingratitude, calumny and rebellion. But there is also a peculiar fitness in this fate for it lifts all his efforts in behalf of his people beyond the reach of any detraction based on a charge of self-interest. After he knows his destiny never to be permitted to enter the Promised Land, he continues with the same steadfastness to devote himself to his people. He rehearses their history and in words of passionate appeal admonishes them in song and prophecy to be faithful to the covenant, as the very life of the nation depended thereon. And he provides during his lifetime for a successor to his labors and secures for him the popular allegiance. Then, with his life-work completed but with all earthly reward for it withheld, he ascends the mountain to behold the Land of Promise and dies content with seeing in prophetic vision the consummation which a less divinely meek man would have



demanded to see in realization. "No man knoweth of his sepulcher". As in life he was content to live for God and to give God the glory, so in his death he left no token which might attract to him the reverence due to the God whom he served, thereby saving Judaism from that man-worship to which other religions have fallen a prey by reason of their identification of their religion with the personality of its founder. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth", (Numbers 12. 3) and, therefore, "There hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face; in all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land; and in all the mighty hand, and all the great terror, which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel." (Deuteronomy 34. 10 to 12.)

[217]

**Aim.** The aim of this lesson should be to cultivate in the child a reverent appreciation of the personality of Moses which would result not merely in the attempt to emulate his virtues, but in the desire to be faithful to his law in accordance with the sentiment expressed in the verse, "Moses commanded us a law, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob." (Deuteronomy 33. 4.)

**Suggestions to the teacher.** There is comparatively little narrative in this lesson and what there is will present no difficulty. When telling of how Moses addressed the people before his death, read well selected extracts from the Book of Deuteronomy. If the class has learned in its Hebrew work the translation of the וַיִּשָּׁח (Deuteronomy 6. 4 to 9) and וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶם וְהִיָּה (Deuteronomy 11. 13 to 21) or if the pupils have been taught to say them at home, include these portions among those selected and call the attention of the children to the fact that these words which they say daily are among the last words of Moses, which he wanted the people to remember after his death and to teach to their children, and that if we say them and live according to them we are carrying out the will of the great law-giver of our nation. This should serve to give an added meaning and value to the child's prayers and connect the history lesson with his daily life. Other passages adapted for reading to children are, Deuteronomy 3. 23 to 4. 10, also 4. 32-40 and 28. 1-4, 30. 15-20 and 32. 7-18.

[218]

In the discussion of the lesson with the class after its first presentation take occasion to review the life of Moses as a means of bringing out the salient traits of his character. Call for instances illustrating Moses' stern sense of justice, his courage, his modesty, his readiness to forgive, etc., and seek to get as many examples as possible so that the result will be in effect a review of the life of Moses. Be very careful not to make your questions too vague. Thus it would not do merely to say, "Who can tell me an incident in the life of Moses that shows his modesty?" inasmuch as the abstract noun "modesty" has little meaning to the child of the age at which this story is usually taught. It would be much better to say, "One reason that Moses was so great was because he was modest, that is to say, he never thought about the honor that others owed to him as leader, or felt boastful in his heart because of all the great things he had done, and was always ready to see the good in others and to admit whenever he was wrong. Can any of you give me any instance in the life of Moses to show that he did not think himself a great man? Can you give me an example to show that he was not anxious for honors? to show that he was ready to take the advice of others, or to admit that he was wrong when such was the case?" After having a sufficient number of answers illustrative of the modesty of Moses put them down on the blackboard thus:

[219]

Moses was modest,

1. He hesitated about leading the people from Egypt.
2. He would not rebuke Eldad and Medad for prophesying.
3. He veiled his face when it shone.
4. He accepted the punishment for his sin without complaint.

Then do the same with other traits of Moses' character, until every incident in the career of Moses is classified thus on the basis of its moral significance. The value of this drill is that it serves at the same time as a review not merely of the events of the life of Moses, but of their significance, and, moreover, provides exercise for the moral judgment of the pupils. The success of this exercise will depend very largely on the skill of the teacher in making his questions simple and brief and in putting them to the class in an animated manner, such as would make them feel that to find the correct answers was a sort of game that they were playing.

After the main incidents in the life of Moses are thus classified on the blackboard in accordance with the traits of character they exhibit, another helpful exercise would be to let the class rearrange them in their chronological order and assign them to the three periods of Moses' life,

1. His life before receiving the call to save his people,
2. His opposition to Pharaoh,
3. His leadership of the people in the wilderness.

[220]

This second classification might serve as the outline of an essay on the life of Moses which the children might be requested to submit at the end of the term as summarizing their year's work.

## FOOTNOTES:

[1] Whenever a *haggadah* is useful as explaining a Biblical passage, it may be taught as part of the Biblical lesson. But the teacher should avoid teaching such legends as may misrepresent the Biblical meaning and even such as are merely extraneous to the subject, as, for example, the legend of Abraham's persecution by Nimrod, for we must be careful that these legends do not usurp the unique place which the Bible as Torah must hold in Jewish life and thought. The *haggadah* is not authoritative; the Bible is.

[2] See for instance Genesis 19. 16, 17; 31. 11 to 13; 32. 25 to 31; 48. 15 to 16. Exodus 3. 2, etc.; 23. 20 to 22. Judges 2. 1 to 2; 4. 12 to 14; 13. 17 to 18, 21 to 22.

[3] The significance of this cannot be gone into here. An interesting treatment of it is to be found in Wiener's *Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism*. Pages 47-53.

[4] To speak of our race as the Jewish people at any time before the exile of the ten tribes is, to be

sure, an anachronism, but we employ it because the child knows that he and his friends are Jews before he knows that they are Israelites or Hebrews.

- [5] The teacher who is interested will find them discussed in Sulzberger's Am Haaretz.
- [6] The Hebrew has Medanites.
- [7] Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism pages 47-53.
- [8] Do not illustrate this on the blackboard, as Jewish sentiment considers it irreverent to write the name of God on anything from which it will be subsequently erased, or which will be cast aside and destroyed. Instead, illustrate from printed books. If children are required to write the name of God on the blackboard they should be taught to write simply the initial "G" in English or  $\gamma$  or  $\eta$  in Hebrew.
- [9] Since the sacrifices have ceased with the destruction of the Temple, the eating of the meal as part of the Seder service answers this purpose. At this meal the Paschal lamb is symbolically represented by the roasted bone, and the *mazzot* and *maror* are eaten.
- [10] In modern times eight days in the diaspora.
- [11] Of course, such a method of approach is only possible where the child attends services, but it is exceedingly important that provision for attendance at a regular service be made by every religious school.
- [12] For other suggestions in this connection see Part II, Chapter IV, of this book.
- [13] See Part I, Chapter IX.
- [14] Good illustrations of the tabernacle and its appointments, as also of the priestly garments, are to be found among Tissot's Bible Illustrations.
- [15] There is no direct evidence of this being part of the worship of the tabernacle, but we know it to have been part of the Temple worship and as hymns are common in ancient rituals our statement is probably correct.

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