

A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY  
Edited by the Rev. A. R. BUCKLAND, M.A.

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# GENESIS

XXXVII.—L

A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY

By the

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

IN accordance with the purpose of the series of Devotional Commentaries, of which this volume forms a part, the narratives of the patriarchs are taken as they stand, and an endeavour is made to deduce from them their spiritual meaning and messages. Questions of criticism are therefore not discussed unless where they are thought to be necessary to the elucidation of the passage.

It is well known that three very different views are held as to these narratives. (1) The extreme critical view, of which Wellhausen is the representative. This regards everything in Genesis before Abraham as mythical, and the narratives of the patriarchs legendary though with elements of truth. On this view the stories indicate the knowledge of Israel at a time much later than the patriarchs, and therefore represent tribal occurrences of subsequent periods. (2) The moderate critical view, of which Dr Driver is the representative. This regards these narratives as substantially true, but with the characters and experiences idealized. The outline is held to be accurate, but the details are said to be coloured by the associations of later ages. The oral tradition is regarded as the basis, though it is now quite unknown how far the original nucleus has been modified in the course of time. (3) The

## Introductory Note

conservative view, of which Dr Green and Dr Orr are the representatives. This holds that the narratives are not tribal but personal, not legendary but historical, and that their historical character is being confirmed by the discoveries of archæology both in regard to Babylonia and Egypt. The present Commentary proceeds on the last-named assumption. For those who desire to study the critical questions involved, reference may be made to Dr Driver's *Genesis*, and *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*; Green's *Unity of the Book of Genesis*; Orr's *Problem of the Old Testament*; and an article in the *Quarterly Review* for January 1907, by Professor George Adam Smith.

# I

## JOSEPH'S EARLY LIFE

### GEN. xxxvii

1. And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

2. These *are* the generations of Jacob. Joseph, *being* seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren ; and the lad *was* with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives : and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

3. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was* the son of his old age : and he made him a coat of *many* colours.

4. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

5. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told *it* his brethren : and they hated him yet the more.

6. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed :

7. For, behold, we *were* binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright ; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us ? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us ? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more ; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10. And he told *it* to his father, and to his brethren : and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What *is* this dream that thou hast dreamed ? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth ?

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11. And his brethren envied him ; but his father observed the saying.

12. And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

13. And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed *the flock* in Shechem ? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here *am I*.

14. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks ; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

15. And a certain man found him, and behold, *he was* wandering in the field : and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou ?

16. And he said, I seek my brethren : tell me, I pray thee, where they feed *their flocks*.

17. And the man said, They are departed hence ; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

18. And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

19. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

20. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him : and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

21. And Reuben heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands ; and said, Let us not kill him.

22. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, *but* cast him into this pit that *is* in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him ; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

23. And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, *his* coat of *many* colours that *was* on him ;

24. And they took him, and cast him into a pit : and the pit *was* empty, *there was* no water in it.

25. And they sat down to eat bread : and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry *it* down to Egypt.

26. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit *is it* if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood ?

27. Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him ; for he *is* our brother *and* our flesh. And his brethren were content.

28. Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen ; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph

## Joseph's Early Life

to the Ishmeelites for twenty *pieces* of silver : and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

29. And Reuben returned unto the pit ; and, behold, Joseph *was* not in the pit ; and he rent his clothes.

30. And he returned unto his brethren and said, The child *is* not ; and I, whither shall I go ?

31. And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood ;

32. And they sent the coat of *many* colours, and they brought *it* to their father ; and said, This have we found ; know now whether it *be* thy son's coat or no.

33. And he knew it, and said, *It is* my son's coat ; an evil beast hath devoured him ; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

34. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

35. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him ; but he refused to be comforted ; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

36. And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, *and* captain of the guard.

WITH the story of Joseph we come to the last **Gen.** division of Genesis, though the heading is **xxxvii.**

'These are the generations of Jacob,' since Jacob was the head of the family. The development and progress of the household of Jacob until at length it became a nation in Egypt had Joseph as a pioneer, and it is almost entirely to this development under Joseph that the remainder of Genesis is devoted. At the same time the story is not concerned with Joseph only (see xxxviii.), but with Jacob and all his sons.

The fulness of the narrative is worthy of consideration. Far more is told us of Joseph than of any of the patriarchs preceding him. There is a fourfold value and importance in the record of Joseph's life: (1) It gives the explanation of the development of the Hebrews. How was it that

The fulness  
of the  
narrative.

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they who came originally from the valley of the Euphrates were found at length as a colony in Egypt? How came it to pass that they, a nomadic people, lived in possession and enjoyment of the richest province of Egypt for generations? The story of Joseph gives the answer to these questions. (2) It is a remarkable proof of the quiet operation of Divine Providence, overruling evil and leading at length to the complete victory of truth and righteousness. (3) It affords a splendid example of personal character. Joseph's life is one of the very finest recorded in Scripture. (4) It provides a striking series of typical illustrations of Christ. There are few more remarkable points of contact and coincidences with the life of our Lord than those found in the story of Joseph.

Aspects of  
faith in  
Genesis.

In concentrating attention on the life of Joseph it is impossible to avoid noticing the various aspects of faith represented by the leading characters in Genesis. Thus, Abel illustrates redemption through faith; Enoch stands for the walk of faith; Noah bears witness to the confession of faith; Abraham expresses the obedience of faith; Isaac is an example of the patience of faith; Jacob reveals the training of faith; while Joseph exemplifies the testing and triumph of faith.

In the chapter before us we have the commencement of the story which is so familiar and precious to all lovers of Holy Writ.

I. Joseph's  
Home Life  
(vers. 1-4).

I. *Joseph's Home Life* (vers. 1-4).—Joseph was the elder son of Rachel (xxx. 24). Of his early life nothing is recorded. He could not have been

## Joseph's Early Life

more than five or six years old when his father left **Gen.** Mesopotamia. He was therefore the child of **xxxvii.** Jacob's later life, and escaped all the sad experiences associated with the earlier years at Haran. He comes before us in this chapter at the age of seventeen. His companions were his half-brothers, the grown-up sons of Bilhah and Zilpah. From all that we have hitherto seen of them they must have been utterly unfit companions for such a youth. Jacob's elder sons had naturally been affected by the life in Haran, by the jealousy at home, and by the scheming between Laban and Jacob. They had been brought up under the influence of the old Jacob, while Joseph had been the companion of the changed Jacob or 'Israel.' There are few people more unfitted for influence over younger brothers than elder brothers of bad character.

The difference between the elder brethren and Joseph was accentuated by the fact that 'Joseph brought unto his father the evil report of his brethren.' What precisely this meant we do not know, but from the wording in the original it was evidently something that was well known and notorious in the neighbourhood. It may have been dishonesty, but most likely it was something much worse, in view of all that we know of them. It is sometimes thought that Joseph is blameworthy for telling tales; but there does not seem any warrant for regarding him as a mere spy. It is an utterly mistaken sense of honour that keeps people from giving information when wrong-doing is involved. Far from being mean and cowardly, such action is not

Joseph and his brethren.

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only justifiable but necessary. Tale-bearing pure and simple is, of course, always despicable; but there is a time to speak, and on such an occasion silence is criminal. The lad had been brought up amid the more godly influences of Jacob's later years, and it is quite easy to understand the shock that would be given him at meeting with this wickedness away from home on the part of his elder brothers. So long as there was no exaggeration, no malice, and no personal ends to serve, there could be nothing blameworthy in Joseph bringing his father their evil report.

Jealousy of  
Joseph.

There was, however, something much more than this to account for the differences between Joseph and his brethren. Israel had a special love for this child of Rachel, and he did not hesitate to show it in a very definite way. The gift of a coat of many 'pieces' (not 'colours'), or rather 'the tunic with sleeves,' was about the most significant act that Jacob could have shown to Joseph. It was a mark of distinction that carried its own meaning, for it implied that exemption from labour which was the peculiar privilege of the heir or prince of the Eastern clan. Instead of the ordinary work-a-day vestment which had no sleeves, and which, by coming down to the knees only, enabled men to set about their work—this tunic with sleeves clearly marked out its wearer as a person of special distinction, who was not required to do ordinary work. Whether Jacob exercised sufficient prudence in showing such undisguised partiality for Joseph is an open question. It was in any case a very



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natural thing for him to do. He was the child of Gen. his old age, the son of his beloved wife, and with- xxxvii. out doubt a sympathetic, responsive listener to all that the patriarch had to say about the promises of God to himself and to his fathers. It was impossible after Reuben's great sin (xxxv. 22) for the transfer of the birthright from him to be disguised from the others, and it was equally natural for Jacob to appoint for Joseph the privileges of the firstborn.

And so when his brethren saw these marks of special favour 'they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.' Although he was so young and they were grown men, their jealousy had been excited, for they readily saw all that it meant. Nor may we overlook the remarkable difference in their lives and conduct, a fact which must have rebuked the elder brothers and added fuel to the fire of their envy and jealousy. Joseph's purity of life and moral growth must have rankled in their hearts.

II. *Joseph's Dreams* (vers. 5-11).—The hatred of the brothers was soon intensified through the dreams that Joseph narrated to them. The first dream was that of the sheaves in the field. He dreamt that the sheaves of his brethren made obeisance to his own sheaf. This, in true Eastern fashion, was interpreted by the brethren to mean his dominion over them, and as a consequence 'they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.' Not only did they feel annoyed at his telling them his dream, but their animosity was

II. Joseph's  
Dreams  
(vers. 5-11).

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stirred by reason of the dream itself. Again he dreamed, and this time his father and mother were included: 'Behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.' Joseph told this to his father as well as to his brethren, and Jacob at once checked him, expressing astonishment that anything of the kind could possibly come true. 'Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?' The reference to the mother seems to be to Leah, who had taken the place of Rachel, and had become a mother to her sister's children.

Impressed by  
the dreams.

Yet, although the father rebuked the boy, he could not help being impressed. 'His father observed the saying.' Like Mary in after years, there was something that even Israel could not understand (Luke ii. 19, 51). The repetition of the dream seems to imply certainty of fulfilment (xli. 32), and the dreams were at once natural and supernatural. They were natural in form as distinct from any Divine vision, and yet they were clearly prophetic of Joseph's future glory.

It is sometimes thought that Joseph made a mistake in telling his brethren these dreams, or at any rate, that he was wrong in telling the second. He does not seem to have been actuated by self-consciousness or vanity, or perhaps he would not have told what he had experienced. Whether this was so or not, the effect was disastrous to him, for it only added fuel to the fire, intensifying his brothers' animosity.

How true to life are these dreams of the youth!

## Joseph's Early Life

Youth is the time for visions of the future. Young men cannot help dreaming dreams, for they would not be young men if they did not do so. A youth without ideals is a youth without inspiration; and when, as in Joseph's case, it is susceptible to spiritual intuitions, there is indeed the promise and potency of a fine manhood.

III. *Joseph's Mission* (vers. 12-17).—In the course of their work as shepherds, Jacob's elder sons went to Shechem, about sixty miles from Hebron; and, in view of all that had happened at Shechem (xxxiv.), it is not surprising that Israel wished to know how it fared with his sons and with the flocks. He thereupon commands Joseph to take the journey of inquiry. His orders met with a ready and full response, 'Here am I.' The words of Jacob should be noted: 'Go, I pray thee; see the peace of thy brethren and the peace of the flocks.' Jacob might well wish to know whether there was *peace*, considering the danger to which the brethren and flocks were liable in going back to the neighbourhood of Shechem. Joseph, however, has to go several miles further, for the brethren had gone on to Dothan, which was on the southern slope of Mount Gilboa (ver. 17). Perhaps even they felt that it was scarcely safe to remain too long in Shechem.

This promptness and thoroughness of obedience on the part of Joseph is very characteristic of him, and should be carefully noted all through his history. It has often and truly been pointed out that Joseph seems to have combined all the

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen.** best qualities of his ancestors—the capacity of  
**xxxvii.** Abraham, the quietness of Isaac, the ability of Jacob, and the personal beauty of his mother's family. It is interesting to note that the same word is used of the mother and the son (xxix. 17 and xxxix. 6).

**IV. Joseph's Brethren**  
**(vers. 18-28).**

**IV. Joseph's Brethren** (vers. 18-28).—The sight of Joseph in the distance was sufficient to stir up again all their animosity, and 'even before he came near unto them they conspired against him to slay him.' They were prepared to go the whole length of murder, and had their answer ready for their father. 'Some evil beast hath devoured him.' We can almost see the grim smile with which they said, 'We shall see what will become of his dreams.' The conspiracy was all very simply but quite cleverly concocted, every point was met, the wild beast and the ready explanation.

At this point Reuben intervened, and in view of the fact that Joseph had superseded him in the position of firstborn, we must not fail to observe the magnanimity of his appeal. He begged them not to kill him but to cast him into the pit, he himself intending to rescue him and deliver him to his father again. So far the proposal was good, but it possessed obvious elements of weakness. There was no decision about it, and no guarantee that it could be carried out. 'The flighty purpose never is o'ertook, unless the deed go with it.'

**Callous and Cruel.**

And then was seen another exhibition of their callousness and cruelty. They stripped the lad of that tunic which was such a bugbear to them, and

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cast him into one of the pits in the neighbourhood, **Gen.** while they themselves 'sat down to eat bread.' **xxxvii.** Thomas Fuller quaintly remarks, 'With what heart could they say grace, either before or after meat?' There within earshot was their own brother, his appeals for mercy having fallen on deaf ears. It was to this fearful hardness and cruelty that the prophet referred ages afterwards, when he spoke of those who 'drink wine in bowls . . . but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph' (Amos vi. 6). We can also understand still more of their savagery when we remember that twenty years afterwards they recalled this moment, and said that 'we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear' (xlii. 21). Those who had butchered a whole family in Shechem were not likely to trouble themselves about the piteous cries and pleas of a mere lad whom they so cordially hated.

In the course of their meal another suggestion **Joseph sold.** occurred to them. They saw in the distance a company of Ishmaelite merchants on their way to Egypt, and Judah had what must have been thought a happy idea. There was an opportunity of avoiding the sin of murder and at the same time of making a little profit by selling him to these merchants. They shrank from slaying, but not from enslaving their brother. It was something of 'honour among thieves.' He was not to be killed, because he was their 'brother and their flesh'; but slavery did not matter in the least, even though he was their 'brother and their flesh.' Nor

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

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are we surprised to read that 'his brethren were content' with Judah's proposal—that is to say, they 'hearkened' (Heb.) with perfect acquiescence.

Circumstances sometimes seem to turn out favourably for bad men as well as good, and this shows that it is impossible to believe that circumstances alone are necessarily the voice of Providence. They must be judged by principle; and if circumstances are wrong in themselves, no happy coincidence or association can make them right. There is a great deal of danger in interpreting circumstances, lest we should bend them to our will instead of reading them in the light of God's eternal truth.

Thus the first two proposals, to kill Joseph outright (ver. 20), and to cast him into a pit and let him die there (ver. 24), were set aside for a third, and he was sold as a slave to the Midianites (ver. 28). They therefore took him out of the pit, and in a short time he was on his way, as a slave, to Egypt, while they doubtless rejoiced in his removal and in their own possession of twenty pieces of silver (about 2*l.* 10*s.*).

V. The Outcome (vers. 29-36).

V. *The Outcome* (vers. 29-36).—Reuben seems to have been away when the proposal to sell Joseph was made and carried out. People are often away when they are most needed. If he had taken the bolder course earlier in the day, the result might have been very different. He seems to have been true to his character, 'unstable as water,' and when he returned to his brethren he was doubtless soon made aware of what had happened, and

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apparently entered into the plan with the rest of Gen. them. They carried out their ideas with great xxxvii. thoroughness. They found it convenient that they had not sold Joseph's coat, and taking it up from where they had thrown it, they dipped it in the blood of one of the kids, ready to show their father.

When they arrived home Jacob soon recognised his son's coat, and realising that Joseph had been devoured by an evil beast, rent his clothes and mourned many days; and though all his sons and daughters tried to comfort him their efforts proved unavailing, for he refused to be consoled. We cannot fail to note the unutterable grief of the aged patriarch. There was a time, not long before, when he met the awful sorrow and shame connected with his firstborn with dignity and trust in God (xxxv. 22), but now he seemed to be utterly overwhelmed by his sorrow. There was no expression of submission to the will of God, no testimony of faith in God, and no allusion to the new name—Israel—in the narrative. How often in the course of experience a great sorrow has so overwhelmed a soul that it has lost the peace and strength and comfort that should have been derived through faith and fellowship in God! So it was with Mary of Bethany, who sat still in the house overwhelmed with her grief when she knew that the Master was near (John xi. 20). Not only did she thus miss the glorious revelation that Martha obtained (John xi. 25, 26), but her weeping even caused trouble to our Lord. For He observed her and the Jews utterly prostrate and overwhelmed with grief in the

Jacob's  
inconsolable  
grief.



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presence of physical death, forgetful of Himself and His own power over it (John xi. 32, 33, Greek). There are few occasions on which the reality and power of Christian experience are shown more clearly than by the way we meet the shock of bereavement and death.

Meanwhile the chapter ends very significantly by telling us what happened to Joseph. The Midianites soon got rid of him, and sold him to Potiphar, a high official in Egypt.

Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.

The Sin of  
Man.

The chapter is full of contrasts between man's sin and God's grace, and calls for special attention.

1. *The sin of man.*—The root of all the trouble recorded in this chapter is envy (Acts vii. 9), a sin that has characterised human nature all through the ages. 'Neither be thou envious' is the counsel of the Psalmist (Ps. xxxvii. 1); and it was the experience of an earnest man in the moment of temptation who said, 'I was envious . . . when I saw' (Ps. lxxiii. 3). The crowning example of envy was that of the Pharisees against our Lord (Matt. xxvii. 18); and Christians are counselled against it in the New Testament, 'Not in strife and envying' (Rom. xiii. 13). The difference between envy and covetousness is that we envy *persons* and covet *things*. We are dissatisfied with our own lot, and we are annoyed and angered that others should be superior to us in the possession of certain things. The results of envy are many and varied, and our familiar Litany rightly gives us the train of consequences: 'Envy, hatred, malice, and all un-



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charitableness.' Everything recorded here of Gen. Joseph's brethren—their anger, malice, conspiracy, **xxxvii.** cruelty, callousness, deceit—sprang originally from envy. So it is always. (Cf. Rom. i. 29; 1 Tim. vi. 4; Gal. v. 21.) Envy is the root of almost every sin against our brethren. And whenever it is harboured, there is an end of all peace, rest, and satisfaction. Envy is 'the rottenness of the bones' (Prov. xiv. 30), and no one can stand against it (Prov. xxvii. 4). 'Where envying is, there is confusion and every evil work' (James iii. 16).

2. *The grace of God.*—If only God had been **The Grace of God.** first in the lives of these men, there would have been no envy; for when He fills the soul with His love and grace, there is no room for anything unworthy and wrong (1 Cor. xiii. 4). That is why the Psalmist is not content with the negative exhortation, 'Neither be thou envious,' but goes on to the fourfold positive counsel, 'Trust in the Lord,' 'Delight thyself also in the Lord,' 'Commit thy way unto the Lord,' 'Rest in the Lord' (Ps. xxxvii. 3-7). Not only are we to 'lay aside all envies,' but we are also to receive the Word of God into our hearts (1 Pet. ii. 1). It is by the expulsive power of this new affection that we are protected at all points from the sin of envy.

But the grace of God is also seen in this chapter in the way in which sin is defeated and the Divine purposes accomplished. Sin may hinder God's plans, but it cannot ultimately defeat His purposes. Sin is never necessary, though it may be used and overruled by God. It is absolutely impossible to

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bring good 'out of' evil; for there never has been any good in evil, in spite of the familiar saying about 'the soul of goodness in things evil.' But good can be brought about in spite of evil, and so it came to pass that the very steps Joseph's brethren took to defeat God's purposes were used to fulfil those dreams. 'We shall see what will become of his dreams.' They were to see this to some purpose.

For right is right, since God is God,  
And right the day shall win.  
To doubt would be disloyalty,  
To falter would be sin.

## II

# A FAMILY SHAME

GEN. xxxviii

1. And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name *was* Hirah.

2. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name *was* Shuah ; and he took her, and went in unto her.

3. And she conceived, and bare a son ; and he called his name Er.

4. And she conceived again, and bare a son ; and she called his name Onan.

5. And she yet again conceived, and bare a son ; and called his name Shelah : and he was at Chezib, when she bare him.

6. And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name *was* Tamar.

7. And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord ; and the Lord slew him.

8. And Judah said unto Onan, Go, in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.

9. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his : and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled *it* on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.

10. And the thing which he did displeased the Lord : wherefore he slew him also.

11. Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown : for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren *did*. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

12. And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died : and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheep-shearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

13. And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold, thy father-in-law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep.

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14. And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which *is* by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife.

15. When Judah saw her, he thought her *to be* an harlot; because she had covered her face.

16. And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee (for he knew not that she *was* his daughter-in-law). And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me?

17. And he said, I will send *thee* a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give *me* a pledge, till thou send *it*?

18. And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that *is* in thine hand. And he gave *it* her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him.

19. And she arose, and went away, and laid by her veil from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood.

20. And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive *his* pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not.

21. Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where *is* the harlot, that *was* openly by the way side? And they said, There was no harlot in this *place*.

22. And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, *that* there was no harlot in this *place*.

23. And Judah said, Let her take *it* to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her.

24. And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter-in-law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she *is* with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt.

25. When she *was* brought forth, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, By the man, whose these *are*, *am* I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose *are* these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff.

26. And Judah acknowledged *them*, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more.

27. And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins *were* in her womb.

28. And it came to pass, when she travailed, that *the one* put out *his* hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first.

29. And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that,

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behold, his brother came out : and she said, How hast thou broken forth ? *this breach be* upon thee : therefore his name was called Pharez.

30. And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand ; and his name was called Zarah.

WE instinctively ask why this story is found **Gen. xxxviii.** here ? Why is the record of these events given, and given in such plainness by details ? Why is the story of Jacob and Joseph interrupted at this point ? We may be perfectly sure that in a book marked by so definite a purpose and characterised by so spiritual an aim, there must be some good reason for the inclusion of this sad and unsavoury episode. Let us see whether we cannot discover what this is. It occurs in that part of Genesis where we find recorded the steps of the Divine Providence which led to the transfer of Jacob's family into Egypt. This was to be accomplished, by Joseph as the *instrument*, through famine as the *occasion*, and through Divine power as the *cause*. And in this chapter we can see the *need* of it, the entire justification of the deportation, as we contemplate the state of the people revealed by this story of Judah. We are very sharply reminded of the grave moral dangers that surrounded the chosen family as long as they remained in Canaan ; and the practical, and perhaps utter, impossibility of their being preserved pure unless removed to some shelter from such fearful contamination. We seem to have this fact suggested by the significant chronological note (ver. 1), ' And it came to pass *at that time*, ' *i.e.* at the period of Joseph's sale into Egypt. **The purpose of this record.**

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xxxviii.

It is quite unnecessary and indeed impossible to dwell upon the details of the story. It carries its own meaning and message to all who read it.

The initial trouble lay in Judah going out of his way to associate himself with the people of Canaan. If he had remembered his father's and his grandfather's experiences he would have saved himself and others from these unhappy and awful experiences. But up to this time there was no sign of grace in Judah's heart, and no thought of the covenant-God of his father influenced him in the slightest degree.

Evil Com-  
munications.

We are not surprised that from this wicked association wicked sons should have sprung. The first born was so wicked that he came under the Divine displeasure, 'and the Lord slew him.' The second son was as bad if not worse, and was guilty of that sin to which his name has ever since been given, and of which it will suffice to say that it is perhaps the very deadliest of all sins as affecting definitely body, mind and soul, and as having slain its thousands in all ages of the world's history.

The sin of Judah and of Tamar is the culminating horror of this fearful story, and the only redeeming feature about it is Judah's tardy repentance, if such it may be called, when he discovered what he had done.

Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.

1. *The awful possibilities of human sin.*—Can anything be more terrible than this record? Here is a man brought up amid opportunity of

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godliness, surrounded by good (if also by evil) influences, and yet sinning in these fearful ways, and becoming the occasion (and almost the cause) of the sins of others. Well for us if we realise from the narrative the plague of our own heart, and the awful extent to which sin may lead any one of us. But for the grace of God, who is there that dare say this might not be true of him ?

2. *The justification of Divine Providence.*—It is abundantly clear from this story what was the moral condition of the Canaanites, and how essential it was for the family of Jacob to be safeguarded from such evil. The sale of Joseph into Egypt seemed on the face of it arbitrary and devoid of moral meaning, but God was overruling the evil to bring about much good to His people. And here we can see something of the Divine meaning and purpose. It was absolutely necessary for Israel to ‘come out and be separate,’ and in this story we have the proof of it vividly and awfully brought before us.

3. *The severity of Divine Righteousness.*—The absolute candour of the Bible is an almost constant marvel. And this in turn rests on the absolute justice of the God Whose book it is. Here is the sin of one of the chosen race depicted in all its hideousness. Here is the human ancestor of the Messiah revealed in all his blackness. Behold, therefore, ‘the severity of God.’ He is no respecter of persons. The sin of His sons is as faithfully dealt with as that of anyone else. There are no favourites with Him. Sin is sin at all times,

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Gen.  
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and by whomsoever committed. Well for us if we learn and heed this solemn lesson.

The Marvel  
of Divine  
Grace.

4. *The Marvel of Divine Grace.*—It is simply astonishing that God could take up the threads of this very tangled skein, and weave them into His own pattern. First of all He dealt with Judah, and we know how great was the transformation of his character. And then, greatest marvel of all, God permitted the human descent of the Messiah to come not only from Judah, but even from Tamar. 'It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah' (Heb. vii. 14), and 'Judah begat Pharez and Zarah of Tamar' (Matt. i. 3). Now it is clear as it can be that no *man* would have done this, even if he could. Only Divine grace could dare to take up these sorry elements of human life and use them for its own blessed purpose. There is nothing more marvellous than the power and possibilities of grace. Grace forgives, uplifts, transmutes, transforms, and then uses for its own glory. 'Shall we then sin that grace may abound? God forbid.' We may not, must not, dare not. And yet, '*if* any man sin we have' the blessed assurance that grace will not leave us in the mire of degradation, defeat and despair. While it is eternally true that what is done can never be undone, it is equally true that what has been broken can be mended, and the glory of grace is its power to heal broken hearts and mend broken lives. While life can never be as though sin had not been committed, yet the alchemy of grace has wonderful transforming power. Nature knows nothing of this, and can only tell



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of law broken and penalty exacted. But the **Gen.**  
Gospel comes to hearts broken by sin and des- **xxxviii.**  
pairing of redemption, and tells of pardon, peace  
and purity, in the blessed healing and transforming  
influences of Divine mercy, love and grace.

III  
IN EGYPT

GEN. xxxix

1. And Joseph was brought down to Egypt ; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

2. And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man ; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

3. And his master saw that the Lord *was* with him ; and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

4. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him : and he made him overseer over his house, and all *that* he had he put into his hand.

5. And it came to pass from the time *that* he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake ; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

6. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand ; and he knew not aught he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was *a* goodly *person*, and well favoured.

7. And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph ; and she said, Lie with me.

8. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what *is* with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand.

9. *There is* none 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 ?

10. And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, *or* to be with her.

11. And it came to pass about *this* time, that *Joseph* went into the house to do his business ; and *there was* none of the men of the house there within.

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12. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me : and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

13. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth,

14. Then she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us ; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice :

15. And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.

16. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.

17. And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me :

18. And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

19. And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me ; that his wrath was kindled.

20. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners *were* bound : and he was there in the prison.

21. But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

22. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that *were* in the prison ; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer *of it*.

23. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing *that was* under his hand ; because the Lord was with him, and *that* which he did, the Lord made *it* to prosper.

**E**ACH scene in the record of Joseph's life reveals **Gen.** some distinctive trait of character elicited by **xxxix.** means of a crisis. We have already seen his passive submission to an awful wrong at the hands of his ruthless brothers. We naturally try to realise something of what he felt, but except for the allusion twenty years after to 'the anguish of his soul' nothing is told us ; no word of accusation falls from his lips, not a word of appeal or reproach

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen.  
xxxix.

finds its place in the story. This silence is surely remarkable, and tells its own tale of quiet strength and sublime power.

The record continues to reveal Joseph's character. The boy who suddenly exchanged the place of a petted and favourite son for that of a slave of foreign merchants is once again raised to high position, and as suddenly falls from honour, and is cast into prison. The revelation of his character is very striking, and deserves the closest possible study and attention.

I. In Pros-  
perity (vers.  
1-6).

I. *In Prosperity* (vers. 1-6).—From the hands of the Midianite traders Joseph passed into the possession of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, 'chief of the executioners.' So from the pit into which he was cast by his brothers he passes into the pit of slavery in Egypt. It is a fine test of character for a young man when he is brought suddenly face to face with adversity, for the way in which he meets his difficulties will at once reveal and practically guarantee his future life.

Thorough-  
ness in  
Work.

The young slave filled his position to the very utmost of his powers and abilities. Instead of complaining that God was unjust to him, that his lot so far away from home was utterly hopeless, he put his whole power into the work that he had to do, and we are not surprised to read that 'the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man.' Observe this use of the Divine Name, Jehovah, the God of the Covenant, Who had not left him, and Who, still more, would never forsake him. 'He was a prosperous man' is a

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phrase that reads curiously in connection with a **Gen. xxxix.** slave. How could he be 'prosperous' in such a position? The explanation is that prosperity is not due to circumstances but to character, and character in turn depends upon faithfulness to God.

His life soon became evident, for in some way or other his master observed that God was with him and was prospering him. Not that Potiphar had any spiritual insight into the ways of Jehovah, but being in some sort a religious man, he became convinced that Joseph's powers must come from a Divine source. It is one of the finest and most glorious results of true piety when those around us who may not be of our way of thinking are enabled to see the reality of our life in our daily work and conduct. **God's Presence.**

We are therefore not at all surprised to read that Joseph 'found grace' in his master's sight, and that he was made overseer over the house and over all his master's possessions. 'Them that honour Me I will honour' is one of the great fundamental principles of life which find clear illustrations all through the centuries. **God honours Faithfulness.**

The crowning point of all was that 'the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.' It is not the only time that God-fearing servants have brought spiritual blessing to the life and home of their masters. So thoroughly did Potiphar trust Joseph that 'he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which

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he did eat.' This absolute confidence in Joseph's trustworthiness and capability is very striking, the one limitation being that of food, which was doubtless due to the great care of the Egyptians about ceremonial defilement (xliii. 32).

The Secret  
of True  
Prosperity.

Thus Joseph lived his life in Potiphar's household, bearing testimony to God and bringing blessings to his master. 'The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man.' Mr Eugene Stock (*Lesson Studies in Genesis*, p. 119) calls attention to the rendering of 'He was a prosperous man' in Wycliffe's version, 'He was a luckie felowe,' and makes the valuable point that a 'luckie felowe' is not the rich man, but the man of character, the man of whom it can be said 'The Lord is with him.' Circumstances can never by themselves produce or guarantee prosperity. The 'prosperous' man is the man who lives according to genuine hope, and this is only possible when our hope is based on God.

II. In Peril  
(vers. 7-12).

II. *In Peril* (vers. 7-12).—All was now going well with Joseph. He was trusted by his master, and blessed of his God. How things would have turned out in the usual way we know not, but an event occurred, which, however forbidding and surprising in itself, was nevertheless used as the link in the chain of that Divine providence which is so marked a feature of the story.

Joseph was young, manly and physically attractive. He had not a little of his mother's beauty (*cf.* xxix. 17 with xxxix. 6), and this was the occasion of fierce temptation which came from an

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unexpected quarter. As he was Potiphar's property why should not his master's wife do what she liked with the 'living chattel'? And so the temptation came upon him in all its attractiveness and awful power. In a way it was a fine testimony to Joseph's power and influence that the wife of his master should have noticed one of her husband's slaves. Temptation is one of the great tests of life and character. It transforms innocence into virtue. Sin lies not in being tempted, but in yielding to it.

The way in which Joseph met this fierce onslaught is full of meaning. 'He refused.' There was his power. He met the temptation by a definite act and attitude of will. There was no dallying, no hesitation, but a 'great refusal.' This refusal was based on rational grounds. Behind the will were the intellect and the conscience. The first reason for his refusal was the consciousness of duty to the master who had trusted and honoured him. Very plainly Joseph told the temptress that she, as his master's wife, was the one and only exception to his full sway and power in the house. The perfect faith of the master called for the perfect faithfulness of the servant. Gratitude, trust, honour, devotion to such a master demanded, and should have, the uttermost integrity of which he was capable.

But above and beyond all this, duty to God reigned supreme. He could not, and therefore would not, commit this great wickedness and sin against God. To him God was first. The lessons of the old home had not been forgotten in spite of

Gen. xxxix.

The Way to meet Temptation.

Duty to God supreme.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

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all the treatment he had received. On the contrary the way in which the Lord God of his father had been with him and prospered him in his servitude was an additional reason for loyalty and integrity. And so on the highest ground of his relation to God, he faced this temptation and won the victory.

Persistence  
of Temptation.

But sin was not to be daunted. The temptation was continued long, for 'she spake to Joseph day by day.' Temptation once only, and temptation continued daily, are very different experiences, and many who resist at first succumb at last. There was much more than the merely sensual in this conflict. We need not suppose that a man of Joseph's nature and circumstances was immune from the grossness of the peril; but we may be perfectly certain that this was not the deepest and strongest aspect of the foe. Dr Marcus Dods, in one of those penetrating and searching delineations of character which make his studies of the patriarchs so valuable, very truly and acutely says :—

'It is too little observed, and especially by young men who have most need to observe it, that in such temptations it is not only the sensual that needs to be guarded against, but also two much deeper-lying tendencies—the craving for loving recognition, and the desire to respond to the feminine love for admiration and devotion . . . a large proportion of misery is due to a kind of uncontrolled and mistaken chivalry' (Dod's *Genesis*, p. 344).

At length the woman's passion overreached itself,



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and in the attempt to force Joseph to yield she was signally and wholly defeated. When he was faced with this crowning attempt he did the very best—indeed, the only possible—thing, ‘he fled and got him out.’ Flight is the only safety from certain forms of temptation. Some temptations we resist by meeting them, but we can only resist others by flight. Safety is found in putting distance between us and our foe, and there is not only nothing ignoble in such flight, but on the contrary, it is the highest and truest form of virtue.

And then the woman’s disappointed passion changed from love to hate. ‘Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.’ Taking the garment that Joseph had left behind him in his flight, she used it as a proof of his guilt; and first to the servants and then to her husband she made out a case against the Hebrew slave. The way she spoke of her husband to the servants (ver. 14) shows the true character of the woman, and perhaps also the terms of her married life; while the fact that Potiphar only placed Joseph in prison instead of commanding him to be put to death is another indication of the state of affairs. For appearance’ sake Potiphar must take some action, but the precise action taken tells its own tale. He evidently did not credit her story.

And thus Joseph was victorious. Her rank did not flatter him, her allurements did not entice him. In the strength of the presence of his Covenant God he was more than conqueror.

There is scarcely anything finer in Scripture than

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this picture of youth tested and triumphant. The simplicity, dignity and reserve of the narrative ; the vividness of the portrayal of the parts played—by Potiphar, his wife, and Joseph—and the unmistakable force of the presentation of truth and righteousness, command our interest and elicit our admiration. It is the typical story for young manhood, conveying its own clear and blessed message. Young men need not sin, *can* be pure, *shall* be victorious, if only they will face their foe in the spirit and power of Joseph. Jehovah is the same to-day, and His covenant of grace is ‘ordered in all things and sure.’

III. In  
Prison (vers.  
13-23).

III. *In Prison* (vers. 13-23).—We are now to notice an instance of the victory of slander. It is often a great mystery that evil forces are allowed such freedom in a world that is controlled by a righteous and almighty God. Joseph was a victim of false accusation. There have been many such since his day. When Potiphar’s wife told her story, first to the servants and then to her husband, it is possible that they may have had certain doubts of the truth of what she said, and yet were not prepared to deny altogether the likelihood of what she charged against Joseph. Perhaps those servants said among themselves, ‘Well, there *must* be something in it.’ How often people have said this on hearing a charge which they were not able to prove. Those well-known sayings, ‘There is no smoke without some fire,’ and ‘There *must* be some truth in it,’ are here absolutely disproved ; and if these things were untrue of Joseph, may they not

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be untrue of many to-day? Yet insinuations **Gen.**  
continue to be made, suggestions rankle in the **xxxix.**  
mind, inquiries are not made, and perhaps the  
trouble is never removed. How easy it is to do  
mischief with the tongue! And if the accused,  
like Joseph, keeps silence, we may easily blast a  
character by reason of our suspicion that 'there  
*must* be something in it.'

Joseph's silence is once again remarkable. As **Silence amid**  
on the former occasion when his brothers cruelly **Calumny.**  
treated him, so now he says nothing in self-defence.  
He will not rob his master of his wife in order to  
save himself. A word from him might easily have  
settled the matter, especially because, as we have  
observed, it seems pretty evident that Potiphar did  
not altogether believe in his wife's story. Yet to  
save her honour, Joseph was absolutely silent.  
There was no recrimination, nothing but a quiet  
endurance of the wrong. How he could do this is  
only explicable by that which is found no less than  
four times in this chapter—'Jehovah was with  
him.'

In the prison his experiences soon repeated **Renewed**  
themselves, for the prisoner continued to do what **Faithfulness.**  
the slave had been doing in the time of prosperity.  
He filled this post also to the utmost of his ability,  
and it was not long before he was exactly in the  
same relation to the keeper of the prison as he had  
been to Potiphar, for 'the keeper of the prison  
committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that  
were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there,  
he was the doer of it.' What magnificent rectitude

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and persistent faithfulness! By sheer force of character he won his way into the confidence of his keeper, and we may say that already other sheaves were 'making obeisance to his sheaf.' The spiritual vitality of the man is simply astonishing, and again illustrates with magnificent force the truth that God blesses and honours those who are true to Him.

Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.

Out of the wealth of material found in this chapter it may be worth while dwelling upon the element of difficulty as part of the training and discipline of human life.

The Value  
of difficulties.

1. *The Value of difficulties.*—'It is good for a young man to bear the yoke in his youth.' It is easy to read this text, and not difficult to agree with it as a matter of theory; but it is quite another matter to accept it while the yoke is upon our own shoulders. And yet if only we could believe it at that time it would do incalculable service to the cause of Christian character. There were three yokes that Joseph bore: the yoke of slavery, the yoke of temptation, the yoke of suspicion and slander. Each of these by itself would have been heavy, but all three must have pressed deeply upon his soul. It is the worst possible thing for a young life to be made easy, to have everything done for it, to have a 'good time.' Yokes borne in youth have at least three results; they prove personal integrity, they promote spiritual maturity, and they prepare for fuller opportunity. In Nature and in human life the best things are not the easiest but the

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hardest to obtain. 'Blessed be drudgery' is **Gen.**  
universally true. **xxxix.**

2. *Duty in difficulties.*—How nobly Joseph **Duty in**  
comported himself amidst all these trials and hard- **difficulties.**  
ships! He might have sulked and become  
embittered; but instead of this his spirit was un-  
conquerable by reason of its trust in God. He  
steadfastly refused to be unfaithful to his God,  
whatever might be the consequences. In duty he  
was loyal, in temptation he was strong, and in  
prison he was faithful. When this spirit actuates  
our life, difficulties become means of grace and  
stepping-stones to higher things. On the other  
hand, if difficulties are met in a fretful, murmuring,  
complaining, disheartened spirit, not only do we  
lose the blessings that would otherwise come  
through them, but our spiritual life suffers untold  
injury, and we are weakened for the next encounter  
of temptation whenever it comes. There is scarcely  
anything in the Christian life which reveals more  
thoroughly what our Christianity is worth than the  
way we meet difficulties by the use of the grace of  
God.

3. *Assurance in difficulties.*—The secret of **Assurance in**  
Joseph's power was the consciousness of the **difficulties.**  
presence of God. God had not forgotten him,  
though it might seem to have been the case. The  
very incident that was apparently the most injurious  
was the link used by God to bring about his  
exaltation. One of Horace Bushnell's great  
sermons has for its title, 'Every Man's Life a Plan  
of God,' and to the man who is sure that he is in

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Gen.  
xxxix.

the pathway of God's will there will come the consciousness of the Divine presence and blessing which will be an unspeakable comfort as he 'rests in the Lord and waits patiently for Him.' God will bring forth his 'righteousness as the light and his just dealing as the noonday.' The very troubles that seem to overwhelm will prove blessings in disguise, and before long the Divine justification of His servant's faithfulness will be seen and manifested to all men. Evil may have its temporary victories, but they are only temporary. Good and right and truth must prevail, and it is for the servants of God to wait quietly, to go forward humbly, to live faithfully, and to trust boldly until God shall justify them by His Divine interposition, and glorify His grace in their lives.

The Certain  
Victory of  
Right.

However the battle is ended,  
Though proudly the victors come  
With fluttering flags and prancing nags  
And echoing roll of drums,  
Still truth proclaims this motto  
In letters of living light—  
'No question is ever settled  
Until it is settled right.'

Though the heel of the strong oppressor  
May grind the weak in the dust.  
And the voices of fame with one acclaim  
May call him great and just,  
Let those who applaud take warning  
And keep this motto in sight—  
'No question is ever settled  
Until it is settled right.'

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Let those who have failed take courage,  
Though the enemy seemed to have won,  
Though his ranks are strong, if he be in the wrong,  
The battle is not yet done ;  
For, sure as the morning follows  
The darkest hour of the night,  
'No question is ever settled  
Until it is settled right.'

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IV  
IN PRISON

GEN. XI

1. And it came to pass after these things, *that* the butler of the King of Egypt and *his* baker had offended their lord the King of Egypt.

2. And Pharaoh was wroth against two *of* his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers.

3. And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph *was* bound.

4. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them : and they continued a season in ward.

5. And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which *were* bound in the prison.

6. And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they *were* sad.

7. And he asked Pharaoh's officers that *were* with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day.

8. And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and *there is* no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, *Do not* interpretations *belong* to God? tell me *them*, I pray you.

9. And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold a vine *was* before me.

10. And in the vine *were* three branches : and it *was* as though it budded, *and* her blossoms shot forth ; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes ;

11. And Pharaoh's cup *was* in my hand ; and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

12. And Joseph said unto him, This *is* the interpretation of it : The three branches *are* three days :

13. Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head,



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and restore thee unto thy place : and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

14. But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house :

15. For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews : and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

16. When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also *was* in my dream, and, behold, *I had* three white baskets on my head :

17. And in the uppermost basket *there was* of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh ; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head.

18. And Joseph answered and said, This *is* the interpretation thereof : The three baskets *are* three days :

19. Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree ; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

20. And it came to pass the third day, *which was* Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants : and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

21. And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again ; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand :

22. But he hanged the chief baker : as Joseph had interpreted to them.

23. Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.

**T**HE outstanding feature of Joseph's life was **Gen. xl.**

faithful loyalty to God under all circumstances. He carried his convictions with him and lived them out. The well-known phrase, 'When in Rome do as Rome does,' has brought infinite trouble upon those who have followed its guidance. Joseph never compromised his position, and as a consequence he never lost spiritual power or weakened his witness for God. Someone has said that true independence is to act in the crowd as one thinks in solitude. Joseph had already influenced the keeper of his prison, and we are now to see still

No Com-  
promise in  
Morals.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xl.** more strikingly the proof that ‘the Lord was with him.’

**I. Working**  
(vers. 1-4).

1. *Working* (vers. 1-4).—In the course of Joseph’s incarceration two very notable people became inmates of the same prison, the chief of the butlers and the chief of the bakers of Pharaoh, King of Egypt. To these two men Joseph was appointed as servant, and in this simple fact was found one of the main links in the remarkable chain of providences associated with his life. ‘None of us liveth to himself,’ and no one could have foreseen that the association of these two important servants of Pharaoh with the Hebrew slave would have brought about such far-reaching results. The smallest circumstance in life has its meaning, and it may be literally said that we do not really know the profound significance of many of the simplest details of daily life. Happy is the man whose eye is open to see the hand of God in every-day events, for to him life always possesses a wonderful and true joy and glory.

The Hand of  
God in daily  
life.

Again we observe the characteristic of faithfulness to duty which actuated Joseph at all times. Although the circumstances were hard, and his own position was the result of gross injustice, it made no difference to the faithfulness and loyalty with which he did his duty. The circumstances were all the harder because, as it would seem, it was none other than Potiphar (ver. 4) who appointed Joseph to attend to these prisoners. ‘A wounded spirit who can bear?’ And yet there is no trace whatever of any bitterness, but on the contrary, a

## In Prison

magnificent and even massive silence amid all the **Gen. xl.** misunderstanding, slander, and injustice. There are times in life when silence is indeed golden, and when to speak would be to demean one's self. Joseph had learned the secret of suffering uncomplainingly, and in the strength of his personal trust in God he won the victory over self.

It is also well worth noticing that Joseph's **Religion no bar to Promotion.** faithful loyalty to his religious convictions did not stand in the way of his earthly promotion. The men of the world are not slow to detect real character, and to take advantage of it. Other things being equal, a business man, although utterly irreligious, will trust a true Christian as an employee before one who makes no such profession. Genuine loyalty to God will always express itself in absolute faithfulness in every-day duty.

II. *Watching* (vers. 5-19).—Once again Joseph **II. Watching (vers. 5-19).** was to be associated with dreams, for his two prisoners, the chief butler and the chief baker, each dreamed a dream in one night. Dreams were regarded as of great significance in Egypt, and we are therefore not surprised to read that the men were puzzled and sad by reason of their inability to understand the meaning of what they had dreamed. Joseph was quick to see their sad countenances, a simple but significant testimony to his attitude of cheerfulness and the absence of self-consciousness. He possessed that finest of all gifts, 'a heart at leisure from itself, to soothe and sympathise.' Very quickly he inquired of them as to the reason of their sad looks, and he was

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xl.** told the cause. Now if Joseph had been in the habit of looking on life with the eyes of a cynic he would have had nothing more to do with dreams. He might have said that he had had personal experience of the futility of such things in the fact that his own dreams had been so entirely dissipated by his experiences. But so far from this spirit being shown, Joseph at once invited the chief butler and the chief baker to tell him their dreams, saying that interpretations belonged to God. How real God was to Joseph all this time! He never went back from his early convictions, but was true to his home-training in spite of everything that he had suffered. It takes a real man to hold fast to his integrity in the midst of suffering such as Joseph experienced, and to keep the spiritual life free from fret, strain, hardness and despair. Does not all this put us to shame as we contemplate, perhaps with astonishment, the profound reality of the consciousness of God in the life of Joseph?

Ability and  
Attractive-  
ness blended.

Not the least remarkable point in his character was the combination of ability and agreeableness. By sheer force of personal power he raised himself, or rather was raised by God, to a position of trust, and at the same time manifested such personal amiability and attractiveness that he became acceptable to those around him. It is not often that we find so delightful a combination of personal characteristics. Sometimes we find ability without attractiveness, in which case the man is admired and even respected, but is feared, and people are

## In Prison

apt to keep him at a distance. On the other hand **Gen. xl.** we sometimes find agreeableness without ability, which gives the man an attractiveness for a while, but his superficiality at length becomes evident and his amiability counts for very little in the eyes of earnest and serious people. When, however, ability and attractiveness are combined, we have a man of real power whose influence for good can scarcely be limited.

Joseph's readiness in approaching Pharaoh's two officers is a striking illustration of the need of faithfulness in little things. He did not wait for some great occasion, but was found faithful in the pathway of every-day service. True life will always strive to be at its best, and instead of waiting for great occasions, will make every occasion great.

The combination of Joseph's testimony to God with reference to interpretation, and his invitation to them to tell him the dreams, is another interesting feature in his life. God was the Source, but His servant was the channel of the interpretation. This has always been God's method of revealing His will. The human interpreter has always been necessary and doubtless will be to the end of time. Testimony to God.

First the chief butler's dream was told and interpreted, and after the revelation of forthcoming restoration for the butler we have an exquisite human touch which reveals the heart of Joseph. 'But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for indeed I was stolen away out of

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xl.** the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.' Joseph rightly took the opportunity of appealing to this man to use his influence to get him out of the prison. Hitherto we have been impressed with the marvellous silence and self-control of the prisoner, but these verses clearly reveal what he felt, and go to prove the truth of the Psalmist that 'the iron entered into his soul.'

**Remarkable  
Faithfulness  
and Courage.**

Then came the chief baker's dream, and he, elated by the favourable interpretation of the former dream, fully expected a similar happy ending to his imprisonment. We observe here the remarkable faithfulness of Joseph, who told the baker quite frankly that a very different issue awaited him. The courage shown in this faithful revelation is noteworthy. Not even for his own advantage would Joseph swerve one hair's breadth from the pathway of truth. That which God revealed to him he passed on to the chief baker without addition or subtraction.

**III. Waiting  
(vers. 20-23).**

**III. *Waiting*** (vers. 20-23).—It is, perhaps, not unduly imaginative to think of the day when the prison-doors were opened and the butler was allowed to go free. We may picture him bidding him farewell to Joseph with an assuring look and an encouraging word, and telling him that he would not be forgotten. And then again the doors were closed, and Joseph was still inside, wondering, doubtless, how long it would be before he would find deliverance. The story closes with the

## In Prison

pathetic words, 'Yet did not the chief butler **Gen. xl.** remember Joseph, but forgat him.' This must have been a terrible experience, for it was the deepest pit of his humiliation. Joseph must have been tempted to hate the world and surround himself with a wall of hardness and selfishness. Instead of this, we do not find that there was any feeling of bitterness or rebellion, or desire for revenge. Two years elapsed, and we doubt not that they had a steadying effect on Joseph's character as he waited for the fulfilment of God's purpose concerning him. He learned that there was something far more satisfying than recognition by man, the consciousness of doing the will of God. This is without exception the deepest joy in life.

These two years of waiting must also have had the effect of maturing whilst steadying Joseph's character. It is not too much to say that the self-possession and dignity which he showed when he stood before Pharaoh had their foundations laid during these two years. From time to time he would doubtless hear what was going on in Egypt, and perhaps in connection with the Court, and yet day after day passed without any remembrance from the one whose dream he had interpreted. But we are perfectly certain that he never regretted putting God first and allowing God to take care of His servant's interests. If only we take care of our character, God will take care of our interests and reputation. Daily faithfulness in ordinary duties is the very best preparation for future service.

**The effect of  
patience on  
Character.**



## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xl. Joseph found plenty of work to do and was enabled to bear his own sorrows and troubles in ministering to the needs of others. These two years were in some respects the most vital and critical in his life. The deeper the foundation, the more durable the building; and in these two years the foundations of his future influence were laid deep and strong. Some might have thought that the forty years spent by Moses in Midian keeping sheep, were unworthy of the man's position; but the keeping of the sheep was the making of Moses. So also these two years of quiet endurance in prison went far to make Joseph the fine man he afterwards became.

Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.

The one dominant thought that runs through the chapter is the relation of God to the ordinary everyday life of His people, especially in the time of suffering, sorrow, hardship and disappointment.

God's way  
is wisest.

1. *God's way is wisest.*—The prison was a place where Joseph was fitted for his life-work. Men of the world would have described this as 'hard luck': but to Joseph it was part of the providence of God. God always sends His servants to school in order to fit them for future work, and it is necessary that they should have 'a thorough education.' Training, whether physical or moral, must necessarily be attended with hardship; and those whom God uses most have to be trained in the hardest schools. No chastening is pleasant at the time; but in the retrospect of experience no servant of God would ever be without the



## In Prison

discipline which has enabled him to enter more **Gen. xl.** thoroughly into the purposes of God and to help more really his fellowmen.

Pain's furnace heat within me quivers,  
God's breath upon the flame doth blow,  
And all my heart in anguish shivers  
And trembles at the fiery glow.  
And yet I whisper, 'As God will!'  
And in His hottest fire hold still.

He comes and lays my heart, all heated,  
On the hard anvil, minded so  
Into His own fair shape to beat it  
With his great hammer, blow on blow!  
And yet I whisper 'As God will!'  
And at His heaviest blows hold still.

He takes my softened heart, and beats it;  
The sparks fly off at every blow.  
He turns it o'er and o'er, and heats it,  
And lets it cool, and makes it glow.  
And yet I whisper, 'As God will!'  
And in His mighty hand hold still.

Why should I murmur? for the sorrow  
Thus only longer-lived would be;  
Its end may come, and will, to-morrow,  
When God has done His work in me.  
So I say, trusting, 'As God will!'  
And, trusting to the end, hold still.

He kindles for my profit purely  
Affliction's fiery, glowing brand;  
And all His heaviest blows are surely  
Inflicted by a Master-hand.  
So I say, praying, 'As God will!'  
And hope in Him, and suffer still.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xl.

2. *God's time is best.*—When Joseph was taken from home and sold into slavery everything seemed to be against him. When he was cast into prison as the result of calumny, again everything seemed to combine to crush him. When the hope of deliverance through the influence of the chief butler was deferred until at length there seemed to be no hope of freedom, everything must have appeared dark and forbidding. And yet probably Joseph never forgot those early dreams at home of the sheaves making obeisance. God was working His purpose out; and though it was impossible to realise it at the time, we know that afterwards Joseph fully understood that God's time of deliverance was by far the best. God is never before His time but He is never behind. The clock of Divine providence keeps strict time, and has never been known to vary either in one direction or the other.

God's time  
is best.

God's Grace  
is Sufficient.

3. *God's grace is sufficient.*—In spite of everything that was against him, Joseph was victorious by the grace of God. Whether it was silence after calumny and injustice, whether it was cheerfulness amidst hardship, whether it was quick sympathy with the sorrows of others, whether it was patient endurance amidst hopes deferred, he was more than conqueror; and the secret of it all was, 'the Lord was with him.' The test of character lies in the spirit being unprovoked, though faced by constant friction and opposition; and the test of ideal service is its continuance when unrecognised. True life consists in going on, without placing any limit to

## In Prison

goodness of character or faithfulness of service, **Gen. xl.** even though neither should be acknowledged on earth ; and this is only possible by the grace of God. In a certain coal-mining neighbourhood, where almost everything was covered with coal-dust, there was a beautiful white flower perfectly free from dust. When someone who was strange to the place remarked that the owner must take very great care of the flower to prevent it from being covered with coal-dust, another who was standing by threw over the flower some dust which at once fell off, leaving the whiteness and beauty as exquisite as ever. The explanation was that the flower had on it what might be called an enamel which enabled it to receive the dust and throw it off without feeling anything of the effects. So it was with Joseph. His character was covered with the enamel of Divine grace, and all these sorrows and troubles came upon him and left him untouched except for the increased strength and power that came to him from God.

And so the message to us all is that we are to wait for God. **Need of Patience.** ‘Let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing’ (James i. 4). ‘Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise’ (Heb. x. 36). ‘In patience ye shall possess your souls’ (Luke xxi. 19, R.V.). And the secret of waiting for God is waiting on God. By simple trust and constant prayer, by loving fellowship and faithful obedience, we are enabled to wait for God so as to be ready when He

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xl.** calls. His summons to higher service comes in unexpected ways and at unexpected times, and if it does not find us ready we shall inevitably be passed by. So while we 'wait patiently for Him' let us 'rest in the Lord,' and then, like the servants of David, we shall be able to say, 'Thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint.'

## V

# EXALTATION

### GEN. xli. 1-40

1. And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed : and, behold, he stood by the river.

2. And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed ; and they fed in a meadow.

3. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed ; and stood by the *other* kine upon the brink of the river.

4. And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

5. And he slept and dreamed the second time : and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good.

6. And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.

7. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, *it was* a dream.

8. And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled ; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof : and Pharaoh told them his dreams ; but *there was* none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

9. Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day :

10. Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, *both* me and the chief baker :

11. And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he ; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream.

12. And *there was* there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard ; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams ; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

13. And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was ; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

14. Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon : and he shaved *himself*, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

15. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and *there is* none that can interpret it : and I have heard say of thee, *that* thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

16. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, *It is* not in me : God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

17. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river :

18. And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured ; and they fed in a meadow :

19. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness :

20. And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine :

21. And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them ; but they *were* still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I woke.

22. And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good :

23. And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them :

24. And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears : and I told *this* unto the magicians ; but *there was* none that could declare *it* to me.

25. And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one : God hath showed Pharaoh what He *is* about to do.

26. The seven good kine *are* seven years ; and the seven good ears *are* seven years : the dream *is* one.

27. And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them *are* seven years ; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

28. This *is* the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh : What God *is* about to do He showeth unto Pharaoh.

29. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt :

30. And there shall arise after them seven years of famine ; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt ; and the famine shall consume the land :

31. And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following ; for it *shall be* very grievous.

32. And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice : *it is* because the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

33. Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

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34. Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

35. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

36. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt ; that the land perish not through the famine.

37. And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

38. And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find *such a one* as this *is*, a man in whom the spirit of God *is* ?

39. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, *there is* none so discreet and wise as thou *art* :

40. Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled : only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

**T**RIALS may be viewed from two standpoints, Gen. xli. and it will make all the difference to our I-40.

spiritual life and peace which of these two points of view we take. From the human side Joseph's suffering was due to injustice on the part of Potiphar, and ingratitude on the part of the butler. From the Divine side these years were permitted for the purpose of training and preparing Joseph for the great work that lay before him. If we look only at the human side of trial we shall become discouraged, and it may be irritated and angered, but as we turn to look at it from the Divine side we shall see God in everything and all things working together for our good. How truly all this was realised in Joseph's case we are now to see.

I. *The Dreams of the King* (vers. 1-7).—The I. The essentially Egyptian character of this section, and Dreams of the King indeed of the entire narrative of Joseph, is worthy (vers. 1-7). of constant notice, for it provides us with one of

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xli. the watermarks of the Pentateuch, enabling us to  
I-40. perceive its historical character and its truthfulness to life. It is not too much to say that at no period after the time of Moses could anything so true to Egyptian life have been written out of Egypt by a member of the community of Israel.

Pharaoh dreamed, and his dream was associated with the River Nile, on which throughout the centuries the land of Egypt has depended for its very life. The dream was twofold: first that of the fat and lean kine, and then that of the full and thin ears of corn. In each case the dream was associated with the needs and conditions of the country.

II. The  
Failure of the  
Magicians  
(ver. 8).

II. *The Failure of the Magicians* (ver. 8).—The mighty monarch soon realised his limitations, for he was utterly unable to interpret his dreams. Like all Egyptians, he was profoundly impressed with the thought that the dreams had great significance, and ‘his spirit was troubled.’ He thereupon summoned to his presence all the magicians of Egypt and all his wise men, ‘but there was none that could interpret.’ In ancient days when so many natural phenomena were unknown and their true meaning not understood, there was great and constant opportunity for cleverness on the part of able and not too scrupulous men. The result was that a class sprang up which undertook to satisfy the cravings of men for knowledge; and, while there was doubtless not a little of perfectly legitimate information afforded by these magicians, in the course of time they became



## Exaltation

associated with chicanery and deceit. Here was **Gen. xli.**  
an opportunity for them to reveal their knowledge, **I-40.**  
and inasmuch as the colouring of the dreams was  
essentially Egyptian it might have been thought  
that they would have had no real difficulty in giving  
some plausible interpretation ; but their failure was  
complete, and Pharaoh was still without the relief  
he so earnestly desired.

III. *The Recollection of the Butler* (vers. 9-13).—**III. The**  
The law of mental association was, however, at **Recollection**  
work in the mind of one of the monarch's attend- **of the Butler**  
ants, and suddenly he remembered the days that **(vers. 9-13).**  
were past and his own experiences in the prison.  
He thereupon confessed his faults and reminded  
Pharaoh of what had happened two years before,  
and then told him of the young Hebrew who had  
interpreted his dream which had so literally and  
wonderfully come to pass. How simple and yet  
how truly remarkable is this link in the chain of  
circumstances by means of which God fulfilled His  
purposes for Joseph ! On how little does very  
much often depend !

IV. *The Call of the Prisoner* (vers. 14-16).—**IV. The Call**  
did not take long for Pharaoh to summon the **of the**  
Hebrew prisoner into his presence. Joseph was **Prisoner**  
brought hastily out of the prison and quickly stood **(vers. 14-16).**  
before Pharaoh. What a picture it must have been  
—the mighty monarch and the unknown slave !  
It is evident that Pharaoh considered Joseph was  
of the same class to which his own wise men and  
magicians belonged ; and inasmuch as such know-  
ledge of dreams was regarded as obtainable by

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xli.  
1-40.

human powers, it seems pretty certain that Pharaoh regarded Joseph as one who was an adept in the work which his own wise men had failed to do. But the very first words of Joseph showed Pharaoh the true state of the case. 'It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace' (ver. 16). Mark the self-forgetfulness of these words: 'Not in me: God.' Utterly regardless of himself or his own fate, he had one thought only—the glory of God. Had he been a time-server or a place-seeker, or even concerned for his own personal safety, he might have fenced with the question and brought about his own deliverance. Had he been a proud man and eaten up with vanity, he might have shown eagerness to obtain personal credit. All these things were utterly alien from his mind. The supreme and overmastering thought in Joseph's life was God. His spiritual vitality was inwrought and deep-seated, and nothing could shake his integrity and fearlessness as he faced the great monarch and witnessed to his God.

V. The Interpretation  
of the  
Dreams  
(vers. 17-36).

V. *The Interpretation of the Dreams* (vers. 17-36). —Pharaoh thereupon told his two dreams of the kine and ears of corn, and at once the interpretation was given. The two dreams referred to one subject, the double dream merely indicating the certainty of the occurrence (ver. 32). Seven years of plenty were to be succeeded by seven years of famine, and Joseph thereupon urged Pharaoh to appoint a man who would take action to prevent the famine from causing suffering. He advised precaution being taken during the seven years of

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plenty : all the food of these good years that could **Gen. xli.** be kept was to be stored up against the seven years **I-40.** of famine.

This in substance was the interpretation and the advice based upon it. Not a word was uttered about himself, nor does there seem any hint that he considered himself to be the man whom Pharaoh should appoint. Joseph does not seem to have cared about himself at all. The frankness **Traits of Character.** with which he told the King the dream, the quiet dignity with which he gave his counsel, the perfect balance with which he stood before Pharaoh and his Court, are striking features of this splendid character. Six traits stand out which constitute him one of the models for all time : integrity, conscientiousness, diligence, nobility, courage, humility. He is one of the all-round, symmetrical characters of the Bible, always ready, ever conscientious, never sacrificing principle, faithful and fearless at every crisis.

IV. *The Reward of the Interpreter* (vers. 37-40). **VI. The Reward of the Interpreter** (vers. 37-40). —Pharaoh and his servants quickly saw the real value of this advice and at once accepted it. Still more, the King went much further and said that Joseph should be the one to accomplish this task. ‘Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?’ Pharaoh was so deeply impressed with Joseph’s wisdom that he recognised his possession of Divine powers. Whatever precisely the King understood by the ‘Spirit of God,’ it is evident he realised that Joseph was possessed of superhuman ability. The relation of the Spirit

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xli.** of God to certain men whose lives are recorded in  
**I-40.** the Old Testament is worthy of careful study. Joseph, Joshua, and Daniel in particular are referred to as men in whom the Spirit of God dwelt (verse 38; Numbers xxvii. 18; Daniel v. 11).

**The Spirit of  
God in Prac-  
tical Life.**

And it is particularly important to observe the connection between the Spirit of God and the gifts for practical life that are exemplified in Joseph. Thus he possessed the spirit of observation. He had not lived for thirteen years in Egypt without knowing something of its needs, and it was the spirit of wisdom that enabled him to see how those needs were to be supplied. Just as sin dulls the mental and moral faculties, so the Spirit of God cleanses and refines them. A life of faithful obedience always guarantees true insight. There is no necessary contradiction between Christianity and genuine business powers. To be clear-headed does not mean to be soft-hearted. Christianity gives clearness, far-sightedness, mental perception and balance. It is perfectly true that the Gospel cannot, or at any rate does not, make an intellectual man out of one who does not possess any powers at all; it does not give faculties to those who do not possess them; but it certainly increases the capacity and refines the faculty. It does not diminish, but on the contrary increases mental life and genuine manhood.

**Moral Gifts.** The gifts possessed by Joseph were not only intellectual but moral. What marvellous self-possession was his! Such a change from the prison

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to the Court would have killed a small nature ; **Gen. xli.**  
but Joseph's head was not turned, because of his **I-40.**  
moral rectitude. We also observe what remarkable  
decision of character he showed. There was no  
hesitation—he knew what to advise, and stated his  
policy with absolute clearness and frankness. Not  
only so, but he proved once again that he possessed  
the gift of management. He had been faithful  
in that which was little, and had thereby qualified  
himself to be faithful in much.

Best of all, he had spiritual gifts. What en- **Spiritual**  
durance was his as he had learned to obey during **Gifts.**  
those thirteen years of testing! How disinterested  
and unselfish he was, having no personal ends to  
gratify, no thought of bargaining before giving his  
interpretation!

And thus his religion was supremely practical,  
and was not a hindrance to him, but a help. The  
Holy Spirit of God had taken full possession of  
every faculty of his nature, and intellectually,  
morally, and spiritually had been training and pre-  
paring him for this eventful moment.

The chapter speaks of life in various aspects, **Suggestions**  
and carries its own messages for everyone of **for Medita-**  
**tion.**  
us.

1. *The purpose of life.*—God has some sphere **Life's**  
for every one of us to fill. 'To every man **Purpose.**  
his work,' and Joseph at last found his proper  
place. What a dignity it gives to life to realise  
that God has something for each one of us  
to do!

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xli.  
I-40.  
Life's  
Discipline.

2. *The discipline of life.*—The most unlikely circumstances are part of our education. Joseph had spent thirteen years in Egypt, and most of those years had been spent under a cloud. What was there to show as the result of all this time? Apparently nothing, and yet really everything. All his experiences had been tending in the direction of training. Some dreams take a long time to fulfil.

Life's Duty.

3. *The duty of life.*—We cannot help wondering whether Joseph ever showed any impatience with his lot. At any rate, nothing is recorded. In spite of much to try him, much that pressed upon him again and again, he held fast his integrity. Loyalty to his master, faithfulness to his God, heartiness in his work, constituted for Joseph his duty. So it must be always. 'It is required of stewards that a man be found faithful.'

Life's  
Assurance.

4. *The assurance of life.*—The secret of Joseph's loyalty was the consciousness that God was with him and was working on his behalf. He little knew how God could accomplish His will and bring about the fulfilment of the dreams; but God has marvellous facilities, and many ways of working. A monarch's dream, a butler's recollection, and everything else is brought about. How true it is that 'God worketh for him that waiteth'! (Isa. lxiv. 4, R.V.)

Life's Glory.

*The glory of life.*—Joseph exemplified this in his constant living for others. Whether it was for Potiphar, or the jailer, or the prisoners, or Pharaoh, he laid himself out to serve others. This is the

## Exaltation

real meaning of altruism, and in it is the greatest **Gen. xli.**  
glory of life. True influence over our fellows always **I-40.**  
comes sooner or later to the genuinely sincere man,  
who is devoid of all merely personal ambitions, the  
man who has no 'axes to grind.' There are men  
to-day full of shrewdness and possessing great abili-  
ties who are nevertheless not trusted and loved, but  
either feared or suspected or at most admired at a  
distance! There are others who are without great  
intellectual powers, but who are absolutely genuine,  
truly sincere, and without any *arrière pensée*, and  
men trust them, love them, and find themselves  
helped by their sympathy, sweetness, and  
strength.

The message for us all is to live close to God, to **Live close to**  
be ever on the watch for God's will, to find our **God.**  
happiness in carrying out that will, to say from  
the heart, 'I delight to do Thy will,' and then to  
go forth spending and being spent in the service of  
others. When this spirit actuates us, all difficulties,  
trials, and hardships will be found only the means  
of training, testing, and preparing us for living  
to the glory of God in the service of our  
fellows.

What only seemed a barrier,  
A stepping-stone shall be,  
Our God is no long tarrier,  
A present Help is He.

If all things work together  
For ends so grand and blest,  
What need to wonder whether  
Each in itself is best?

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xli.  
1-40.

Our plans may be disjointed,  
But we may calmly rest ;  
What God has once appointed  
Is better than our best.

What though we seem to stumble  
He will not let us fall,  
And learning to be humble  
Is not lost time at all.



## VI

# THE PRIME MINISTER

GEN. xli. 41-52

41. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

42. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck ;

43. And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had ; and they cried before him, Bow the knee : and he made him *ruler* over all the land of Egypt.

44. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I *am* Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

45. And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah : and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over *all* the land of Egypt.

46. And Joseph *was* thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

47. And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

48. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities : the food of the field, which *was* round about every city, laid he up in the same.

49. And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering ; for *it was* without number.

50. And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bare unto him.

51. And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh : For God, *said he*, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

52. And the name of the second called he Ephraim : For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xli.  
41-52.

ONLY twelve years stood between the Hebrew shepherd boy and the Egyptian Prime Minister. It was a wonderful change by which, at one bound, Joseph leaped from the position of a slave in prison to that of the second ruler in the country. The story before us is the record of unchanged faithfulness amidst greatly changed surroundings. 'Circumstances alter cases,' and even alter persons, but there was no alteration made in Joseph's character in spite of the very great change in his circumstances.

I. His Ap-  
pointment  
(vers. 37-45).

I. *His Appointment* (xli. 37-45).—It is worth while dwelling once again on the grounds of this appointment. We naturally wonder whether Pharaoh's quickly-conceived and strong impression that Joseph was the very man for the post was warranted by the facts of the case, and the more thoroughly we seek to penetrate beneath the surface the more clearly we see the monarch's decision was justified. Joseph's ready apprehension of coming danger, together with his foresight in propounding a plan to meet it, deeply impressed Pharaoh and those with him. Not less evident were the quiet resourcefulness and genuine capacity with which the young Hebrew dealt with a gigantic matter which concerned the whole of Egypt. But beneath these marks of power lay the elements of character which were at the root of Joseph's real life. From the very first uprightness had marked all his conduct in Egypt. If he had been a schemer intent on gaining his own selfish ends he might have easily avoided the prison, but from the time

## The Prime Minister

he was sold into Egypt to the moment that he stood before Pharaoh he had been honest, straightforward, and true. Then again Joseph had learned the secret of patient submission. In the face of injustice and cruel wrong he accepted his lot without murmuring, and endeavoured to make the best possible use of it. The way upward often lies by a downward path through the valley of humiliation. Nor may we forget the magnificently bold use of the powers that God gave him. Whether it was interpreting dreams, or showing sympathy, or organising a national policy, he put into fine practice his divinely-given faculties, and in their exercise he found the best possible way of preparation for his life-work. Gen. xli.  
41-52.

It is at once easy and profitable to dwell upon the afore-mentioned elements of Joseph's character and manhood. We must never forget, however, that they in turn need explanation, and this is to be found in what Pharaoh spoke of as the indwelling of 'the Spirit of God' (ver. 38). Character is undoubtedly the secret of power, but God is the secret of character. Pharaoh was therefore perfectly correct when he said, 'God hath shewed thee all this' (ver. 39). From first to last it was the grace and power of God that made Joseph what he was. The Secret  
of Character.

Pharaoh very promptly gave Joseph definite proof of the appointment by putting upon him his own ring, arraying him in vestures of that characteristically Egyptian product, fine linen, putting a gold chain about his neck, making him to ride in

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xli.** the next chariot to his own, and calling upon the  
**41-52.** people to do him honour (vers. 42, 43). The familiar words "Bow the knee," representing the Hebrew *Abrech*, have been the cause of not a little discussion. The A.V. rendering dates as far back as the time of Jerome, but Professor Sayce is inclined to favour a Babylonian interpretation meaning 'seer.' It is therefore very interesting to note that some thirteen years ago a letter appeared in the *Record* mentioning that in modern Egypt *Ibrik* is in common use in the present day by camel-drivers when they want their camels to get down on their knees, and slave-mistresses in the harems say *Ibriky* when they order a slave-girl to get down on her knees and confess repentance for wrong-doing (*Expository Times*, vol. v., p. 435). It would seem therefore that there is still good reason for the old rendering.

The  
astonishing  
change of  
circum-  
stances.

Again, we cannot but mark the astonishing change in Joseph's circumstances, and we wonder whether he ever thought of the coat of many pieces with its significant meaning given to him by his father years before. Only once before, so we are told by the inscriptions, was a subject thus raised to a high position in Egypt.

Further assurance was given to Joseph by Pharaoh in the solemn promise that he should be kept from harm (ver. 44), and in the new name bestowed upon him, 'Zaphnath-paaneah. Here again we are in the region of conjecture. By some it is thought to mean 'The Revealer of Secrets,' by others, 'The Support of Life,' and yet again

## The Prime Minister

modern Egyptologists are said to favour ' God spoke, **Gen. xli.** and he came into life ' (Driver's *Genesis*, p. 344). **41-52.**

Joseph's wife was also given to him by the king, and in marrying Asenath, the daughter of the Egyptian priest, we see how thoroughly Pharaoh intended Joseph to become identified with Egypt and its life. He thus became naturalised in his new country; and if we are inclined to wonder whether he had any scruples in marrying into such a family we may perhaps remember that there was no such clear severance between the Hebrews and other nations at that time as there was in subsequent times.

II. *His Life* (xli. 46-52).—The new Prime **II. His Life** Minister was not long before he took up with **(vers 46-52).** characteristic promptitude the work which lay before him. First of all he made a tour throughout all the land, and in the seven plenteous years he gathered up all the food and laid it up in store-houses. He carried out his policy with thoroughness and success.

Meanwhile personal and domestic happiness was **Home** coming to him. God gave to him two sons, and **Happiness.** true to his constant recognition of the Divine blessing, he acknowledged God's mercies in the names that he gave to them. The firstborn he called Manassch (which means 'Forgetting'); 'for God said he, hath made me to forget all my toil, and all my father's house.' Everything in life had a profound significance for Joseph, though we are not to take these words literally, as though all his early life had become entirely obliterated from his

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xli.  
41-52.

The Past  
blotted out  
by the  
Present.

memory. The true meaning is that now he had a new outlook, and was able to view things from the standpoint of his own home rather than that of his father's. Hitherto his thoughts had naturally gone back with intense longing to the old home and his old father. Now, however, he had home, wife, work and interests of his own, and everything was henceforth to be judged from this new point of view. 'The prosperous years were doing their office in Joseph's life. They were making changes in the man. They were working off the depression, the anxiety, the wistfulness of that sorrowful past; they were filling his soul with more ample conceptions of God's goodness; they were causing him to forget all his toil. . . . His father's house, loved as it still must be, could not rise in his mind as the sole form of welfare, the sole image of good; nor could his expectations of home happiness take that form now. That, too, had gone from the present to the past. . . . God had made him feel that the career of deliverance and comfort might, and did, take another shape. He filled the present for him with other scenes, and the future with other expectations; and he enriched all with a great sense of enjoyment, of peace, and welfare given and blessed by God' (Rainy, *Expositor*, series 3, vol. iv. pp. 401-411).

The name of the second son Joseph called Ephraim ('Fruitful'); 'for God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.' If the birth of the first son reminded him of the negative side of his life's experiences, enabling him to blot out the

## The Prime Minister

memory of the past, the birth of the second son **Gen. xli.** suggested the positive side of his life in the **41-52.** abundant blessing that God had vouchsafed to him. How beautiful it is when life is interpreted in the light of God's dealings, and when everything, dark or light, has its own Divine significance! There was no resentment, no murmuring, no occupation with personal ills, no concern with mere second causes. Everything in Joseph's experience was illuminated by light from heaven.

Not the least important point derivable from the story at this juncture is that when Joseph became Prime Minister of Egypt he did not forget his religion, and set it aside as a thing of the past. On the contrary, he used it in the fulfilment of the duties of his important office. If Divine grace was needed in the time of his affliction, much more was it needed in the moment of prosperity. If ever Joseph needed protection, it was at this time. His self-possession and his perfect accommodation to his new surroundings could only have come through absolute dependence upon God. Prosperity therefore made no difference to him. He was the same Joseph that he had been in the days of adversity. He acknowledged God's hand and goodness, and thereby proved that he had learned some of the deepest lessons of life in the school of discipline.

The story of Joseph's life and work as Prime Minister of Egypt can, as we have seen, be regarded from the point of view of religious manhood, genuine character, and splendid work. We prefer, however,

Religion not forgotten in Prosperity.

Suggestions for Meditation.



## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xli.** to look at it from the standpoint of the Divine  
**41-52.** purpose, and see in it lessons about God in relation  
to His servants.

**God's  
Providence.**

1. *God's Providence exemplified.*—Again and again we shall find it profitable and important to recall the links in the chain which led from Canaan to Egypt, from the old home to the royal court. Jealousy by brothers, sale as a slave, faithfulness under temptation, sympathy with sadness, endurance of ills, loyalty to God, the dreams of a monarch, the memory of past mercies—these were the slender but sufficient threads which linked the pit in Canaan with power in Egypt. Not one of these links of connection was unnecessary. Each one was essential, and formed one of the “all things” that worked together for good. How often we find this so in life! A multitude of minute events, not even one of them great or striking or marvellous, and yet at the end a truly astonishing revelation of the working of God. Let us never hesitate to believe in Him ‘Whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth.’

**God's  
Righteous-  
ness.**

2. *God's Righteousness revealed.*—It was a long time from Egypt back to the youthful dreams of the boy Joseph, but now they were in a measure fulfilled and were yet to be completely realised. How true it is that ‘them that honour Me I will honour!’ God will justify Himself at last. His providence often appears like a piece of tapestry looked at from the wrong side, but the pattern is there and only needs the true standpoint to perceive it. ‘Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?’



## The Prime Minister

In the Great Day when everything is seen clearly it will be the testimony of every one of God's servants that 'He hath done all things well.' Meanwhile it is for us to 'rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him,' and 'He shall bring forth our righteousness as the light and our judgment as the noonday.'

3. *God's Wisdom justified.*—During those years of trial, life must have been a great mystery to Joseph. The misunderstandings, misrepresentations, and persecution were unusually severe and protracted, but they brought the needed discipline for the subsequent years of exaltation. He had learned, and so could teach. Our best work is always the result of long preparation, and it is only thus that we can pass on the lessons that God teaches us. There is a plant which takes a century to develop, and flowers but for a short time. So it is with human character. The process of training is long, but the power which results is great. It took Moses eighty years to get ready for the one night of deliverance from Egypt.

4. *God's Grace manifested.*—This is the supreme lesson which meets and impresses us at every stage of Joseph's history. In adversity he trusted his God and waited God's time. In prosperity he leaned upon his God and found His grace sufficient. And thus the balance was preserved. His heart was not tried by humiliation nor his head turned by exaltation. When the Lord exalts His servants to positions of importance it is because He has prepared them by discipline. In moments which appeal to human pride and self-sufficiency

Gen. xli.  
41-52.

God's  
Wisdom.

God's Grace.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xli. the believer needs nothing less than Divine power  
41-52. to keep him humble, simple, and faithful, and for  
all this there is no school like the grace of God.

Let us therefore make God real in our daily life, and ever put and keep Him in the foremost place in all our interests and hopes. In darkness or in daytime let us live *in* Him, and then we shall be enabled to live *for* Him. The darkness may be great and prolonged, but He is our Light. The sunshine may be fierce and dazzling, but He is sufficient. Whatever our pathway, be it shadowed or bright, He is near, He will keep, and He will make our lives strong, sweet, beautiful, fragrant and blessed.

## VII

# THE AWAKENING OF CONSCIENCE

### GEN. xlii

1. Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another ?

2. And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt : get you down thither, and buy for us from thence ; that we may live, and not die.

3. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.

4. But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren ; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.

5. And the sons of Israel came to buy *corn* among those that came : for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

6. And Joseph *was* the governor over the land, *and* he *it was* that sold to all the people of the land : and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him *with* their faces to the earth.

7. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them ; and he said unto them, Whence come ye ? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food.

8. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.

9. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye *are* spies ; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

10. And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come.

11. We *are* all one man's sons ; we *are* true *men*, thy servants are no spies.

12. And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

13. And they said, Thy servants *are* twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan ; and, behold, the youngest *is* this day with our father, and one *is* not.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

14. And Joseph said unto them, That *is it* that I spake unto you, saying, Ye *are* spies :

15. Hereby ye shall be proved : By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.

16. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether *there be any* truth in you : or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye *are* spies.

17. And he put them all together into ward three days.

18. And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live ; *for* I fear God :

19. If ye *be true men*, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison : go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses :

20. But bring your youngest brother unto me : so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

21. And they said one to another, We *are* verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us.

22. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child ; and ye would not hear ? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

23. And they knew not that Joseph understood *them* ; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

24. And he turned himself about from them, and wept ; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

25. Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way : and thus did he unto them.

26. And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence.

27. And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money ; for, behold, it *was* in his sack's mouth.

28. And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored ; and, lo, *it is* even in my sack : and their heart failed *them*, and they were afraid, saying one to another, what *is this that* God hath done unto us ?

29. And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them ; saying,

30. The man *who is* the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.

31. And we said unto him, We *are* true *men* ; we are no spies :

32. We *be* twelve brethren, sons of our father ; one *is* not,

## The Awakening of Conscience

and the youngest *is* this day with our father in the land of Canaan.

33. And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye *are* true *men*; leave one of your brethren *here* with me, and take *food* for the famine of your households, and be gone:

34. And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye *are* no spies, but *that ye are* true *men*; so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffic in the land.

35. And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money *was* in his sack: and when *both* they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

36. And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of *my children*: Joseph *is* not, and Simeon *is* not, and ye will take Benjamin *away*: all these things are against me.

37. And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again.

38. And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

WE now take up again the thread of God's **Gen. xlii.** direct purposes with Israel as exemplified in the story of Joseph in Egypt. More links in the wonderful chain of Providence come before us. The famine was affecting other lands besides Egypt, and it was the need of Jacob and his household that brought Joseph and his brethren once more together.

I. *The Journey* (vers. 1-5).—In some way or other Jacob had been informed that there was corn in Egypt, and in view of the great need of himself and his family he expostulated with his sons, and urged them to go down thither. The brethren were evidently perplexed and undecided. Their father's words, 'Why do ye look one upon another?' may possibly have reference to their awakening consciousness of what Egypt might mean to them.

I. The  
Journey  
(vers. 1-5).

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlii.** The name clearly called up memories which they would much prefer not to have brought before them. However, the pressure of need brought their indecision and hesitation to an end, and they started from home to go down and buy corn in Egypt. Only ten of Joseph's brethren took the journey, for Jacob would not allow his youngest son Benjamin to accompany them. He was the last and only comfort of the old man's life, and it would have been the crowning disaster and sorrow if anything had happened to him. We can well imagine the feelings of the ten brethren as they journeyed to Egypt and recalled the events of twenty years before. They little knew what was in store for them, and it was well that they did not, for it might easily have led to troubles of various kinds for themselves and their father. It is a merciful Providence which hides the future from our view, and calls upon us to take one step at a time, and to learn the spiritual meaning and significance of each event in the retrospect of experience.

**II. The Meeting**  
(vers. 6-25).

II. *The Meeting* (vers. 6-25).—At length the brethren came face to face with the great Governor of Egypt, and 'they bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.' Thus all unconsciously they fulfilled his early dreams (xxxvii. 7) which had been such a cause of offence to them. It is not at all surprising that they did not recognise Joseph, for the changes in his appearance between the ages of seventeen and thirty-eight, together with his Egyptian language, appearance and posi-

## The Awakening of Conscience

tion, would effectually prevent them from associating their young brother with the great personage before whom they stood. **Gen. xlii.**

His hard treatment of them has been criticised as at once unnecessary and unworthy, but it still remains a question whether he did not do the very best for them under the circumstances. Joseph was undoubtedly prompted by principle in taking these steps, and it would have been weakness of the highest and most culpable kind to have revealed himself prematurely before discovering the real character of the brothers after the long lapse of time. It is an old saying that 'the longest way round is the shortest way home,' and we have a striking example of this in Joseph's treatment of his brethren. In view of the fact that God was so real a power in his life, there does not seem much doubt that he was divinely guided in what he did. It was essential that their character should be tested, and if there was no change in them that an endeavour should be made to bring about an improvement. Joseph thereupon charged them with being spies come to see the unfortified and unprotected position of the land. Their answer was to repel with earnestness this charge, and their language is very significant when they say, 'Thy servants are twelve brethren . . . the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.' If this reference to Joseph represents their true mind, they evidently believed that he was dead, but the phrase 'twelve brethren' is very suggestive, and even beautiful. Like Wordsworth's 'We are Seven,'

Joseph's  
Treatment  
of his  
Brethren.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlii. they considered that the family circle was still intact, notwithstanding their brother's death. Is there not some hint here of an improvement in their spiritual condition?

Joseph lets them understand that he is not prepared to take their bare word of denial, and requires a definite proof of their sincerity and truthfulness. He makes a proposal that one of them shall return home and fetch their youngest brother, in order that it may be evident that they are speaking the truth. Thereupon he puts them in prison for three days, doubtless to give them time to consider and consult about this proposal. It is impossible to avoid associating the pit into which they thrust him with the prison into which he put them, and it would seem as though Joseph himself had this association in mind. In any case, we know that the memory of the past became acute, and their sin was brought vividly before them.

Joseph's  
Testimony  
to God.

At the end of three days they had their second interview with the Governor of Egypt, and at the outset there was a note of encouragement in Joseph's assurance that he feared God. The way in which God is associated with the life of Joseph, as expressed in his words, is one of the most beautiful features of the narrative. Several instances have already come before us, and there are more to follow. Thus we remember how he said, 'How can I do this . . . sin against God?' (xxxix. 9). 'Do not interpretations belong unto God?' (xl. 8). 'God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace' (xli. 16). 'God will shortly bring it to



## The Awakening of Conscience

pass' (xli. 32). 'God hath made me forget' Gen. xlii. (xli. 51). Everything in Joseph's life was guided and controlled by the thought of God. He thereupon makes another proposal to the effect that one of them should be left behind and the others return home and bring their youngest brother down to Egypt.

At this point the brethren cannot refrain from connecting what they were then suffering with what they had caused Joseph to suffer over twenty years before. Conscience was now awake, and in the presence of the Governor of Egypt they admitted their guilt concerning their brother. Time does not blot out sin, nor has it any power over the conscience. Why these men should have had this sin so vividly brought to their recollection at this time is a point of very real interest. The law of association was undoubtedly at work. They were in Egypt; a simple fact that called up the memory of the Midianite merchantmen and their journey thither. They were all together in a strange land; another fact that might have had influence in calling to mind the deed which was done as the result of a former meeting together. Then again, they were in the power of a stranger whose force was infinitely stronger than their own; and this in turn may have had the effect of reminding them of the utter defencelessness of their young brother as they plotted his ruin and thrust him into the pit in spite of the anguish of soul and his cries for pity. The elements of true repentance as seen in these words of the brethren are very striking—(a)

The  
Power of  
Conscience.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlii. Conscience: 'We are verily guilty'; (b) Memory: 'We saw the anguish'; (c) Reason: 'Therefore is this distress come upon us.'

At this point Reuben rebuked them and reminded them of what he himself had done. It was a case of weakness reproaching badness, and was not of any great moral value. Reuben was the unstable one, and it is easy for such a character to say, 'I told you so,' while not having lifted a finger to remove the injustice or right the wrong. The whole tone of the brethren is, however, very striking in the change which had evidently been wrought during the twenty years in their thought of Joseph. In the old days he was scornfully stigmatised as 'this dreamer,' but now he is 'our brother' and 'the child.' The mocking attitude had been changed for at least something of interest and sympathy, and they seem to be already experiencing a little of the truth that 'blood is thicker than water.'

Clear Marks  
of Moral  
Progress.

All this time they were, of course, perfectly unconscious that Joseph understood every word they were saying, and we can see his real feeling towards them in the fact that he was overcome by his emotions, and had to retire to weep in silence and to avoid recognition. On his return, as they had accepted his proposal, Simeon was the one selected to be kept, and he was thereupon bound before their eyes. We do not know exactly why it was that Simeon was chosen, but from the fact that Jacob on his deathbed could say nothing of good concerning him it is very probable that he was the ringleader in the action against Joseph, as he

## The Awakening of Conscience

had been in the treachery against Hamor and Shechem. **Gen. xlii.**

Joseph's command to restore every man's money into his sack and to give them provision for the way is another indication of his true feelings towards them. There is nothing more striking in the character of Joseph than the utter absence of revengeful feeling, whether it was against his brethren, or against Potiphar, or against the chief butler. At each step of his journey he shows the true forgiving spirit of the man to whom God is a supreme and blessed reality. There are some people who never seem to get over slight and injustice. They brood over them and take almost every opportunity of pouring out their wrongs and indulging a revengeful spirit. To such people 'Revenge is sweet,' and they take a pleasure in repaying people in their own coin. Not so with Joseph. To revenge may be human, but to forgive is Divine.

Absence of  
Revenge.

III. *The Return* (vers. 26-38).—The brethren had not gone far away before they discovered the money in their sacks, and when they found it 'their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?' They of course felt that they had no right to the money, and it is noteworthy that for the first time in the record God is brought into their life. Conscience was still making cowards of them, and they could not but associate the circumstance of the money in the sack with their past wrong-doing.

III. The  
Return (vers.  
26-38).

At length they arrived home and told their

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlii.** father all that had happened unto them. There were no lies this time, no deception of their aged father, and once again we are conscious of a decided improvement in the moral character of the men. Everything was told, and in particular the condition laid down by the Governor in Egypt about bringing their youngest brother with them. Their father felt the same fear that they did when he saw the money in their sacks, and the words of the old man show how keenly he took all this to heart. We wonder whether his words, 'Me have ye bereaved of my children' (ver. 36), really expressed his deep conviction, in spite of what they had told him, and of the coat which they had brought home (xxxvii. 33), that *they* had really put Joseph to death? Or it may be a mere general expression that it was through their instrumentality he had lost his beloved son.

Jacob's sad  
Faithless-  
ness.

We cannot help feeling sorry for this exhibition of faithlessness on the part of Jacob. It is a case of the old Jacob once more, and not the new Israel. As he had done very often in days gone by, he was looking entirely on the human side, and never thinking of the possibility of God having some wise purpose in all these events. 'All these things are against me' was his sad and really faithless outburst, when as a simple fact 'all these things' were definitely and directly in his favour. Four mistakes the old man made. He said Joseph was dead, when he was not; he seems to have thought Simeon could not remain alive in Egypt, when he was perfectly safe; he interpreted the

## The Awakening of Conscience

taking of Benjamin as a loss to himself for ever; **Gen. xlii.** and then, as the crowning error, said that everything was against him. How short-sighted it is possible for a true believer to be! God's 'never-failing providence' was as much at work at that moment as it had ever been in the early days of the patriarch's chequered history.

Reuben now gets the better of his characteristic instability, and boldly offers his two sons as hostages if Benjamin is not brought safely back. It was a noble and generous offer, though, of course, it is difficult to see what power he could have to bring Benjamin back out of Egypt, or what good it would be to his father to slay the two sons if Benjamin did not return. But the father would not be persuaded, and by his refusal he not only delayed the truest and best interests of himself and his family, but hindered the development and progress of the Divine purposes of love and grace concerning them.

The chapter is full of varied lessons for life. Divine mercies and human experiences are crowded into almost every part. **Suggestions for Meditation.**

1. *The persistence of the Divine purpose.*—Once again we observe the onward sweep of God's providence concerning Joseph and Israel. There is no halt, no resting, but a constant, steady movement. Event after event is taken up and weaved into the plan; nothing is outside the Divine purpose, and everything is made to subserve it. Whether it be the lack of food to Jacob, or the **The Divine Purpose.**

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlii. power of memory in the brethren, or the opportunity of mercy in Joseph, everything tends to reveal the loving kindness of God and to realise His projects for them all. At the risk of repetition—for the subject is full of it at every point—we must not fail to cling closely to our belief in the constant providence of our Father in heaven. In these days, when law is said to reign supreme, when science can only speak of cause and effect, or at least of continuity, and Christian people are apt to concentrate attention on methods, principles, and laws rather than on the Source of all these things, it is particularly necessary to hold fast the old foundation belief that

There is a Divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough hew them how we will.

Human  
Affection.

2. *The strength of human affection.*—Twenty and more years had elapsed since Joseph had experienced the cruelty and injustice of his brethren, and yet when he meets them again it is with feelings of deep affection. All that he says and does is really prompted by his devoted love for them and their best interests. There is nothing stronger in this world than human love. Its persistence, its forbearance, its self-sacrifice are writ large on the annals of the human race and constitute its noblest feature. And when, moreover, this human affection is inspired and prompted and controlled by love to God, it is in truth ‘the greatest thing in the world.’ Now, if human love is so great, so mighty, so enduring, what must

## The Awakening of Conscience

Divine love be, of which the human is only a faint **Gen. xlii.** though blessed echo? If human love is the greatest thing in the world, Divine love is the greatest thing in the universe.

3. *The power of a guilty conscience.*—There are **A Guilty Conscience.** few passages more striking in the record of Holy Writ than the revelation of the power of conscience in the brethren of Joseph. The greatest punishment that a man can suffer is that which is within, and comes from a consciousness of guilt. The marvellous way in which circumstances combined to recall with intensity the events of over twenty years before is one of the most striking and significant features of the story. What a wonderful chain of simple ordinary events led to the revelation of the sin of the brethren! That they should be called to go into Egypt of all places, that they should endure hard usage at the hands of the Governor, that they should be cast into prison, and that they should be so manifestly under the absolute control of the power and mercy of the great personage, were so many links of memory that brought back to them their sin. Conscience is the 'knowing' part of us, that which 'knows' together 'with' God, and agrees with the revelation of right which comes from Him (*con-science, συν-εἰδήσις*). It is worth while observing the seven different aspects of conscience referred to in the Scriptures—a weak conscience (1 Cor. viii. 7), a defiled conscience (1 Cor. viii. 7), an evil conscience (Heb. x. 22), a scared conscience (1 Tim. iv. 2), a pure conscience (2 Tim. i. 3), a good conscience (1 Pet. iii. 16), a



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Gen. xlii. beautiful conscience (Heb. xiii. 18, Greek). The last point is of very special importance. There are consciences which, while intrinsically good, are not outwardly attractive to others, because they are full of scruples rather than principles. The true conscience will recommend itself by its moral beauty, and this is the kind of conscience men ought to see in the children of God. This is only possible when the conscience is kept pure through the blood of Christ by the Eternal Spirit (Heb. ix. 14).

True  
Repentance.

4. *The nature of true repentance.*—We see in the story the remorse and sorrow of the brethren. Why were these not sufficient? Because a consciousness and even a confession of sin is no true evidence of an altered character. Joseph saw their change of mind as to the *past*, but it was necessary for him to know it with regard to the *future* as well. To be aware of sin is not repentance, for everything proves useless if the sin should be committed again. Right views of sin are one thing, to stop sinning is quite another. Joseph could not see this until the return of the brethren to Egypt, but we can observe in the narrative (vers. 29, 37) the elements of a better life. Repentance, therefore, is a change of mind as to the past, and this we call ‘penitence’; it is also a change of will as to the future, and this we call ‘obedience.’ In our childhood’s days many of us learned what are still the very best definitions of repentance. One is in the Church Catechism, ‘Repentance whereby we *forsake* sin.’ The other was in our hymn-book, though it is not often found in children’s hymn-books to-day:—



## The Awakening of Conscience

'Tis not enough to say,  
'I'm sorry and repent,'  
And then go on from day to day  
Just as we always went.

Gen. xlii.

Repentance is to leave  
The sins we loved before,  
And show that we in earnest grieve  
By doing them no more.

5. *The short-sightedness of human reason.*—At the end of the story we see this in the experience of Jacob. The old man made a list of his troubles, and, 'on the face of it, all that he said was in a sense verbally true; and yet he made deplorable mistakes by drawing wrong deductions. We may put our own record of life in one column and argue accordingly, but we do not know all and we ought therefore to wait until we can put God's record in the opposite column. Through judging by appearances Jacob proved himself to be utterly wrong; and while we dare not blame him—for we ourselves do the same so often—faithfulness compels us to observe that his earlier experiences might well have taught him to believe more truly in the unwearied faithfulness of God. He said 'All these things are against me,' and that is what we say as we continue to be occupied solely with circumstances. If, however, we would but look up above circumstances, we should see things as they really are, and thus be able to cry out with the Apostle, 'All things work together for good.' And we should say this because of our strong confidence that 'all things are yours.' The message is therefore clear. We must

Human Reason.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlii.** look up to God through and beyond circumstances. It was when Peter took his eyes off Christ and occupied his attention with the waves that he lost his faith and began to sink. Circumstances are only things that 'stand round' us, and they can never do more than this. They do not shut out the sky or 'stand over' us; and if only our gaze is ever fixed on God, and we believe to see the goodness of the Lord in spite of circumstances, we shall never be put to confusion.

Rest in the Lord, my soul;  
Commit to Him thy way.  
What to thy sight seems dark as night,  
To Him is bright as day.

Rest in the Lord, my soul;  
He planned for thee thy life,  
Brings fruit from rain, brings good from pain,  
And peace and joy from strife.

Rest in the Lord, my soul;  
This fretting weakens thee.  
Why not be still? Accept His will;  
Thou shalt His glory see.

## VIII

# DIVINE DISCIPLINE

GEN. xliii.—xliv.

1. And the famine *was* sore in the land.
2. And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.
3. And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you.
4. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food :
5. But if thou wilt not send *him*, we will not go down : for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you.
6. And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye *so* ill with me, *as* to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother ?
7. And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, *Is* your father yet alive ? have ye *another* brother ? and we told him according to the tenor of these words : could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down ?
8. And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go ; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, *and* also our little ones.
9. I will be surety for him ; of my hand shalt thou require him : if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever :
10. For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.
11. And their father Israel said unto them, If *it must be* so now, do this ; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds.
12. And take double money in your hand : and the money

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry *it* again in your hand ; peradventure it *was* an oversight :

13. Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man :

14. And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of *my children*, I am bereaved.

15. And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin ; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

16. And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring *these* men home, and slay, and make ready ; for *these* men shall dine with me at noon.

17. And the man did as Joseph bade ; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.

18. And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house ; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks the first time are we brought in ; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses.

19. And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house,

20. And said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food :

21. And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, *every* man's money *was* in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight : and we have brought it again in our hand.

22. And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food : we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks.

23. And he said, Peace *be* to you, fear not : your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks : I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them.

24. And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave *them* water, and they washed their feet ; and he gave their asses provender.

25. And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon : for they heard that they should eat bread there.

26. And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth.

27. And he asked them of *their* welfare, and said, *Is* your father well, the old man of whom ye spake ? *Is* he yet alive ?

28. And they answered, Thy servant our father *is* in good health, he *is* yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.

29. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, *Is* this your younger brother, of

## Divine Discipline

whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.

30. And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought *where* to weep; and he entered into *his* chamber, and wept there.

31. And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.

32. And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that *is* an abomination unto the Egyptians.

33. And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another.

34. And he took *and sent* messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

1. And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks *with* food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth.

2. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

3. As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses.

4. *And* when they were gone out of the city, *and not yet far off*, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?

5. *Is not this it* in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? Ye have done evil in so doing.

6. And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words.

7. And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing.

8. Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?

9. With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen.

10. And he said, Now also *let it be* according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless.

11. Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack.

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12. And he searched, *and* began at the eldest, and left at the youngest : and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

13. Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city.

14. And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house ; for he *was* yet there : and they fell before him on the ground.

15. And Joseph said unto them, What deed *is* this that ye have done ? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine ?

16. And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord ? what shall we speak ? or how shall we clear ourselves ? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants : behold, we *are* my lord's servants, both we, and *he* also with whom the cup is found.

17. And he said, God forbid that I should do so : *but* the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant : and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

18. Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant : for thou *art* even as Pharaoh.

19. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother ?

20. And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one ; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

21. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

22. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father : for *if* he should leave his father, *his father* would die.

23. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

24. And it came to pass, when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

25. And our father said, Go again, *and* buy us a little food.

26. And we said, We cannot go down : if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down : for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother *be* with us.

27. And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two *sons* :

28. And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces ; and I saw him not since :

29. And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

30. Now therefore, when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad *be* not with us ; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life ;

31. It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad *is* not *with us*, that he will die : and thy servants shall bring down

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the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

32. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.

33. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

34. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad *be* not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

**T**HE great detail of the story of Joseph's relations to his brethren is a noteworthy feature, and sheds not a little light on the fundamental purpose of this section and of the Book of Genesis as a whole. It is history written from a religious standpoint, and in these chapters now to be considered everything seems to be subservient to the Divine testing, revelation, and development of the character of the brothers under the stress of the discipline administered to them. In view of the great particularity of the story it is impossible to do more than touch upon its salient features; but it will repay the closest attention as a striking manifestation of Divine action and of human character.

I. *The Dire Need* (xliii. 1-14).—It was not very long before the need of food was as great as ever in Jacob's family at Hebron. The famine continued, and Jacob thereupon urged his sons to go again to Egypt to buy food. Judah at once represented to his father the utter impossibility of going without taking Benjamin with them, because of the definite and solemn words of the Governor of Egypt. With perfect plainness he told Jacob that they would not go down unless he was prepared to send Benjamin.

I. The Dire Need (chap. xliii. 1-14).

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**Gen. xliii. and xliv.** One significant and suggestive touch of the old native shrewdness seems to come out in the reply of Jacob: 'Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?' (ver. 6). That is, 'Why did you need to say anything about it; why not have kept silent?' His sons told him that this was an utter impossibility, for the man asked pointed questions which admitted only of equally pointed answers.

**Judah's Urgent Appeal.**

Once again Judah appealed to his father and urged him to yield the point. He promised to be surety for Benjamin, and expressed his willingness to bear the blame for ever if he did not return with him in safety. At length Jacob recovered his spiritual equilibrium, and consented to let Benjamin go. He also told them to take a gift to the great man in Egypt. In the old days he had tried to appease his brother Esau, and here again he adopted the same policy. Not only so, they were to take double money in their hand, and the money that was brought again in their sacks. He also commended them to the God of Power (El-Shaddai), praying that the Mighty God would give them mercy before the man and send back Simeon and Benjamin. The old man's closing words indicate a fine spirit of acceptance of the Divine will: 'If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.'

**II. The Notable Reception (chap. xliii. 15-34).**

II. *The Notable Reception* (xliii. 15-34).—The men soon arrived in Egypt and stood before Joseph, and the sight of Benjamin was more than enough to make Joseph decide to receive them and show them hospitality in his own house. The fear of



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the brethren immediately on their arrival is very striking, and they at once told the steward of Joseph's house what had happened about the money found in their sacks. The answer of the man is deeply interesting: 'Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money.' Simeon was thereupon restored to them, and we can well imagine the feelings with which they waited for the appearance of their host. Gen. xliii.  
and xliv.

On Joseph's arrival they once again fulfilled his early dreams as they 'bowed themselves to him to the earth.' His keen inquiries after their father was yet another opportunity for them to acknowledge his supremacy, 'and they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.' How simple is the narration, and yet how remarkable is the way in which God's providence had brought about the fulfilment of the dreams! Again they  
fulfilled the  
dreams.

The sight of Benjamin was too much for Joseph, and the narrative gives a beautiful touch in describing Benjamin as 'his mother's son.' Joseph's feelings compelled him to turn aside and weep in private; but recovering himself, he went back to his brethren, and at once the feast commenced. He had not overlooked the order of their seniority, and as they sat, placed according to age, we are not surprised to read that 'the men marvelled one at another.' It was also a very significant act that Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of the others, for it gave Joseph an opportunity of discovering their feelings towards Benjamin, and

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xliii. and xliv. whether there was anything like the same jealousy towards him as there had been towards the brother with the coat of many colours. The time passed with hilarity and satisfaction, their fears proving groundless, and everything promised well for their journey home as one united company to greet again their aged father.

III. The Significant Plan (chap. xliv. 1-17).

III. *The Significant Plan* (xliv. 1-17).—Joseph's orders were to provide the men with as much corn as they could carry, to put every man's money into the mouth of his sack, and to put the silver divining-cup in the mouth of the sack belonging to Benjamin. It is not certain what the process was in which divining-cups were used. Some think that small pieces of gold were thrown in the cup and demons invoked. Others think that the cup full of water was taken out into the sun, and that as the sun played upon the water the figures made were interpreted as omens, good or bad. It would seem clear from the narrative that Joseph was in the habit of using the art of divination.

They started at the break of day; but before they had gone very far they were overtaken by the steward and rebuked for taking away the silver divining-cup that did not belong to them. We can picture the scene. They were returning happy, if not exultant, with Simeon free and Benjamin safe. Suddenly, however, their elation was destroyed, and fear once again possessed them. They protested with all earnestness that they were innocent, and urged in proof of it that they brought again the money which had been found in their sacks'

## Divine Discipline

mouths on the former journey. They were also perfectly ready—so conscious were they of innocence—**Gen. xliii. and xliv.** that the one with whom the cup was found should die, and the rest would be slaves to the great Egyptian Governor. The steward would not allow this for a moment, only claiming that he with whom the cup should be found must become a slave, the others being free to return home.

We can well imagine the consternation when, after examining into every sack, it was found in the last of all, Benjamin's. Instead of allowing Benjamin to go while they returned to their father, they determined to cast in their lot with him, and so they all returned to Egypt. Once again they found themselves in the house of Joseph, and 'fell before him on the ground.' Joseph asked them solemnly and severely what they had done, and whether they did not know that such a man as he could certainly divine. Judah's words are very striking: 'What shall we say unto my lord? . . . God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we and he also with whom the cup is found.' If these words refer to Judah's belief in the guilt of Benjamin, it is very striking that he speaks of 'the iniquity of thy servants,' as though they were all included in his sin. But it may not be without some allusion to the iniquity of the old days, which they now at length confess that 'God hath found out.'

Joseph, however, would not permit of Judah's proposal that they should become his slaves. All that he required was that the man in whose sack

Discovery of  
the Cup.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xliii. and xliv. the cup had been found should be his slave: the rest of them could go up in peace to their father. It would seem as though Joseph's purpose in this stratagem was to test the brethren in relation to Benjamin, and to see whether they would be prepared to sacrifice him to their own safety. It may also be that he wished to retain Benjamin alone, at least for a time, to gratify his own intense love by having him in Egypt as a companion. But the outcome was soon to prove very different.

IV. The Earnest Intercession (chap. xliv. 18-38).

IV. *The Earnest Intercession* (xliv. 18-34).—Then Judah drew near and interceded on behalf of his brethren, and in the course of these verses we have one of the most exquisite pieces of literature in the whole world. We observe in the first place the deference and humility with which Judah approaches Joseph—another striking fact, in view of those early dreams. We also observe the beautiful simplicity with which he tells the story of his father and the child of his old age—his youngest one who alone is left of his mother, his brother being dead. The pathos of the recital is also deeply touching and almost perfect as he goes on to show how the old man, bereaved of his two favourite sons, will be brought down to his grave in sorrow. Then the appeal closes with the heroic offer to become a bondman in the place of Benjamin, to sacrifice himself on behalf of his brother. 'For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.'

No further words are necessary in connection

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with this touching and beautiful story except to call attention to the way in which it reveals the changed character of Judah and the brethren. Assuming that Benjamin was guilty, his act had brought disgrace upon them all, and if the men had been as they were of old it would have been perfectly easy to settle the question by killing Benjamin on the spot and thereby clearing themselves of all complicity. But this was exactly what they did not and would not do. At once they returned to Egypt, and more marvellous still, there was actually no reproach of Benjamin. They were doubtless conscious of their own greater guilt, and so they returned to suffer together. At last they were a united family; and Judah's pathetic appeal was the crowning proof that they were now docile and disciplined, and ready for God's further and higher purposes concerning them.

Gen. xliii.  
and xliv.

The entire section is filled with striking and suggestive illustrations of human life under the training of Divine discipline. Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.

1. *The recovery and victory of faith.*—The way in which Jacob recovers himself is deeply interesting. At first he would not hear of Benjamin going down. Reuben's appeal (xlii. 37, 38) was utterly powerless, and was doubtless due, in some measure at least, to Jacob's knowledge of his instability of character; but Judah proves more successful, and at last the old man gives his consent. Now, indeed, he is Israel, and not Jacob. Faith is sometimes checked and even defeated as we look on the dark side of Recovery of  
Faith.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xliii. things; but as we continue to face the facts, and  
and xliv. realise that after all God is Almighty, faith regains  
strength, courage is restored, and victory becomes  
ours. Like Jacob, we face the contingency of  
sorrow, not with mere passive resignation, but  
with the consciousness that everything that comes  
is included in the Divine will, and must be among  
the 'all things' that work together for our good.  
'This is the victory that overcometh . . . even  
our faith.'

Power of  
Fear.

2. *The moral power of fear.*—There is scarcely anything more interesting and striking in the story of Joseph's brethren than the way in which they were impressed and actuated by fear from first to last. Fear possessed them on their first journey; fear actuated them when they found the money in their sacks (xlii. 28); fear continued to affect them as they once again appeared before Joseph (xliii. 18); and the crowning fear was seen when the discovery was made of the cup. God uses fear to recall the heart to Himself. Fear probes, searches, warns, purifies, and keeps the heart tender and true, sensitive to God's will, and ever shrinking from that which is evil. The 'fear of the Lord' has two sides—a shrinking from sin, and an intense desire to be true to God—and it is because of these things that it is 'The beginning of wisdom.' There are few subjects more worthy of careful and prolonged attention and practical meditation than the fear of the Lord as it is revealed in Holy Scripture.

Necessity of  
Discipline.

3. *The necessity of prolonged discipline.*—As we read the story of the length of time, from the

## Divine Discipline

moment the brethren were first tested to the time when Joseph revealed himself to them, we cannot but be struck with the almost continuous discipline which they experienced, and we naturally ask why it was necessary that so thorough, persistent, and deep a work was attempted. The answer is probably to be found in the need of thoroughness of moral and spiritual training. When a large building is to be erected, it is important that there should be not merely a wide, but also a deep foundation; and it is the same with spiritual building. There are old corruptions to be swept away, there is the power of habit to be removed; and not the least result of God's work in the sanctification and purification of the soul is to deepen the consciousness of our own nothingness, to arouse and maintain in our souls an increasing sense of His all-sufficiency. This is doubtless the reason why God deals with believers by bringing to their memory old sins and causing them to learn the same painful lessons over and over again. God's work must be thoroughly done, and it is for us to bow before Him and become malleable to His will.

4. *The naturalness and unconsciousness of moral testing.*—The brethren little knew that all these ordinary events in their life were proving the occasion of the most searching and thorough examination of their character. It was the most natural thing in the world for them to go down into Egypt to buy corn and to return; and yet all the while, and quite unconsciously to themselves,

Gen. xliii.  
and xliv.

Character-  
istics of  
Moral  
Testing.



## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xliii. and xliv.** they were being subjected to the severest scrutiny on the part of Joseph. How true this is to daily experience! We think of the way in which Gideon's men were tested by the simple way in which they drank from the river. This ordinary act was made use of by God to separate the three hundred from the rest. In like manner the ordinary insignificant events of daily life are the very best test of a man's true character. It is comparatively easy to shine on great occasions when we are conscious that the eyes of others are upon us; it is not by any means so easy to shine when we are free from the constraint of other people, when we are alone in our room doing the duty of the moment with equal need of faithfulness to God. Still more, we are being tested most thoroughly by those around us in our ordinary life when we are absolutely unconscious of anything of the kind. Some years ago a gentleman expressed his deep indebtedness to the silent influence of another gentleman whom he did not know, but who, lunching each day at the same restaurant, quietly bowed his head to say grace before meat. Miss Havergal, in one of her books, prays that her 'unconscious influence' might be all for Christ. One of Bushnell's sermons is on the deeply interesting subject of 'Unconscious Influence.' What a glory all this gives to every-day life! There is nothing trivial — nothing which cannot, and perhaps does not, test and reveal character. The Christian is always on duty.

Ordinary  
Events test  
us.

Danger of  
misinterpret-  
ing God's  
dealings.

5. *The danger of misinterpretation.*—We see how true this is as we think of Jacob's first impression



## Divine Discipline

that everything was against him, and that nothing but sorrow and trouble could come of Benjamin's being allowed to go into Egypt. We see it also in the utter unconsciousness of the brethren that all that was done to them by Joseph was actuated, not by severity, but by sympathy. We are not blaming them for this lack of knowledge, but only calling attention to the simple fact that the same action may be quite easily interpreted from two points of view. This is the case in daily life. God's providence in our every-day affairs may easily be misinterpreted. What we think is actuated by severity may really be prompted by the truest loving kindness. The believer often mistakes chastisement for punishment, and there is perhaps no lesson that is harder to learn than the fact that our Heavenly Father deals with us, not punitively, but in discipline. How often we are tempted to misinterpret the ways of God with us! 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself'; and yet, if only we could and would see things in their proper light, we should understand that 'whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,' and that this is done 'that we might be partakers of His holiness.' Let us not misunderstand and misinterpret God's attitude to us, but let us seek in fellowship with him to understand his ways; for we shall find that 'the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.'

Gen. xliii.  
and xliv.

Chastise-  
ment is not  
punishment.

6. *The necessary condition of spiritual blessing.*  
—The one requirement in the case of Joseph's

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xliii. and xliv.** brethren was the proof of their repentance. It was necessary for Joseph to see the reality of their changed life. The long period between the first and second visits might well have been regarded by him as suspicious, and it was therefore essential that they should be subjected to a proper test upon their return to Egypt. Everything was thus leading up to repentance and to the proof of it. Consciousness of sin must always issue in conversion from sin. God cannot act without our repentance. There will always be a barrier to His blessing unless we are prepared to turn from sin with a hearty and true repentance. It is perhaps specially essential to emphasise this need of repentance to-day, for we are naturally too apt to lay stress on 'believe' without preparing for faith by insisting upon repentance. It is not too much to say that no blessing can come unless there is that change of mind which issues in a change of will, and enables us to forsake sin and renounce our evil ways.

**Marks of deepening character.**

7. *The marks of deepening character.*—While the proofs of great moral change are found connected with all the brethren, they are especially visible in the case of Judah. His name had been given to him at his birth amid circumstances of hope on the part of his mother, for Judah means 'Praise' (xxix 35). His early youth did not, however, afford any proof whatever that he was living up to his splendid name. On the contrary, the part that he played in the sale of Joseph (xxxvii. 26) and the choice of his wife among the Canaanites (xxxviii. 2), together with the subsequent sad

## Divine Discipline

events following his association with the Canaanites (xxxviii.), show that his life was altogether different from what it ought to have been as the son of his father and the bearer of such a name. But when he appears before us in these later chapters it is evident that there had been a remarkable change. He comes to the front in these emergencies with great force of character, and the whole tone of his exquisite appeal on behalf of Benjamin shows that he is now living up to his name. We are not at all surprised to read later on that its meaning is once more emphasised and acknowledged as true to life (xlix. 8). There is something very striking in the study of Judah as he appears in the Book of Genesis, and in particular in the revelation of his character in the chapters now being considered. God's Spirit was at work, testing, training, transforming him. There is nothing like the discipline of life to elicit and to deepen character. The pressure of poverty, the stings of conscience, the deepening of family love, the shaking of self-confidence, are a few of the ways in which Judah was brought into the line of true life and enabled to take the lead in these family troubles and sorrows. Let us therefore never shrink from any discipline that God may put upon us, only seeking for grace and wisdom to learn every lesson, to make permanent every impression, and then to manifest His grace in our lives as we endeavour to live to His praise. 'No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of

Discipline  
deepens  
Character.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xliii.** righteousness to them which are exercised thereby.  
**and xliv.** Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees ; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way ; but let it rather be healed.'

## IX

# RECONCILIATION

### GEN. xlv

1. Then Joseph could 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, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

2. And he wept aloud : and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

3. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I *am* Joseph : doth my father yet live ? And his brethren could not answer him ; for they were troubled at his presence.

4. 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.

5. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither : for God did send me before you to preserve life.

6. For these two years *hath* the famine *been* in the land : and yet *there are* five years, in the which *there shall* neither be earing nor harvest.

7. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8. So now *it was* not you *that* sent me hither, but God : and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt : come down unto me, tarry not :

10. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast :

11. And there will I nourish thee ; for yet *there are* five years of famine ; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

12. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that *it is* my mouth that speaketh unto you.

13. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

14. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

15. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

16. And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants.

17. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan;

18. And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.

19. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take your wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.

20. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt *is* your's.

21. And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way.

22. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred *pieces* of silver, and five changes of raiment.

23. And to his father he sent after this *manner*; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.

24. So he sent his brethren away, and they departed; and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

25. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father.

26. And told him, saying, Joseph *is* yet alive, and he *is* governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

27. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived:

28. And Israel said, *It is* enough; Joseph my son *is* yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

## Reconciliation

**T**HERE was no need of further delay on the **Gen. xlv.** part of Joseph in making himself known to his brethren. Judah's touching appeal had shown conclusively that the character of the brethren was entirely altered. The prolonged tests had proved satisfactory and the moment had come for the surprising manifestation.

It is scarcely possible to comment on this passage without robbing it of its charm and power.

'If the writer of this inimitable scene of Joseph's reconciliation with his brethren was not simply an historian, he was one of the great dramatic geniuses of the world, master of a vivid minuteness like Defoe's, and able to touch the springs of tears by a pathetic simplicity like his who painted the death of Lear. Surely theories of legend and of mosaic work fail here' (Maclaren's *Genesis*, p. 261).

I. *The Revelation* (vers. 1-8).—The intensity of his feelings overcame Joseph as he listened to the earnest pleading of Judah, and he ordered all the Egyptians to go out, leaving him alone with his brethren. It was impossible for him to reveal himself before others. He needed the sacredness of privacy for so special and noteworthy an occasion. It is not difficult to understand Joseph's tears as 'he wept aloud.' He had been for years accustomed to the solitary life of Egypt, and now his pent-up feelings burst forth and the true man revealed himself. Overcome and vanquished by his own love, he was unable to control himself any

I. The  
Revelation  
(vers. 1-8).

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlv.** longer. Then he cried: 'I am Joseph: doth my father yet live?' Brevity, force, and pathos are here strikingly combined. His first thought is about the aged parent who had loved him, and whose love he had never forgotten.

The brethren met this disclosure with silence and fear. 'His brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.' We are not surprised at this, for it must have been an astounding revelation to hear the words 'I am Joseph' spoken by the great ruler before whom they had bowed themselves, and in whose hands their lives had been.

**Revelation met by fear.** Joseph at once recognised this hesitation and fear, and said to his brethren: Come near to me . . . I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.' He did not hesitate to acknowledge his relationship even while he was compelled to remind them of what they had done against him. 'I am Joseph your brother.' Yes; the same, and yet not the same. He was a very different Joseph from the lad whom they had cast into the pit. Twenty years of varied experience had made their mark on him, and into the old nature had come all the enlargement of capacity and depth of experience consequent upon his prolonged trials and altered circumstances.

It is beautiful to notice that there was not the slightest word of reproach uttered as he revealed himself to the brethren. On the contrary, he urged them not to be grieved or angry with themselves, telling them that in spite of everything God had



## Reconciliation

overruled their sin to bring about a blessing. ‘God Gen. xlv. sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.’ How characteristically Joseph bore his testimony to God, as he had done so often before! To his brethren he said: ‘Not you . . . but God;’ just as years before he had said to Pharaoh: ‘It is not in me; God shall give.’ He also called their attention to his own position in Egypt as ‘a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.’

II. *The Commission* (vers. 9-13).—Based upon II. The Commission (vers. 9-13). this manifestation of himself and the statement of his authoritative position in Egypt, he urged them to hurry back home and tell his father what had happened. ‘Thus saith thy son Joseph’ was what they were to say. He is not ashamed of his aged father, notwithstanding his exalted position in Egypt. There is perhaps nothing more pitiable than to see a son who has attained to a high position ashamed of his father who has remained in a humble walk in life. At all points Joseph stands out as the true man, because he was a man of God. They were also commanded to bring their father down to Egypt, with the promise of a safe and sheltered home and the assurance that he should be near his son. The special reason alleged for this command was that there were still five years of famine, and it was therefore essential that they should be protected against poverty and want. Even Joseph did not realise the full meaning of the

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlv.** contemplated journey into Egypt. He thought of it quite naturally, as simply a preservative against famine; but God knew that it was the way in which the promise to Abraham was to be fulfilled and the family transformed into a great nation. How significant it is that our actions are left perfectly free, and yet all the while we may be unconsciously accomplishing the great and far-reaching purposes of Divine wisdom! It gives a dignity to life to realise that nothing is trivial and without meaning.

Joseph added some strong encouragement that they were to convey to their father. They were assured by the sight of their own eyes that it was their brother who was speaking to them; but not only so, they were to tell their father of all Joseph's glory in Egypt. Joseph evidently knew that his father would be impressed by these outward and visible marks of power, for not once or twice had Jacob been impressed and influenced by the tangible and visible, as distinct from the purely spiritual and non-material elements of life.

**III. The Reconciliation (vers. 14, 15).**

**III. *The Reconciliation* (vers. 14, 15).**—With these words of encouragement and command Joseph 'fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck.' The tears of joy on both sides were the only and fitting expression of the meeting after all those years of severance. Moreover, we read with profound suggestion that 'he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them.' Mark the phrase, '*all* his brethren'; Simeon, Reuben, Judah, and the rest who were responsible

## Reconciliation

for his being cast into the pit and sold into Egypt **Gen. xlv.** were all kissed and wept over by the forgiving brother against whom they had done what might have seemed irreparable injury. Nor are we surprised to read that: ‘*After that* his brethren talked with him.’ They could hardly have done otherwise, for he surely gave abundant proof, not only of his identity, but of his entire good-will to them.

IV. *The Departure* (vers. 16-24).—The news of **IV. The Departure** all that was going on soon came to Pharaoh’s ears, **(vers. 16-24).** and ‘it pleased Pharaoh well and all his servants.’ There was something very fine about the character of the king. From the moment that he came into contact with Joseph we observe truly admirable points in him, and at this juncture we find him urging Joseph to send a hearty invitation to his father and family to come into Egypt, and to be assured of the royal protection and favour. They were not to ‘regard their stuff’; that is, they were not to have any anxiety about the property they were leaving behind, since everything in Egypt would be at their disposal.

Then Joseph gave them waggons and provision for the way, according to Pharaoh’s command; and it is noteworthy that while he gave each man changes of raiment, to Benjamin were given 300 pieces of silver and five changes of raiment; no doubt in order to make some reparation for the period of anxiety that Benjamin had recently passed through in connection with the supposed theft of the cup. It is also interesting to observe the

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlv. generous present sent to his father. This was according to the usual marks of courtesy of that day, though at the same time it would help to assure his father of the reality of the messages sent by the brethren.

### Needed Counsels.

We may not overlook his parting counsels to the brethren: 'See that ye fall not out by the way.' We might at first suppose that there was some irony in these words, as though Joseph, knowing of old the quarrelsomeness of his brothers, gave them these counsels as a parting shot; but it is much more likely that he had a genuine fear that they might not readily accommodate themselves to the new experiences when they had left him and were once more by themselves. It might easily have been that their former dispositions would have reasserted themselves and caused trouble. We shall have occasion to see later on in the story that they were by no means so thoroughly conformed to the new state of affairs as to make such a counsel altogether unnecessary. It was all so strange and unlike their former days. A new and wonderful vista had opened out before them.

### V. The Result (vers. 25-28).

V. *The Result* (vers. 25-28).—Their safe arrival home was, we doubt not, a great satisfaction to their aged father, more particularly as he caught sight of Simeon and of his beloved Benjamin. The circle was complete. The brethren had brought back a plentiful supply of provisions, and there seemed to be nothing more needed by Jacob. What then must have been his surprise when he was told that

## Reconciliation

‘Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.’ No wonder ‘Jacob’s heart fainted and he believed them not.’ The news was far too good to be true, and Jacob, who had never been particularly strong in believing without seeing, was not prepared to accept so astonishing a piece of information when they told him Joseph’s words ; but ‘when he saw the waggons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.’

**The Power  
of the  
Visible.**

What a remarkable touch this is, ‘When he saw the waggons.’ Their word without the waggons does not seem to have been sufficient. Jacob was always a strong believer in the truth expressed by the well-known cynical phrase, ‘Seeing is believing.’ All through his career it was the actual, tangible, material, and visible that impressed him, and ‘the infection thereof remained even in the regenerate.’ Why was it that the waggons had this impression on him ? It is more than probable that in the quiet ordinary pastoral life of Jacob waggons were unknown, and it may also be that they formed part of the royal equipage of Pharaoh, and thus their very strangeness impressed the patriarch with the assurance that something out of the ordinary must have happened to bring these waggons to his home. It is also deeply interesting to observe the exact words of the text. ‘The spirit of *Jacob* revived ; and *Israel* said.’ Jacob thus once again becomes Israel, and it is the Prince of God who makes this resolve to go down to see his son Joseph. He had had his doubts, but these had been removed, and with belief had come prompt decision. ‘It is

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlv.** enough ; Joseph my son is yet alive ; I will go and see him before I die.'

**Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.**

It is impossible to read this story without associating with it the spiritual ideas connected with Him of Whom Joseph was a type. Later on we shall have occasion to consider this typical aspect of Joseph's life in its entirety ; but meanwhile, as we consider the disclosure made by Joseph to his brethren we may see in it some of the most precious truths concerning the revelation of Christ to the soul.

**Fulness of  
Divine  
Revelation.**

1. *The fulness of the revelation.*—Joseph's manifestation to his brethren was the disclosure of one whom they had rejected ; but one also whose love had remained all through the years and had now conquered. It was love stooping, love conquering, love blessing. The condescension of love for the purpose of uplifting the lives of others is one of the most beautiful features in human life, and much more is it the case when we think of the Divine love. The highest serves the lowest, and God's love expresses itself in self-sacrifice on behalf of mankind.

**Method of  
Divine  
Revelation.**

2. *The method of the revelation.*—We observe the privacy with which Joseph disclosed himself to his brethren. This is also true in the spiritual realm. The revelation of Christ to the soul is one of the most private of experiences. There are things far too sacred at such a time for any eye-witness or any record. At the first thought we naturally desire to know what happened between

## Reconciliation

our Lord and Peter on the morning of the Resurrection; but second thoughts are best, and we are glad that 'something sealed the lips of the Evangelist.' **Gen. xlv.**

Not only was it private, it was personal. 'I am Joseph.' So is it always; the revelation is not of a truth, or an institution, or a philosophy, or a code of ethics; but of a Divine, living, loving Person. Christianity has well been defined as devotion to a Person, and it is so because of that personal revelation of Christ to the soul.

This revelation is not only private and personal, but affectionate. Joseph kissed his brethren and thereby proved beyond the shadow of a doubt the reality and intensity of his feelings towards them, and the Divine disclosure to the soul is, above all things, a proof of God's persistent, everlasting love; the 'Love that will not let us go.'

3. *The power of the revelation.*—We cannot but be impressed with the splendid magnanimity of Joseph notwithstanding all that they had done. There is no word of reproach or rebuke, but only of encouragement and cheer. How like this is to God's method of manifesting Himself to the sinner. There is no reproach on the part of God; but it is the sinner who learns to reproach himself as he becomes conscious of the love of God towards him. We are not surprised that Joseph's brethren were full of fear, for the revelation was too much for them. It is often the case that the consciousness of sin becomes more acute after the revelation of God's mercy in Christ than it ever did before.

Power of  
Divine  
Revelation.



## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlv. The consciousness of God's long-suffering love breaks down the soul, deepens our penitence, and enables the heart to see things as it could not see them before conversion. Not only so, but in this revelation of Joseph to his brethren they found their true life. Up to that time they had been haunted with the ghost of their former sin. They had tried to leave it behind them ; their characters were manifestly improved, and yet the sin clung to them and at almost every turn they were reminded of what they had done. But after the revelation of Joseph and their reconciliation to him, new hopes, new ideas sprung up in their lives, and they were enabled to see things in their proper light and find peace in regard to their former wrongdoing. Joseph did not reproach them, but they reproached themselves, and in that self-reproach was one of the guarantees of avoidance of sin in future.

Outcome of  
Divine  
Revelation.

4. *The outcome of the revelation.*—We cannot fail to observe that the immediate results of Joseph's disclosure of himself were threefold : (a) It brought *peace* to the brethren ; peace between Joseph and them ; peace among themselves ; and peace with their aged father. (b) It also assured them of *protection*. They were to be safe from that time forward under the guardianship of their brother. (c) It also guaranteed to them *plenty*, for everything in the land of Egypt was to be placed at their disposal. How true this is to New Testament teaching needs hardly more than suggesting. Reconciliation with God brings peace—peace between God and the soul, peace in the soul itself, peace between



## Reconciliation

the soul and others. And not only so, but there is also the guarantee of protection and provision for all emergencies. When the prodigal returned to the father's house he received the kiss of reconciliation, followed by the robe and all the other proofs of reinstatement in the old home. Those who have been reconciled by the death of God's Son are certain to be kept safe in His life. (*Cf.* Rom. v. 10.)

5. *The responsibility of the revelation.*—Joseph laid one burden upon his brethren. They were given a commission. They were not to keep the news to themselves but to go back at once and tell their father three great facts: (*a*) that Joseph was *alive*; (*b*) that he was in an *exalted* position; (*c*) that he was willing to *receive* his father and all of them. This commission was faithfully carried out, and thus they fulfilled their brother's will. In the same way the reconciliation of the soul with God involves obedience to what we speak of in the New Testament as the Great Commission. It is for us to go far and near with the same message, that our Lord is indeed *alive* and risen from the dead; that He is *exalted* to be a Prince and a Saviour; and that He is willing to *receive* all that come unto God by Him. This is our bounden duty, and if we have been reconciled to God it will be for us to carry out this commission and fulfil our responsibility.

And so we praise God for His great revelation of Himself in Christ. All of Christ's is ours, and all of ours ought to be Christ's. Nothing must, and nothing need, come between us and our

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlv. Saviour. We may draw from his fulness and use it, we must assimilate His image and reflect it, and then show day by day by a humble, loving, lowly, earnest life that we love much because we have been much forgiven.

X  
INTO EGYPT

GEN. xlv. 1-30

1. And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

2. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here *am* I.

3. And he said, I *am* God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:

4. I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up *again*: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

5. And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the waggons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

6. And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:

7. His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.

8. And these *are* the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's first-born.

9. And the sons of Reuben; Hanoch, and Phallu, and Hezron, and Carmi.

10. And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman.

11. And the sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

12. And the sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zarah; but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

13. And the sons of Issachar ; Tola, and Phuvah, and Job, and Shimron.

14. And the sons of Zebulun ; Sered, and Elon, and Jahleel.

15. These *be* the sons of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob in Padan-aram, with his daughter Dinah : all the souls of his sons and his daughters *were* thirty and three.

16. And the sons of Gad ; Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and Ezbon, Eri, and Arodi, and Areli.

17. And the sons of Asher ; Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Isui, and Beriah, and Serah their sister : and the sons of Beriah ; Heber, and Malchiel.

18. These *are* the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter, and these she bare unto Jacob, *even* sixteen souls.

19. The sons of Rachel Jacob's wife ; Joseph, and Benjamin.

20. And unto Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bare unto him.

21. And the sons of Benjamin *were* Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard.

22. These *are* the sons of Rachel, which were born to Jacob : all the souls *were* fourteen.

23. And the sons of Dan ; Hushim.

24. And the sons of Naphtali ; Jahzeel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shillem.

25. These *are* the sons of Bilhah, which Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter, and she bare these unto Jacob : all the souls *were* seven.

26. All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls *were* threescore and six ;

27. And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, *were* two souls : all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, *were* threescore and ten.

28. And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen ; and they came into the land of Goshen.

29. And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him ; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

30. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou *art* yet alive.

Gen. xlvii.  
1-30.

**A**LTHOUGH hitherto the story of Joseph has been full of great detail we are now reminded that Jacob is still the head of the family, and that

## Into Egypt

everything in the record is to be regarded as sub-**Gen. xlv.**  
servient to the development of the promises of God **I-30.**  
concerning him and his house. The message from  
Joseph, as we have seen, proved successful, and  
Jacob decided to go down into Egypt.

I. *The Journey* (vers. 1-7).—We are not surprised **I. The**  
to find in this later period increasing references to **Journey**  
the name of Israel rather than to that of Jacob, **(vers. 1-7).**  
though the latter is not altogether displaced.  
'Israel took his journey with all that he had.' It  
was a very definite change and transplantation.  
He had been many years in Canaan, with all that  
it meant of settlement and stability. Besides this,  
the grave of his beloved wife was not far away  
from his home, and it must have meant a real up-  
rooting to leave the land. Above all, it was the  
Land of Promise which God had assured to him  
and to his father and grandfather before him. We  
can well understand therefore the mixed feelings  
with which he left a country so full of blessed  
memories and strong ties.

On his way he halted at Beersheba, and it would  
seem as though the memory of the place impelled  
him to offer sacrifices and worship to the God of  
his father. It was in Beersheba that Abraham  
had had a special revelation of God (xxi. 23), and  
where he lived after the offering of Isaac (xxii. 19).  
It was there also that Isaac his father lived, and  
where he too received a manifestation of the Divine  
presence (xxvi. 24). It was also the place of  
Jacob's own home in those early days before he set  
out to Haran (xxviii. 10). We can therefore

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlvi.** fully appreciate the reasons which prompted him to approach God on this occasion.  
**1-30.**

The Divine revelation was quickly given in response to his worship. 'God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob.' Observe how God uses the old name of Jacob, and calls him twice, just as He had called His grandfather before him (xxii. 11). The prompt answer of Jacob is also noteworthy, 'Here am I.' It was a phrase that sprang spontaneously to the lips of those who were in true and full fellowship with God (Gen. xxii. 11; Exod. iii. 4).

God revealed  
as the  
Mighty One.

God revealed Himself by a twofold name. 'I am El' (the Mighty One), and 'I am the God of thy father.' Thus was Jacob encouraged by a revelation of the Divine character and attitude, and this encouragement was further emphasised by the words, 'Fear not to go down into Egypt,' followed by a fourfold promise of what should happen there: (a) 'I will there make of thee a great nation.' (b) 'I will go down with thee.' (c) 'I will also surely bring thee up again.' (d) 'Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.' This fourfold promise is very striking, and, as we shall see, extends far beyond the temporary circumstances connected with the famine and the need of going into Egypt for food. The real object of Israel going down into Egypt was much more than temporary and accidental; it was a definite and very significant step by which the family became transformed into a nation. For many years the chosen race had been a mere handful of people. Abraham had long to wait before

## Into Egypt

Isaac was born, and Isaac had only two sons. One of these was still only the father of a comparatively small number, and if the promise to Abraham about being 'as the stars of heaven for multitude' was to be fulfilled, something very special and definite must take place. Although many years had elapsed since the promise of the land and the seed had been given to Abraham, there was as yet no sign of the one, and not much of the other. Added to this there was the constant danger of attack from the Canaanites, and the possibility of the comparatively small number of the chosen seed being entirely destroyed. To obviate all these difficulties, and at the same time to allow the family to grow in safety, events were overruled to bring about the journey into Egypt, where they would have all possible safety and all necessary separation from others. Not only this, but these plain, simple, pastoral men would in Egypt come in contact with civilisation, established government, and the administration of law. Every advantage of training and discipline would be theirs, and we cannot help observing in the light of the subsequent history how true were the words of God, 'I will *there* make of thee a great nation.' It was to be done there, or, humanly speaking, it would not have been done at all. (*Cf.* Dod, *Genesis*, pp. 321 ff.)

With these promises ringing in his ears, Jacob rose up, and all his family with him, and journeyed towards Egypt.

II. *The Family* (vers. 8-27.)—At this juncture the compiler of Genesis felt that it would be

Gen. xlv.  
1-30.  
The real  
Object of  
going into  
Egypt.

II. The  
Family  
(vers. 8-27).

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlvii.** appropriate to give a list of 'the names of the children of Israel which came into Egypt.' The enumeration includes some who were doubtless born in Egypt. The number is seventy, and we cannot help observing the symbolism of this figure when we recall the seventy nations into which the earth was divided according to the Jewish view, the seventy Elders of Israel, and the seventy Disciples of our Lord. The number seventy seems to suggest a completed development, and it is probably for this reason that the complete list of Jacob's descendants is given in this section.

**The Family of Jacob.**

'It is clear that our list contains not only Jacob's sons and grandsons already born at the time of the emigration, but, besides this, all the sons that formed the ground of the twelve-tribed nation—or, in general, all the grand and great-grandchildren that became founders of *mischpa-hoth*, or independent, self-governing families. Thus only can the fact be explained—the fact otherwise inexplicable—that in the days of Moses, with the exception of the double tribe of Joseph, there were, in none of the tribes, descendants from any grandson or great grandsons of Jacob that are not mentioned in this list' (Keil).

According to the Septuagint the number of those who came with Jacob into Egypt was seventy-five, and this number was used by Stephen (Acts vii. 14). The additional five seem to be the grandsons of Joseph, who are mentioned in the Septuagint version from which he quoted.



## Into Egypt

III. *The Meeting* (vers. 28-30).—We can well **Gen. xlv.** imagine the feelings both of Jacob and of Joseph **I-30.** as the time drew near for the meeting. Jacob sent **III. The** Judah before him to direct his face to Goshen. **Meeting** Judah was once again honoured. He had proved **(vers. 28-30).** his worth in his attitude to Joseph in the matter of Benjamin, and his father was now able to trust him and lean upon him as the firstborn.

And then Joseph came to meet Israel his father, 'and presented himself unto him, and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.' This loving reunion after all the years that had elapsed, and in view of all the circumstances of Joseph's life, is one of the most beautiful episodes recorded in Holy Scripture. No wonder that Israel said unto Joseph, 'Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.' How much there is summed up in these touching words! They show, among other things, that the general idea of death ushering the soul into the gloom of the unseen world was not the sole conception of the patriarchs. Jacob clearly implies by these words that there was nothing further to live for, and that he was perfectly ready to depart, having once again seen his beloved son.

As we review the entire circumstances of Jacob's **Suggestions** life from the moment that Joseph was taken away **for Medita-** from him and sold into Egypt we cannot but be **tion.** impressed with the wonderful revelation of God's providence, grace, and truth to his servants.

1. *The greatness of God's purpose.*—When Jacob

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlv.  
I-30.

The Great-  
ness of God's  
Purpose.

was told in Beersheba that God would make of him a great nation in Egypt he was also given the Divine promise, 'I will also surely bring thee up again, and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.' We cannot help wondering whether Jacob fully understood these words. We feel that he naturally expected soon to return out of Egypt when the famine was over; and yet his family was there for at least two, if not for four, centuries. 'I will also surely bring thee up again.' God did so, but it was his dead body that was brought up, and the promise about Joseph 'putting his hand' on his father's eyes doubtless refers to his closing the eyes in death. We clearly see from this the importance of taking large views of God's purpose. While Jacob and Joseph naturally thought that the family was in Egypt as a protection against famine, God was using these temporary circumstances to bring about His own wonderful purposes concerning Israel. 'The love of God is broader than the measures of man's mind.' 'Thy judgments are a great deep,' and yet the obscurity is not in God but in ourselves. As we contemplate the stretch of God's providence and the width of His wonderful purpose, shall we not continually pray, 'Open Thou mine eyes'?

The Reality  
of God's  
Guidance.

2. *The reality of God's guidance.*—Whether we think of Joseph or of Jacob, God was leading them step by step, sometimes by outward circumstances, sometimes by special visions. The guidance was the same all through, and as real as it was precious and blessed. When Jacob put himself into God's

## Into Egypt

hands at Beersheba, the assuring vision came that God would be with him, guide him to Egypt, and bless him there; and Jacob, as we know, realised at every step of his journey that it was not man but God Who was guiding. The guidance of God is as real, as certain, and as precious to-day as ever. 'Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.' It is for us to remember that the Word is 'behind' us, and that we are therefore not to go on too far, or too fast, lest we should fail to hear the Divine Voice. 'When He putteth forth His own sheep He goeth before them.' As someone has well said, 'You can always tell the way by the fact that the path is smoothed.' 'I will guide thee with Mine eye' is the promise for every believer; and if he will abide closely with God, 'the meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will he teach His way.'

3. *The wisdom of God's love.*—Mark carefully this thought. Sometimes we are tempted to think that God's love is not wise. Circumstances happen to us which we find very difficult to reconcile with the love of God. Jacob had had the promise of the land of Canaan, and yet he was called upon to depart into Egypt. Not only so, but his family were out of that land for centuries; and as the days and years went on, it must have been a problem how to reconcile their continuance in Egypt with the assurance of Canaan for a possession. But they did not see 'the end of the Lord.' There was nothing arbitrary in God's dealings. Jacob yielded up his possessions in Canaan temporarily, to receive

Gen. xlv.  
1-30.

The Wisdom  
of God's love.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlv.** them permanently a hundredfold. Before he could  
**I-30.** inherit the land he and his must be trained and disciplined to enjoy it. They were called upon to forego a partial possession in order afterwards to value a complete possession, and in all this we see the wisdom of God's love. The Divine promises were unchangeable, the Divine love to Abraham and his seed was unalterable, and yet the Divine wisdom knew how best to fulfil those promises and to manifest that love. What a call this is for unbroken and enthusiastic faith! Let us trust where we cannot trace. Let us rest our hearts upon the wisdom of God's love. The pathway may sometimes be hard, but God still lives and loves. Experiences may often be trying and testing, but God abides faithful. Our life may be shadowed by sorrow and suffering, but the cloud will always have a silver lining, since God will never leave nor forsake His own.

One hope supports me in the storm,  
When flesh and spirit quail:  
My Father holds me with His arm,  
His promise cannot fail.

The ocean of His grace transcends  
My small horizon's rim,  
And where my feeble vision ends  
My heart can rest in Him.

In confidence I bide the tryst;  
His promise is for aye.  
He guides me still, through cloud and mist,  
Unto the perfect day.

## XI

# THE NEW HOME

GEN. xlv. 31—xlvi. 12

31. And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which *were* in the land of Canaan, are come unto me ;

32. And the men *are* shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle ; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have.

33. And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What *is* your occupation ?

34. That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, *and* also our fathers : that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen ; for every shepherd *is* an abomination unto the Egyptians.

1. Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan ; and, behold, they *are* in the land of Goshen.

2. And he took some of his brethren, *even* five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh.

3. And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What *is* your occupation ? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants *are* shepherds, both we, *and* also our fathers.

4. They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come ; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks ; for the famine *is* sore in the land of Canaan : now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen.

5. And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee :

6. The land of Egypt *is* before thee ; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell ; in the land of Goshen let them dwell : and if thou knowest *any* men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

7. And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh : and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

: And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old *art* thou ?

9. And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* an hundred and thirty years : few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

10. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

11. And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

12. And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to *their* families.

Gen. xlvi.  
31—xlvii.  
12.

THE arrival of Jacob and his household in Egypt meant a very great deal both to him and to Joseph, and many things had to be arranged before they could be perfectly settled in the new surroundings. There were still five years of famine, and for that time at least proper accommodation had to be found for the household of the patriarch. In all the details Jacob still appears as the head, even though most of the work had necessarily to be done by Joseph.

I. The  
Necessary  
Arrangement  
(chap. xlvi.  
31-34).

I. *The Necessary Arrangement* (xlvi. 31-34).—It was impossible for Jacob's household to settle in Egypt, even with Joseph's approval, without the matter being referred to Pharaoh for his royal sanction. Joseph thereupon told his brethren that he would interview Pharaoh and explain the whole case to him. Joseph's words are an interesting combination of principle and prudence. On the one hand it was essential to Israel that the family should have room to grow, and, at the same time, be separated from the Egyptians ; on the other

## The New Home

hand, the feelings of the Egyptians towards Gen. xlvii. shepherds necessitated the two peoples being kept 31—xlvii. apart. Joseph's frankness in telling Pharaoh how 12. matters stood was the only way of solving the problem. It is not yet known why 'every shepherd was an abomination unto the Egyptians.' The words are clearly those of the historian, not of Joseph, and there is independent testimony to their truth in Herodotus—so far, at least, as swineherds are concerned. It is also interesting to observe proofs in history that those who kept cattle were greatly despised in Egypt, Egyptian artists showing their contempt by depicting them as either lame, or dirty, or in some other forbidding way. It is sometimes thought that the explanation of this feeling was due to the resentment against the rule of the shepherd kings, but on the whole there does not seem sufficient warrant for accepting this explanation. Probably it was due to some feeling on the part of the Egyptians that the keepers of sheep were of an impure caste. (See, more fully, *Pulpit Commentary*, p. 504.)

II. *The Complete Provision* (xlvii. 1-6).—Joseph II. The Complete Provision (chap. xlvii. 1-6). at once carried out his project of telling Pharaoh, and took with him five of his brethren. Why five out of the eleven should have been taken is not at all clear, except that the number five seems to have had some significance among the Egyptians (xliii. 34; xlv. 22). As Joseph had anticipated, Pharaoh asked the brethren as to their occupation, and they replied, according to Joseph's directions, that they were shepherds, and requested to be



## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlvii. allowed to dwell in the land of Goshen owing to  
31—xlvii. the famine in the land of Canaan. Pharaoh at  
12. once granted their request, telling Joseph that the  
land of Egypt was at his disposal, and that he was  
to arrange for his father and brethren to dwell  
in the best of it. Not only so, but if there were  
any of his family suitable for the posts, Joseph was  
to make them rulers over the King's cattle. It is  
very interesting to observe the various occasions on  
which Pharaoh comes before us in this narrative,  
from the moment that Joseph was taken out of  
prison to interpret the King's dream. There is a  
real and attractive graciousness about the man, and  
it is hardly too much to say that some of it may  
have been due to the influence of Joseph. The  
large-heartedness, sympathy, and liberality of the  
King towards Joseph and his family reveal a  
nobleness of nature that must have sprung from  
some Divine influence, however indirect and  
unconscious.

III. The  
Notable  
Interview  
(chap. xlvii.  
7-10).

III. *The Notable Interview* (xlvii. 7-10).—Joseph then brought in his aged father and placed him before Pharaoh, and immediately on his entrance 'Jacob blessed Pharaoh.' As Pharaoh had asked the sons as to their occupation, so naturally he enquired of the father as to his age. 'How old art thou?' Jacob's answer was very touching. 'The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.' In comparison with



## The New Home

the hundred and seventy-five years of Abraham and **Gen. xlvi.**  
the hundred and eighty years of Isaac, Jacob's **31—xlvii.**  
days seemed few, though 'few' and 'many' are re- **12.**  
lative terms in more senses than one. That his days  
had been 'evil' was mainly due to the fact of the  
almost ceaseless disquiet, sorrow, and discipline of  
his life. It is a striking picture that is called  
up before the imagination—the aged and feeble  
patriarch standing before the mighty monarch and  
blessing him. Old age affords a natural opportunity  
for bestowing benediction, but added to this, Jacob  
was the representative of his God, the Covenant  
God of his fathers, as he stood and blessed Pharaoh.

IV. *The Special Care* (xlvii. 11, 12).—Joseph **IV. The**  
at once did as Pharaoh had commanded, and placed **Special Care**  
his father and his brethren 'in the best of the land.' **(chap. xlvii.**  
After the King's word no one could charge him **11, 12).**  
with 'nepotism.' From henceforth Jacob and his  
household were the special care and thought of  
Joseph, who nourished them with bread 'according  
to their families.' The Hebrew of this phrase is  
very beautiful in its literalness, 'according to the  
little ones.' In the same way Joseph promised  
later on to nourish his brethren and 'their little  
ones.' The children were not to be forgotten.  
Thus everything turned out exactly as Joseph  
had anticipated, and Jacob and his house were  
ensured protection all through those five years of  
famine.

1. *The simplicity of Divine providence.*—As we **Suggestions**  
read this story and concentrate attention first of **for Medita-**  
**tion.**

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlvi. all on the narrative as ordinary history, we see  
31—xlvii. nothing whatever but the obvious, the natural,  
12. the simple and the straightforward. A famine  
caused a family to leave home and sojourn in a  
strange land. They came there under perfectly  
usual circumstances, and never expected to re-  
main longer than the years of special need. Every  
thing is quite clear and straightforward, with no cir-  
cumstances left unexplained ; and yet with it all we  
can see, as we review the story, that God in His  
providence was taking hold of these everyday events,  
and weaving them into His own Divine pattern for  
Israel. How true this is to life is at once clear to  
us all. The smallest experiences of our every-day  
life may form part of a mighty and far-reaching  
Providence. We pay a visit, intending to stay a  
week, and then we are led to take up our abode  
in that place, with all the course of our life entirely  
altered from that day forward. Or it may be that  
into the even tenor of our life comes a letter with  
a simple request which has very far-reaching effects,  
changing not one life, but several. It is all per-  
fectly simple and yet perfectly Divine ; and though,  
as we review our pathway in the retrospect, we  
can see nothing in detail that has been marvellous  
or out of the way, yet the sum-total of everything  
stands out as an astonishing example of the pro-  
vidence of God. Let us cultivate the habit of  
investing every detail of life with significance, and  
try to learn the precise lessons that God desires to  
teach us. Let us refuse to limit God and His  
providence to the great occasions of life, and let

Simplicity of  
Divine  
Providence.

## The New Home

us believe that nothing can come across our path-  
way unless it is in some way or other part of His  
loving and wise will concerning us.

Gen. xlvi.  
31—xlvii.  
12.

2. *The splendour of honest toil.*—The sons of Jacob were shepherds, ordinary working men, who earned their living by manual labour. There was nothing unworthy in the precise trade to which they devoted themselves, but on the contrary, there was a true honour and glory in their toil. This is one of the essential privileges and glories of life, the capacity and opportunity for work. Whether the toil is manual or mental, it is that for which we have been placed in the world, and no one whose occupation is chiefly manual should for a moment think that there is anything unworthy of the noblest nature in devoting itself to its daily calling. If only we realise that work is part of God's will for us, then whatever precise work we may be called upon to do, we shall do as 'under the great Taskmaster's eye,' and

Splendour of  
honest toil.

A servant with this clause  
Makes drudgery Divine.  
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,  
Makes that and the action fine.‡

3. *The sacredness of family life.*—The relations of Joseph with his father and brethren once more bring before us the beauty and glory of family life, and we are reminded of the oft-quoted saying that 'Blood is thicker than water.' It is hardly too much to imagine the Egyptian courtiers as tempted to sneer at the great ruler when they found out the

Sacredness  
of family life.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlv. very ordinary circumstances of his family life, more  
31—xlvii. particularly as his brethren were of a trade that  
12. was an abomination to the Egyptians. We can picture, without any great difficulty or injustice, these Egyptian magnates remarking with surprise that the one who had done so great a work for Egypt, and was occupying so exalted a position, should have had so humble an origin. We can also fully enter into Joseph's feelings, as he told Pharaoh with perfect frankness of his brethren's occupation, hateful though that was to the Egyptians. In all this, Joseph never faltered or hesitated. His love for his father and brethren was pure and strong, and nothing was allowed to affect it in the very least. So it should always be. Whatever differences of position may take place between members of the same family, the strength of family love should remain unimpaired, and every rightful opportunity taken of expressing it. God has placed the solitary in families, and in the maintenance and furtherance of family life and love will be found one of the channels of blessing to the world.

Significance  
of ordinary  
life.

4. *The significance of ordinary life.*—We notice that twice over Jacob uses the word 'pilgrimage' to express his idea of his own life and the life of his fathers. 'The days of the years of my pilgrimage.' To him life had been a journey, with a starting point and a goal, and it is this aspect of life as a pilgrimage which enabled Jacob to invest it with a sacred and special significance. The same idea of life as a pilgrimage is found all

## The New Home

through the Bible. Holy Scripture represents life as a sojourning, a temporary residence in a land which is not one's own. Even Canaan, to the patriarchs, was regarded as the land of their pilgrimage, and in due time this idea was heightened and transformed into the thought of a heavenly Canaan (Gen. xvii. 18 ; xxviii. 4 ; Lev. xvii. 22 ; Deut. xxiv. 14 ; 1 Chron. xxix. 15 ; Psalm xxix. 13). The same idea is taken up in the New Testament, and the patriarchs are said to have longed for a better country, confessing themselves to be 'strangers and sojourners upon earth' (Heb. xi. 14, Greek). This thought of life as a sojourning away from our true home does not obtain the prominence now that it did of old. This is due in great measure to the sneer of George Eliot about 'other-worldliness.' Nevertheless it is as true to-day as ever that 'this is not our rest,' and that 'here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.' This is the true perspective for every believer. He should regard the present life as a pilgrimage, not as a place in which he is to live permanently, but one through which he is to hasten, looking off from self and circumstances to Him who has gone before us as the Captain of our Salvation to bring many sons to glory. The thought of life as a pilgrimage will inspire and cheer the heart under the storm and stress of earthly discipline, for amidst all troubles and trials, shadows and sorrows, the heart will ever be darting forward in hope and expectation of 'the rest that remaineth to the people of God.'

Gen. xlvii.  
31—xlvii.  
12.

Our life a  
pilgrimage.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlvii.** O pilgrim, as you journey, do you ever gladly say,  
**31—xlvii.** In spite of heavy burdens and the roughness of the  
**12.** way,

That it does not surely matter—all the strange and  
bitter stress,  
Heat and cold, and toil and sorrow—'twill be healed  
with blessedness,  
For the road leads home ?

Home ! the safe and blissful shelter where is glad  
and full content,  
And companionship of kindred ; and the treasures early  
rent  
From your holding shall be given back more  
precious than before.  
Oh, you will not mind the journey with such blessed-  
ness in store,  
When the road leads home.

Oh, you will not mind the roughness or the steepness  
of the way,  
Nor the chill, unrested morning, nor the dreariness  
of the day ;  
And you will not take a turning to the left or to  
the right,  
But go straight ahead, nor tremble at the coming of  
the night,  
For the road leads home.

And often for your comfort you will read the guide  
and chart ;  
It has wisdom for the mind and sweet solace for  
the heart ;  
It will serve you as a mentor, it will guide you  
sure and straight  
All the time that you will journey, be the ending  
soon or late—  
And the road leads home.

## XII

### A WISE RULER

Gen. xlvii. 13-26

13. And *there was* no bread in all the land ; for the famine *was* very sore, so that the land of Egypt and *all* the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine.

14. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought : and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

15. And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread : for why should we die in thy presence ? for the money faileth.

16. And Joseph said, Give your cattle ; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail.

17. And they brought their cattle unto Joseph : and Joseph gave them bread *in exchange* for horses, and for the flocks, and for cattle of the herds, and for the asses : and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year.

18. When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide *it* from my lord, how that our money is spent : my lord also hath our herds of cattle ; there is not aught left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands :

19. Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land ? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh : and give *us* seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate.

20. And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh ; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them : so the land became Pharaoh's.

21. And as for the people, he removed them to cities from *one* end of the borders of Egypt even to the *other* end thereof.

22. Only the land of the priests bought he not ; for the priests had a portion *assigned them* of Pharaoh, and did eat their



## Genesis xxxvii.—1

portion which Pharaoh gave them : wherefore they sold not their lands.

23. Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh : lo, *here is* seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.

24. And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth *part* unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones.

25. And they said, Thou hast saved our lives : let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.

26. And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, *that* Pharaoh should have the fifth *part* : except the land of the priests only, *which* became not Pharaoh's.

Gen. xlvii.  
13-26.

**I**T is always interesting to study great men from different points of view. Joseph lived a many-sided life, and we are enabled to see him in his personal and domestic, and also in his public and official relations. Hitherto we have observed him mainly in regard to his personal life to God and to his family. In the present section he comes before us as a statesman wielding a mighty influence by his national policy.

The purpose  
of this  
section.

It is important, however, to notice why this section describing his policy during the famine appears at this place in the story. A summary of the fourteen years has already been given in xli. 53-57, but the narrative at that point was interrupted in order to account for the coming of Joseph's brethren into Egypt and all that arose out of it. This occupied the long section from xlii. 1—xlvii. 12, and even now the Egyptian policy seems to be introduced almost entirely from Israel's point of view, for it is embedded between one small section (vers. 11, 12,) and another (ver. 27) which describe



## A Wise Ruler

Israel's position and progress in Egypt. We shall see as we proceed how definite a bearing Joseph's policy had on the life and future of his father's family. The famine is shown to account quite definitely for the need of urgency in the care of his father's household. We Gen. xlvii. 13-26.

We will, however, take a general look at Joseph's administration during these years. Whatsoever has been written has been written 'for our learning,' and there are very definite and valuable lessons derivable from Joseph's statesmanship.

I. *The Plan.*—The main idea of Joseph's policy was to take necessary steps during the years of plenty in order to economise for the years of famine. Overseers were appointed over the land, and a tax of one-fifth part was made during the seven plentiful years. Then the food of those good years was stored up against the years of famine. When the famine came and there was no bread in the land, the people came to Joseph according to Pharaoh's orders (xli. 55) and bought corn with their money. When the money was all spent and they still needed food during the famine, they bought food with their cattle. Last of all, when there were no more cattle to bring, they offered themselves and their lands for bread. Joseph thus bought up the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, with the exception of the portion that belonged to the priests, and the people entered into a sort of feudal service to the King. I. The Plan.

II. *The Wisdom of the Plan.*—Joseph's policy has been questioned from time to time on several grounds. In the first place, it is charged against II. The Wisdom of the Plan.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlvii.** him that he showed undue partiality to his own  
**13-26.** kindred in providing them with bread when every-  
body else had to pay for their own. But it should  
be pointed out that the people of Israel were in  
Egypt as the guests of Pharaoh; they were not  
beggars, but on an entirely different footing. Besides,  
there was no possibility of their purchasing food in  
view of the fact that they had left all their posses-  
sions behind them. They had been told by Pharaoh  
not to be anxious about what they possessed in  
Canaan, and he promised that all the good of Egypt  
should be theirs (xlv. 20). Joseph did nothing that  
was not clearly sanctioned and indeed ordered by  
Pharaoh, and he cannot be blamed for the kindness  
he showed to his father and brethren. Their  
temporary sojourn in Egypt as visitors placed  
them in an entirely different category from the  
inhabitants of the land. Pharaoh's care of them  
was a matter of philanthropy, while a free gift  
of corn to the people would probably have resulted  
in pauperisation.

**Criticism of  
Joseph's  
policy.**

It is also charged against Joseph that he did the  
people an injustice by leading them into servitude  
and putting them altogether at the mercy of the  
Crown, but it is not correct or fair to speak of it  
as servitude in the strict sense of the word. They  
were Crown tenants rather than slaves, and the  
tax that he imposed was a very moderate one in  
view of the great productiveness of the Nile Valley.  
The true interpretation of verse 21 seems to be that  
Joseph 'removed' them from place to place for the  
purpose of guaranteeing to them an efficient supply of

## A Wise Ruler

food as needed (xli. 35). Nor is it correct to speak of the money as an exaction, for 20 per cent. would not have been an exorbitant tax. They were free labourers or tenants of the Crown, instead of being independent landlords. Knobel (quoted in Driver's *Genesis*, p. 374) says :—

‘In view of the fertility of Egypt the proportion does not seem excessive. In the time of the Maccabees the Jews, until Demetrius freed them, paid the Syrian Government one-third of the seed and one-half of the fruit (1 Macc. x. 30). Under Turkish rule the proportion is sometimes one-half of the produce, and Arab exactions from the *fellahin* are similar. In Syria cases occur where it is two-thirds ; and about Ispahan, in Persia, the peasants, who receive land and seed from the Government, pay even three-fourths of their harvest.’

It is also very probable that some such naturalisation of the land was necessary. As Sayce says : ‘The power of the old aristocracy was broken as completely as it has been in Japan in our own day.’

But the main proof of the wisdom of Joseph's plan is the simple fact that those who were chiefly affected by it accepted it with readiness and thankfulness. They were only too conscious of the benefits that accrued to them in those terrible years of famine. It is surely impossible to conceive of the entire absence of complaint, opposition or rebellion on the part of such people as the Egyptians if the policy was one that did not meet with their entire acquiescence and approval.

In view of all the foregoing considerations it does not seem difficult to justify Joseph's policy. At the same time we ought to bear in mind that

Proof of  
Joseph's  
wisdom.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlvii. 13-26.** the fact of certain actions by one of God's servants being recorded in Scripture is no necessary proof of any Divine vindication of it. We are not called upon to justify everything that Joseph did, simply because the story of his life is found in Genesis; but bearing in mind that he is described as 'a man in whom the Spirit of God is' (xli. 38), we have no hesitation in believing most thoroughly in the Divine guidance, and therefore in the perfect justification, of his actions during the years of famine.

It is impossible to pass by the recent reference to a discovery by one of the foremost of modern Egyptologists, Brugsch Bey, of a hieroglyphic record of the failure of the Nile to rise for seven consecutive years, which resulted in a terrible famine. Even as an illustration and natural explanation of the famine recorded in Genesis the discovery would be of intense interest, but according to the discoverer the date of the failure of the Nile to rise was B.C. 1700, and this corresponds exactly to that which has been recognised by students of chronology as the date of the story of this chapter. The subject will doubtless be further considered by those who are qualified to discuss it. Meanwhile it is at least an interesting coincidence.

### III. The Results of the Plan.

III. *The Results of the Plan.*—The immediate outcome of Joseph's policy was the salvation and protection of the entire country of Egypt. The people's lives were saved, and as we have seen, they frankly and fully acknowledged what Joseph had done. Then again, the influence of Egypt

## A Wise Ruler

was undoubtedly extended by the policy. It is not without point to read that 'all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy corn.' In view of the constant action of nation against nation, and the wars that were from time to time waged against Egypt, we can easily understand the real value and importance to the country of the action of Joseph during these years. **Gen. xlvii. 13-26.**

Not only so, but the protection of Israel was assured by this policy. By putting all the power into Pharaoh's hands Joseph prevented any of the aristocracy or chiefs of the people from thwarting the government. It made Joseph's action much easier in providing for his father and brethren during these years. The people of Egypt might easily have been jealous of this special attention, but inasmuch as Pharaoh became the owner of the lands and all the produce, the people of Israel were safe during their sojourn in Egypt. Israel needed safety in order to develop, and for this a stable government was required. Herein undoubtedly is the real significance of this section coming in between verses 12 and 27, for it shows that Joseph's policy was part of the Divine providential care of Israel. At the same time we must not forget that this policy led eventually to the affliction of Israel under a new Pharaoh. With all the power in the hands of the King it was at once easy for the Pharaoh of Joseph's time to protect Israel, and for the new Pharaoh to afflict Israel when Joseph and his work were forgotten (Exod. i. 8). Meanwhile, however, God's purposes were being accomplished **Israel's protection assured.**

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlvii. in Egypt, and Israel was becoming transformed  
13-26. from a family into a nation.

Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.

As we ponder the public life of Joseph we see plainly the qualities which characterised him and enabled him to do the great work that he accomplished.

1. *Three essential qualities of true life.*

Discretion.

*a. His discretion.*—We cannot help observing the wisdom which actuated Joseph from first to last. Before the years of famine came he was enabled to look ahead, and with rare foresight take all possible precautions. This is one of the essential characteristics of true life; thought, discretion, foresight, wisdom. If a man does not exercise his reasoning faculties and think out the matters with which he is concerned, he will fail at a vital point. The absence of thought is always the presence of weakness, while the presence of thought is always one guarantee of real manhood.

Promptitude.

*b. His promptitude.*—Joseph acted at once the moment he obtained Pharaoh's permission: and all through those years, as he journeyed from place to place, promptitude and energy characterised his actions. There was no hesitation, no vacillation, no weakness; a genuine decision of character stamped everything that he did. This again, is one of the essential features of a true life. The man who is always 'letting I dare not wait upon I would' will never accomplish anything. Even the man who makes mistakes is not always and necessarily blameworthy for acting, for he shows

## A Wise Ruler

his readiness to do something. On the other **Gen. xlvii.**  
hand, the man who is cautious, slow to move, and **13-26.**  
constantly fearing consequences is only too likely to  
end by doing nothing at all. There is no reason  
why mistakes should be made by a prompt,  
energetic, decided nature, if only with his  
promptitude he has the quality of discretion.  
The two together go far to make the real man.

c. *His thoroughness.*—He not only thought, but **Thorough-**  
thought to some purpose, and took every factor **ness.**  
into consideration. He not only acted promptly  
but he acted with thoroughness, doing everything  
that he had to do with all his heart. The policy of  
thoroughness, when it is based on genuine principle,  
is the only policy that ministers to true life and ser-  
vice. Half-heartedness in any work is useless and  
hopeless, and can only bring trouble in its train.

These three qualities should be carefully noted  
separately and together. They constitute three of  
the most important requirements for every true  
man; the exercise of his mind, the energy of his  
heart, and the action of his will.

2. *The source of these qualities.*—We are accus- **Divine**  
tomed to speak of discretion, promptitude, and **Source of**  
thoroughness as purely natural characteristics capable **all human**  
of almost infinite development by use and habit. This **qualities.**  
is undoubtedly true, so far as it goes, but it leaves  
quite unexplained the source whence these natural  
characteristics come, and Joseph is a striking illus-  
tration of the fact that all these elements of true  
nature come from God. 'If any man lack wisdom  
let him ask of God' (James i. 5). All that Joseph



## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlvii.** did in this emergency sprang from his relation to  
**13-26.** God. ‘A man in whom the Spirit of God is.’ We must not narrow down the operations of the Spirit of God to those things which are purely spiritual and redemptive in the New Testament sense of the word. The presence and work of the Spirit of God are the source of all that is good and true in life and human nature. There is nothing outside His power. Joseph was as much influenced by the Spirit of God in selling corn as he was in bearing witness to Pharaoh and interpreting his dream. True religion touches life at every point, and nothing can be considered outside its scope. This ought to be an encouragement to us all to refer everything in our daily life to God, and to seek the wisdom that cometh from above. There can be no doubt that the presence of the Holy Spirit does affect with vivifying power the faculties of mind, emotion, and will; and the Christian man, other things being equal, ought to show in his life, in all the natural events and actions of his daily career, the power and value of the possession of the Holy Spirit.

**A Christian  
can succeed  
in life.**

It is also a point to be pressed home that a Christian can succeed in business and yet be a Christian, though we must not for an instant make worldly success the measure and proof of our Christianity. It is essential that we should keep in mind the simple fact that Christianity is no bar to success. There is no incompatibility between goodness and brains. On the contrary, we believe it to be a simple fact of Nature as well as of history that only in the sanctions and supports of true



## A Wise Ruler

religion can our intellectual faculties find their fullest and completest exercise and justification. **Gen. xlvii. 13-26.**

Joseph's life is a testimony to the simple but significant fact that a man can serve God and be successful, that a man can occupy the highest position and glorify his Maker, that a man can be a statesman, propounding policies affecting nations, and yet all the while be a humble-minded, true-hearted child of God.

Thus we may speak of Joseph quite literally as 'diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' To use a colloquial but very expressive American phrase, he was a man of 'grace, grit, and gumption,' the three essential features of all true life and manhood. He was not afraid of work, and he did that work to the utmost of his power and ability. That was a fine testimony to real character suggested by a notice in a shop window, 'Difficult work invited.' It was the measure of the man inside the shop, and showed he did not fear to face difficult problems in his business. So it was with Joseph; he was a man of principle. His religion affected every part of his life, and the result was that he glorified God, and, we doubt not, was the means of extending the influence of true religion wherever he went. Let us therefore remember the well-known words of Archbishop Benson, 'To the Christian there is nothing secular but what is sinful.' Religion is to be applied to every department of human life, and whatever we have to do we must do it to the fullest possible extent of all the powers we possess. '*Whatsoever ye do, do it*

The essential qualities of true life.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlvii. heartily as to the Lord ' (Col. iii. 23). ' *Whatsoever ye do*, in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus ' (Col. iii. 17). ' *Whatsoever ye do*, do all to the glory of God ' (1 Cor. x. 31). With these three principles ever actuating us we come to learn, and others come to learn through us, the real meaning of life.

So he died for his faith. That is fine—  
More than most of us do.  
But, say, can you add to that line  
That he lived for it too?

In his death he bore witness at last  
As a martyr to truth.  
Did his life do the same in the past  
From the days of his youth?

It is easy to die. Men have died  
For a wish or a whim—  
From bravado, or passion, or pride—  
Was it harder for him?

But to live—every day to live out  
All the truth that he dreamt,  
While his friends met his conduct with doubt,  
And the world with contempt;

Was it thus that he plodded ahead,  
Never turning aside?  
Then we'll talk of the life that he led—  
Never mind how he died.

ERNEST ABBOTT.

### XIII

## A LIFE'S SUNSET

GEN: xlvii. 27—xlviii. 22

27. And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen ; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.

28. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years : so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years.

29. And the time drew nigh that Israel must die : and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me ; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt :

30. But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their buryingplace. And he said, I will do as thou hast said.

31. And he said, Swear unto me. And he sware unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.

1. And it came to pass after these things, that *one* told Joseph, Behold, thy father *is* sick : and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

2. And *one* told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee : and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.

3. And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,

4. And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people ; and will give this land to thy seed after thee *for* an everlasting possession.

5. And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, *are* mine ; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

6. And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, *and* shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.

7. And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet *there was* but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same *is* Bethlehem.

8. And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who *are* these?

9. And Joseph said unto his father, They *are* my sons, whom God hath given me in this *place*. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.

10. Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, *so that* he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them.

11. And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

12. And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

13. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought *them* near unto him.

14. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid *it* upon Ephraim's head, who *was* the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh *was* the firstborn.

15. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

16. The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

17. And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head, unto Manasseh's head.

18. And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this *is* the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.

19. And his father refused, and said, I know *it*, my son, I know *it*: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

20. And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

21. And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God

## A Life's Sunset

shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.

22. Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the land of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

AS the record of Genesis approaches the death of Jacob it is noteworthy how full of detail it becomes. This clearly shows the importance of the events in the eyes of the author. Joseph recedes into the background, or at any rate takes a very secondary position. The prominent figure is the great patriarch as head of the chosen family. When the seven years of famine came to an end we wonder, from the human standpoint, why Jacob and his family did not return to Canaan. We may be perfectly sure that some indication of the will of God was given enjoining them to stay where they were. At length, twelve years afterwards, Jacob drew near to the end of his life, quite conscious that he would die in Egypt and not in Canaan. This and the succeeding section are therefore filled with the events of the last days of the patriarch, and are fraught with the deepest spiritual meaning in relation to him and to Israel.

I. *The Solemn Requirement* (xlvi. 27-31).—'The time drew near that Israel must die,' the inevitable event was now near at hand. Even Israel must go the way of his fathers. He therefore called his son Joseph, and begged him not to bury him in Egypt, but to take him back to the land of promise. 'When I sleep with my fathers thou shalt carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying-place.' These words are full of the deepest

Gen. xlvii.  
27—xlviii.  
22.

I. The  
Solemn Re-  
quirement  
(chap. xlvii.  
27-31).

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlvii. meaning. The way in which sleeping with the  
27—xlviii. fathers is distinguished from the act of burial  
22. clearly shows that Jacob had a very definite con-  
ception of a future life as 'with his fathers.' But  
more than this, the desire to return to Canaan  
seems to be associated with a belief in God's  
promises, which could only be realised by the  
resurrection from the dead. To Jacob it was per-  
fectly certain that God would fulfil His ancient  
word, and give that land to him and to his seed.

Jacob's  
Faith.

It was thus no mere sentiment, but a very definite  
religious faith that led to his making this request  
of Joseph. Joseph, of course, at once promised to  
do what his father wished, and gave a solemn oath  
to carry out his word. The matter thus satis-  
factorily settled, 'Israel bowed himself upon the  
bed's head.' If we are to read the Hebrew, it  
means that he turned himself over in the bed and  
knelt upon it in the attitude of prayer. If, however,  
we follow the Septuagint, which only differs from  
the Hebrew in the matter of vowel punctuation,  
we shall read that Israel 'worshipped leaning upon  
the top of his staff.' The latter rendering, which  
is favoured by many authorities, has the great  
advantage of being in close agreement with Egyptian  
custom at that time. In either case, worship closes  
the life of the patriarch, who is now indeed 'Israel,'  
not 'Jacob.' Here, as elsewhere, the usage of  
these two names should be carefully considered.

II. The  
Striking De-  
cision (chap.  
xlviii. 1-7).

II. *The Striking Decision* (xlviii. 1-7).—It was  
not long after this that Joseph heard of his father's  
illness, and, knowing that the end could not be far

## A Life's Sunset

off, went to see him, taking with him his two sons **Gen. xlvii.**  
Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob roused himself to **27—xlviii.**  
greet his son, and when they were together the old **22.**  
man naturally recalled the past, and told Joseph  
of what God had done from that day when He  
appeared to him in the vision at Bethel. This  
reminder of the Divine promise about Canaan  
was then followed by the surprising and even  
startling announcement that Joseph's two sons  
were to be regarded as no longer their father's  
children, but as their grandfather's, taking the place  
of Reuben and Simeon among the twelve sons and  
twelve tribes. Any other sons that Joseph  
might have were to remain their father's, but  
Ephraim and Manasseh were to be separated  
from Joseph and to belong in name and fact to  
Jacob.

This adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh was a **Adoption of**  
very remarkable occurrence. We naturally ask **Joseph's**  
ourselves first of all how Joseph regarded it, and **Sons.**  
though the narrative is quite silent we can readily  
see by his perfect acquiescence that he was pre-  
pared to allow his sons to cast in their lot with  
the people of God rather than to continue in  
Egypt with all the possibilities and opportunities  
that might be before them. Joseph in this as in  
every other case, never forgot that he belonged to  
a chosen race, to the people of God. 'By faith'  
everything became possible and even easy since God  
was so real to him.

But what are we to think of the decision in  
relation to Manasseh and Ephraim? They were

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlvii.** at this time twenty years of age at the least, and  
**27—xlviii.** their position must have been to all intents and  
**22.** purposes settled for them by their father's position in the land of Egypt. Their prospects were obviously bright and even glorious, and making every allowance for the authority of Joseph over them, we are surely right in assuming that the decision to separate them from Egypt and to include them in the shepherds of Israel must have meant a real test to them as well as to their father. May we not assume that they had been taught by Joseph the real meaning of the position of Jacob and his family in relation to God and His promise? And if this was so, these young men were prepared to abjure all the hopes of high estate and great power in Egypt in order to cast in their lot with the people of God.

**Memories of Rachel.**

The touching reference to Rachel (ver. 7) with which Jacob closed his words to Joseph is very striking. The presence of Rachel's elder son recalled the past with intensity and vividness, and the circumstances of his beloved wife's death came home to him keenly at the moment. 'As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died, to my sorrow' (R.V. margin) 'in the land of Canaan.' The memory of that day lived with the aged patriarch. And yet we believe that there was something more than the memory of a sorrow in his reference to Rachel. He wished to honour the memory of his beloved wife by giving her three tribes among the twelve—Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh.



## A Life's Sunset

III. *The Special Blessing* (xlviii. 8-16).—The dimness of Jacob's sight prevented him from recognising those whom Joseph had brought with him, but when told who they were, he asked that they might be brought near that he might bless them. How beautiful are those words of his, 'I had not thought to see thy face; and lo, God hath showed me also thy seed.' God is ever surprising His people with added blessing beyond our expectations, because 'He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.' Joseph thereupon placed one son at one side and the other at the other side of the patriarch, so that the elder son Manasseh might have the blessing from Israel's right hand, and the younger son Ephraim the blessing from the left hand. But this was not to be. Israel deliberately stretched forth his hands and crossed them, so that the firstborn received the blessing from the left hand. Then the father and the two sons were blessed by the patriarch in words that live in the memory as we read them. The threefold testimony to God as the God of his fathers, the God of his own life, and the God who had preserved him, is very striking. While we may not read into it the full New Testament doctrine of the Trinity, it is impossible to overlook the threefoldness of the reference. We may also associate with this a similar threefoldness found elsewhere in the Old Testament (Num. vi. 25-27; Isa. vi. 3). God was asked to bless the lads, and the blessing was to take two forms—spiritual and temporal. They were to be incorporated into the family of Israel,

Gen. xlvii.  
27—xlviii.  
22.

III. The  
Special  
Blessing  
(chap. xlviii.  
8-16).

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlvii. and also to grow into a multitude in the midst of  
27—xlviii. the earth. How truly all this was fulfilled in the  
22. subsequent history of Ephraim and Manasseh is  
evident from the record of Holy Scripture.

IV. The  
Significant  
Action (chap.  
xlviii. 17-22).

IV. *The Significant Action* (xlviii. 17-22).—In accordance with the general feeling about the first-born, Joseph was displeased that his father should have laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, and he thereupon attempted to remove it, telling Jacob that Manasseh was the firstborn. The father, however, was equal to the occasion, and doubtless to the surprise of his son said, ‘I know it, my son, I know it.’ It had been done wittingly and deliberately, for the younger son was to be the greater even though Manasseh himself was to be great. This passing over of the firstborn is one of the most striking features of the book of Genesis. So it was with Seth instead of Cain: Shem instead of Japheth; Abraham instead of Haran; Isaac instead of Ishmael; Jacob instead of Esau. And now it was Ephraim instead of Manasseh. Thus did God display His sovereignty and prevent anyone imagining that His blessings necessarily follow the line of natural privilege. God has again and again chosen the weak things of the earth, and even those that are despised, to set at nought those that are mighty. Grace is sovereign, and by no means follows, but rather opposes the course of nature.

Thus the patriarch had his way, and Joseph promptly and fully accepted the situation. Is it not remarkable, in spite of all Joseph had been,

## A Life's Sunset

that his name was not to appear in the list of his father's sons, but that instead of his own his two sons were to take his place? We do not know whether Jacob intended the birthright to pass thereby from Judah to Joseph and to be realised in his two sons, though it is clear afterwards (1 Chron. v. 1, 2) that the birthright was regarded as belonging to Joseph. Joseph's self-abnegation and faith are once again evident.

The closing word of assurance and promise was given to Joseph himself. Israel assured him that though he himself was about to die, God would be with them and bring them again to the land of their fathers. Not only so, but Joseph was granted 'one portion above' his brethren, the portion which his father had taken out of the hand of the Amorite. It is sometimes thought that this reference is to Shechem, as the word 'portion' in the Hebrew is identical with the name Shechem, and that it is to be interpreted of the episode in xxxiii. 19. If this be the case, it must mean that, while Jacob had originally deprecated and condemned the treachery of his sons, nevertheless, the deed being done, the property belonged to him as the head of the house and of the family. He therefore bestows it, not upon those who had treacherously taken it, but on Joseph, as a special mark of privilege and as a guarantee of future inheritance. Others, however, think that the reference is prophetic, and looks forward to the time when Canaan shall be taken out of the hand of the Amorite by the seed of Jacob. It is perhaps best of all to regard it as referring

Gen. xlvii.  
27—xlviii.  
22.

Jacob's last  
words.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlvii. altogether to an episode which is not otherwise re-  
27—xlviii. corded in the history of Jacob.  
22.

Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion

This picture of the sunset of Israel's life is one of extreme beauty and suggestiveness, and may well be taken as a type and model for old age to-day.

Faith,  
looking  
upward.

1. *Faith, looking upward.*—The one thing that seems to stand out pre-eminently in this narrative is the reality to Jacob of God's presence and promise. All through the story the one theme is God (xlviii. 3, 11, 15, 20, 21). The troubled waters of Jacob's life had now settled and cleared, and were flowing placidly in a quiet stream of fellowship with God. He rested his heart upon what God had done for him, and on what God had promised to him and to his seed. Faith is always occupied with the Word of God, and finds in that Word its nutriment, encouragement, inspiration, and power. Trust in man answers to truth in God. The Divine faithfulness is met by human faith, for faith is the only, as it is the adequate, response to a Divine revelation. Happy are they to whom God is equally real, whose hearts rest upon His Word, and who are able to say, 'I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me.'

Gratitude,  
looking  
backward.

2. *Gratitude, looking backward.*—It is very helpful to contrast the two outlooks of life associated with Jacob. When he was before Pharaoh (xlvii. 9) he spoke of his days as 'few and evil,' but in his words to Joseph (xlviii. 16) he speaks of One who had 'redeemed him from all evil.' These two aspects of life seem to represent

## A Life's Sunset

two moods of the ancient patriarch. In the former **Gen. xlvii.** he himself was everything and God practically **27—xlviii.** nothing, except in so far as life was thought of as **22.** a 'pilgrimage.' In the latter God was everything, and he himself nothing. It has been suggested that in taking such a gloomy view of his life when he stood before Pharaoh he missed a splendid opportunity of witnessing for God. This may be so, but there can be no doubt of the definite testimony before Joseph and his sons. God was everything to him in that threefold description. (a) 'The God before Whom my fathers did walk.' (b) 'The God Who hath shepherded me all my life long unto this day.' (c) 'The Angel which hath redeemed me from all evil.' Nothing could well be finer or more appropriate than this description of God, and, whatever we may say of the former testimony, this one is full of genuine gratitude as he recalls his life from that memorable night at Bethel, when God blessed him and gave him such wonderful promises (xlviii. 3, 4). As we are passing through trials and troubles, it is not always easy though it ought to be possible for us to see the hand of God; but as we review the past and look over life's journey we are enabled to see the way in which God has led us, and our grateful adoring testimony in the retrospect of life will undoubtedly be, 'He hath done all things well.'

3. *Love, looking outward.*—The aged patriarch **Love, looking outward.** not only thought of God and of his own past, but also of Joseph and his two sons, and with hands outstretched he called down the Divine benediction

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlvii. upon his grandsons, praying that God would ‘bless  
27—xlviii. the lads.’ His affection for Joseph and his sons  
22. prompted this outpouring of loving prayer and blessing, that the same God Who had been with him would continue to be with his dear ones.

Happy are those young men who can enjoy the privilege of the benediction of a father or grandfather; happy, too, are those who can give this blessing, for in it without a doubt is the assurance of Divine as well as of human love.

Hope,  
looking  
onward.

4. *Hope, looking onward.*—Israel’s faith was not only occupied with God as a present reality, but expressed itself in hope and expectation as he looked forward to the glorious future assured by God to him and to his seed. ‘I die; but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.’ Hope is an integral part of the Christian life, and must never be severed from faith and love. Just as St Paul kept these three graces in close proximity (1 Thess. i. 3), so must it be in every true, full, and well-balanced Christian experience. Faith looks upward, Hope looks onward. Faith accepts, Hope expects. Faith is concerned with the present promising, Hope is concerned with the thing promised. Faith appropriates, Hope anticipates. Faith is always occupied with the past and present, Hope lives entirely in the future. Our life will be weakened, narrowed, and even maimed, if hope does not occupy a very definite place in our life.

And thus we see what the true ending of life should be—a blending of faith, gratitude, love, and

## A Life's Sunset

hope ; a consciousness of the presence and peace of **Gen. xlvii.**  
God ; an assurance of the mercy and blessing of **27—xlviii.**  
God ; a confidence in the promise and assurance of **22.**  
God ; an expectation that what God hath promised  
He is both able and willing to perform. When  
life is lived on this plane of experience it fulfils  
completely the Divine ideal by manifesting itself in  
true character, proving a blessing to those around,  
and bringing ever-increasing glory to God. Then  
indeed, God is its 'all in all.'

## XIV

# FATHER AND SONS

GEN. xlix. 1-27

1. And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you *that* which shall befall you in the last days.

2. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob : and hearken unto Israel your father.

3. Reuben, thou *art* my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power :

4. Unstable as water, thou shall not excel ; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed ; then defilest thou *it* : he went up to my couch.

5. Simeon and Levi *are* brethren ; instruments of cruelty *are* in their habitations.

6. O my soul, come not thou into their secret ; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united : for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall.

7. Cursed *be* their anger, for *it was* fierce ; and their wrath, for it was cruel : I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

8. Judah, thou *art he* whom thy brethren shall praise : thy hand *shall be* in the neck of thine enemies ; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

9. Judah *is* a lion's whelp : from the prey, my son, thou art gone up : he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion ; who shall rouse him up ?

10. The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come ; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

11. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine ; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes :



## Father and Sons

12. His eyes *shall be* red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

13. Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he *shall be* for an haven of ships; and his border *shall be* unto Zidon.

14. Issachar *is* a strong ass couching down between two burdens:

15. And he saw that rest *was* good, and the land that *it was* pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.

16. Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel.

17. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.

18. I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.

19. Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.

20. Out of Asher his bread *shall be* fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.

21. Naphtali *is* a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.

22. Joseph *is* a fruitful bough, *even* a fruitful bough by a well; *whose* branches run over the wall;

23. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot *at him*, and hated him:

24. But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty *God* of Jacob; (from thence *is* the shepherd, the stone of Israel;)

25. *Even* by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:

26. The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

27. Benjamin shall ravin *as* a wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

**T**HE dying words of Jacob to his twelve sons Gen. xlix. mark the close of the patriarchal dispensation. I-27.

The family was already commencing its development into the nation, and it is in every way appropriate that the aged patriarch should foresee and foretell the

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

en. xlix. general course of events which was to happen to his sons in the far-off future. The fact that he called his sons unto him in order to tell them what should befall them in the latter days shows the importance of the occasion, and its real bearing on the subsequent history of the twelve tribes in the light of God's great purpose for the patriarchs and their seed.

The chapter is usually described as the Blessing of Jacob, but it is obviously quite inaccurate to describe it in this way, since the predictions about several of the sons are characterised by the very reverse of blessing. The chapter is rather to be understood as a prediction of the results of character. It consists at once of a review of the past and a foresight of the future in the light of that past.

### I. The Certainty of the Fulfilment.

I. *The Certainty of the Fulfilment.*—The opening verses of the chapter clearly imply and assume the prophetic character of Jacob's words. Solemnly he called together his sons in order that they might hear 'Israel' their father (vers. 1, 2). The words of the patriarch fitly come at this point, and mark a stage in the development of the Divine promise, which was first given in Eden concerning the seed of the woman, and then repeated and developed in the blessings to Abraham and Isaac. Looking back over the record in Genesis, and looking forward to the time of Moses, these words of Jacob come midway between the earlier and later stages of the development of the Divine purpose.

## Father and Sons

It is impossible to overlook the great problem raised by modern writers in regard to this chapter. **Gen. xlix. 1-27.**

Are we to understand it as a genuine prediction of Jacob? Or is it to be interpreted as the utterance of a later writer some ages after the time of Jacob, who used this form for the purpose of conveying the lessons he wished to teach Israel?

On the one hand we have the very definite words of Dr Driver, who says that 'it is not to be supposed that the blessing was actually pronounced by Jacob. . . . The present with which the blessings contained in Genesis xlix, are connected is not the age of Jacob, but the age of the Judges, or a little later; and this accordingly is the period in which they must be supposed to have originated. . . . From the terms in which Judah is eulogised it may be inferred with tolerable certainty that the author was a poet belonging to that tribe' (*Genesis*, pp. 380, 381). Are these words Jacob's?

On the other hand Dr Green is equally definite, saying that 'the structure and contents of this blessing make it impossible to explain it as a *vaticinium post eventum*,' and after arguing the matter in detail he concludes by saying that 'All this points to the genuineness of this blessing as really the utterance of Jacob, which it claims to be, and is declared to be' (*Unity of Genesis*, pp. 522-524). It certainly seems difficult to understand how a later writer, in the time of the Judges or later, could have set down calmly what is here said of Levi, whose tribe at that time had the place of honour as the priestly

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlix. tribe. Nor does it seem easy to understand how anyone writing as late as the Judges could have reflected so severely on the ancestors of the tribes of Reuben and Simeon. It is to be feared that most of the objections to this chapter as a genuine utterance of Jacob arise out of a too circumscribed and almost preconceived idea of what line prophecy should take, or else proceed on the assumption that prediction is impossible. Reviewing all the circumstances and the varieties of conclusions arrived at by critics of the passage (see Green *in loc.*), it does not seem too much to say, with the editor of Lange's *Commentary*, that 'There is but one part of the Scripture to which this blessing of Jacob can be assigned without making it a sheer forgery, and that, too, a most absurd and inconsistent one. It is the very place in which it appears. Here it fits perfectly. It is in harmony with all its surroundings; while its subjective truthfulness—to say nothing now of its inspiration or its veritable prophetic character—gives it the strongest claim to our credence' (Lange, *Genesis*, p. 651). Is there really any middle course? The chapter is either Jacob's, or it is a forgery; and if it be the latter we naturally ask, What is its value, whether historical or spiritual?

Appropriate  
to the  
occasion.

II. The  
Variety of  
the Fulfil-  
ment.

II. *The Variety of the Fulfilment.*—Into the details of Jacob's predictions of his sons it is impossible now to enter. It would seem as though the announcements are grouped round two of the sons, Judah (vers. 3-18) and Joseph (vers. 19-27); six sons being associated with Judah and four with

## Father and Sons

Joseph. So far as the character of each individual man is known, the patriarch's words seem based upon his knowledge of what they were, and he predicts their future history in accordance with their individualities. Gen. xlix. I-27.

It would be profitable to ponder carefully what is said of each man individually under the guidance of a commentary like Driver's or Lange's, to discover first what is the true interpretation of each word and phrase, and then to read what is said in the light of the subsequent history of the tribes so far as it is known to us.

III. *The Accuracy of the Fulfilment.*—There can be very little doubt of the general, and in many respects exact agreement of what is here said with what actually happened in the subsequent history of the tribes. Thus Reuben is predicted as not able to excel (as he should have done being the firstborn) by reason of his instability, and this came literally to pass. 'No judge, no prophet, not one of the tribe of Reuben is mentioned' (Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, article 'Reuben,' quoted in Dod's *Genesis*, p. 428). Again, Simeon and Levi are foretold as divided and scattered, which came literally true, for Simeon was absorbed in the South of Palestine, while Levi had no part in the land owing to his being appointed as the tribe from which the Jewish priesthood was taken. III. The Accuracy of the Fulfilment.

The fulness of reference to Judah is another case in point, for we have only to remember that David came out of this tribe, to see that during the period

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlix. of the monarchy these words were abundantly fulfilled. Not least of all is the accuracy with which the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh realised the blessings here predicted for Joseph. Ephraim was the leading tribe for at least three centuries, and his land afterwards became the scene and centre of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

A true prediction.

All this goes to prove the essential truthfulness of the record of this chapter as a veritable utterance of the patriarch. Unless it is a true prediction, it is difficult to account for several features which are perfectly intelligible on the assumption of genuineness. Thus, if this chapter really dates from the time of the Judges, as is suggested by Dr Driver, it is difficult to understand why there is so much of Judah in Genesis, while he is not mentioned in Deborah's song (Judges v.). The differences of reference to Issachar as compared with Deborah's song, and to Levi as compared with the blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii.) should also be observed. Surely this independence implies originality, or else a very definite attempt at forgery. As Dr Redpath truly says, if there is any inspiration at all, insight into the future, based on a knowledge of personal characteristics, may well be included in it (Redpath, *Modern Criticism and Genesis*, p. 81). Prophecy has been defined (not quite fully perhaps) as 'moral prescience,' and it is suggested that we have in the present chapter one of its best illustrations. 'This is no fancy painting. It is the power of the soul in its last efforts to see what crops will come out of this seed and of that; it is a man standing

## Father and Sons

upon fields charged with seed, the quality of which he well knows, forecasting the harvest. Moral prophecy is vindicated by moral law' ('People's Bible,' *Genesis*, p. 350). Add to this the supernatural action of the Spirit of God, and we may well rest our faith in the accuracy, and therefore in the moral value, of this chapter.

IV. *The Spirituality of the Fulfilment.*—The references to Jacob's sons go far beyond the merely temporal history of the Jewish nation. There are in it some of those very definite Messianic elements in which that history found its spiritual culmination. Thus, we find in the allusion to 'Shiloh' a very true prediction of the Messiah as the 'Rest-Giver' (ver. 10). Notwithstanding all that has been written on this verse during recent years, there is still good reason to interpret Shiloh as a personal name, as in the R.V. The alternative to this rendering seems very trite and altogether inappropriate to the detailed description of future power and glory associated with Judah. Even those who do not interpret the word 'Shiloh' as personal say that the verse is undoubtedly Messianic in the broader sense of the term by reason of its anticipation of an ideal future for Judah (*Driver, Genesis*, p. 414). Those who still maintain the personal interpretation have a great deal to say for themselves after everything else has been considered on the other side.

IV. The Spirituality of the Fulfilment.

Another element of the spiritual interpretation is seen in the exclamation, 'I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord' (ver. 18). This puzzles many



## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlix.** commentators, and yet perhaps the true interpretation is not far to seek. In the preceding verse a reference had been made to an adder in the path that bites the horse's heels and causes the rider to fall backward. Is it not at least possible, not to say likely, that this allusion to a serpent recalled to the aged patriarch the primeval promise of the seed of the serpent bruising the heel of the seed of the woman? Then at once he burst out in earnest appeal to God for that salvation which had been promised as the result of the enmity between the two seeds.

**The Blessing  
of Joseph.**

The blessing of Joseph can hardly be limited to the subsequent history of Ephraim and Manasseh, but must include some of those spiritual elements which were evident and prominent throughout the subsequent history of Israel. It seems in every way best to regard the phrases in verses 24, 25, as a series of descriptions of God as 'The Mighty One of Jacob,' 'the Shepherd,' 'the Stone of Israel,' 'the God of thy father,' 'the Almighty.' In this full revelation of God lay the secret of Israel's uniqueness, and a guarantee of Israel's blessing (Maclaren, *Genesis*, pp. 295-304).

**Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.**

The chapter is so full of material that it is quite impossible to do more than suggest in the briefest way some aspects of teaching with special reference to daily, practical life. Taking the chapter as a revelation of personal character, we may regard the sons of Jacob as among those beacons of the Bible which are set before us, 'written for our learning.'



## Father and Sons

Beacons are at once guides and warnings, and the **Gen. xlix.** delineation of his sons' characters by the aged **I-27.** patriarch affords to us inspiration for imitation, and warning for avoidance.

1. *The danger of instability.*—We see this in **Instability.** Reuben. Of him it was true, 'To one thing constant never,' and what is especially sad is that the instability was due to sin. It is always so. Morality and character go together. To commit sin is to render ourselves unable to act aright because we become morally unstable.

2. *The disgrace of treachery.*—The description **Treachery.** of Simeon and Levi is very terrible. Their father never forgot their treachery and violence to peaceful and harmless neighbours. There is scarcely anything more awful in life than treachery, more particularly when, as in the case of Simeon and Levi, it was associated with apparently religious motives and phraseology. We dare not do evil in the name of good.

3. *The blessing of sovereignty.*—Judah had fully **Sovereignty.** redeemed his character, and the future depicted for him is one of glory and blessing. From him was to come the Messiah, and thence would issue blessing to the world. The life of power when exercised rightly will always be fraught with blessing to others. To serve is to reign, and to reign is to bless.

4. *The responsibility of opportunity.*—Zebulun **Opportunity.** is described as dwelling near the sea with the opportunity of providing a haven for ships. The Jews were never particularly enamoured of seafar-

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlix.** ing life, but this reference to Zebulun clearly shows  
**I-27.** the possibility of this method of living if they had been willing to seize upon it. It is worthy of notice that at the present day the only natural harbour in Palestine is that of Haifa, and the Hebrew word for 'haven' (ver. 13) is thought to be the original from which the modern word Haifa comes. This would be interesting if true, especially as Haifa is not otherwise mentioned in the Old Testament. Opportunity ample and free comes in one way or another to us all. It is for us to seize it, and to be the means of blessing to others, or else by missing it to lose every chance of real life.

**Timidity.**

5. *The weakness of timidity.*—Issachar is described as occupying a very delightful position, and succumbing to the temptation of an easy life and of yielding to the slavery of others. He was content to bear burdens rather than to exert himself courageously on behalf of his own position and rights. How easy it is to let ourselves remain content with quiet life instead of exerting ourselves strenuously on behalf of what is right and good and true!

**Subtilty.**

6. *The peril of subtilty.*—Dan is described as a serpent, biting and causing trouble. The subtilty of the serpent has become proverbial; and whilst the Apostle advises us to be 'wise as serpents,' the wisdom does not mean cunning, but that spiritual shrewdness which is essential to all true life. There is nothing more contemptible than cunning, and when cunning and deceit are used in connection

## Father and Sons

with religion men sound almost the lowest deeps of **Gen. xlix.**  
infamy. **I-27.**

7. *The glory of victory.*—Gad is described as **Victory.**  
being overcome by a troop, but as overcoming at  
the last and pressing upon the heels of his enemies.  
Life is often associated with pressure and hardship,  
but victory is promised to the faithful soldier, and  
'to him that overcometh' there are blessings untold  
and everlasting.

8. *The privilege of felicity.* — Asher means **Felicity.**  
'Blessed,' and the promise to him is marked by  
fulness and real plenty. Blessedness is one of the  
marks of the true life. 'Blessed is the man' (same  
root in Hebrew, Psa. i. 1). So long as we always  
remember that every aspect and element of blessed-  
ness is intended for use and service, and not for  
mere luxury, we may enjoy to the full all the  
blessedness and wealth of grace provided for us in  
the Gospel. The keynote of the New Testament,  
as of the Old, is 'Blessed be the man' because God  
is a God of blessing, 'The blessing of the Lord  
maketh rich.'

9. *The need of activity.*—It is a little difficult to **Activity.**  
understand what is meant precisely by the reference  
to Naphtali, but it seems to refer generally to  
activity, vigour, and movement. The active life  
is always the happy life, and the easy-going is  
always the dangerous life. Activity is necessitated  
not only by our personal safety, but by the in-  
terests of the Kingdom of God. 'Zealous of good  
works.'

10. *The joy of prosperity.*—The blessing of **Prosperity**

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlix.** Joseph may be summed up in the one word 'fruitfulness,' than which there is nothing more glorious in life. Fruit is the natural and necessary expression of the spiritual life, and the way in which our Lord emphasises fruit (John xv.) shows the importance assigned to it in the Gospel. The man who, like Joseph, is true to God will ever bring forth fruit, and his life will abound in the 'fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.'

Ability.

11. *The value of ability.* — Benjamin is compared to a wolf, and in speaking of him as ready both morning and evening to go after his prey it would seem as though the idea were that 'he is at all times equally ready for fighting, and equally successful in the wars which he undertakes' (Driver, *Genesis*, p. 394). Benjamin was the smallest of the tribes, and yet was one of the most martial. From this came Ehud and Saul, and in many other ways this very insignificant tribe became prominent for its courage, fierceness, and power. We may perhaps spiritualise and say that we must ever be ready with spiritual ability and agility to attack any task that may be placed before us, and carry it forward to a successful issue.

Character is  
power

Reviewing all these various elements of character as suggested for us by these men, we may well ask ourselves, with the Apostle, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' Character undoubtedly makes the greatest demands upon us. Other elements of natural power and ability may come easy to men, but moral and spiritual character requires much

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care and effort for its proper and full manifestation. **Gen. xlix.**  
Like the Apostle, we may, however, answer our **I-27.**  
own question, 'Our sufficiency is of God.' It is  
true that Character makes the Man ; it is equally  
true that Christ makes the Character.

## LIGHT AT EVENTIDE

GEN. xlix. 28—l. 14

28. All these *are* the twelve tribes of Israel : and this *is it* that their father spake unto them, and blessed them ; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.

29. And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people : bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite.

30. In the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for the possession of a burying-place.

31. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife ; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife ; and there I buried Leah.

32. The purchase of the field and of the cave that *is* therein *was* from the children of Heth.

33. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet unto the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

1. And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.

2. And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father : and the physicians embalmed Israel.

3. And forty days were fulfilled for him : for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed : and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days.

4. And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying,

5. My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die : in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again.

## Light at Eventide

6. And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.

7. And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,

8. And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen.

9. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company.

10. And they came to the threshingfloor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days.

11. And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which is beyond Jordan.

12. And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them.

13. For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a burying-place of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.

14. And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

**F**EW of the deaths recorded in Scripture are **Gen. xlix.** more beautiful in their simplicity than that of **28—1. 14.** Jacob. His departure from earth was not only the quiet, peaceful close of a chequered life; it also signalised the close of a very definite stage in the development of the Divine purpose concerning his seed.

I. *The Last Words* (xlix. 28-32). The words of Jacob concerning his twelve sons and their future came to a close with the reference to Benjamin, and as the end of the patriarch's life was at hand, he gave his sons his final Benediction: 'Everyone according to his blessing he blessed them.' Not

I. The  
Last Words  
(chap. xlix.  
28-32).

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlix. one was overlooked, even though he had had to speak so faithfully about the temporal results of the sin of some of them. Each one was blessed with his own special blessing, and a legacy of benediction was left to them all. The retrospect, as he went over name after name, must have been as sad to him as it was to his sons; but at length all this was over, and only the Divine benediction was in the mind of their father. His affection for them was unshaken by anything that he had said, and he called down upon them each and all the blessing of the Lord his God.

A solemn charge.

With the blessing came a solemn charge. His mind was full of the promise made to Abraham and Isaac, and what he had said to Joseph (xlvii.) he pressed upon them all, charging them to bury him in Canaan in the field that Abraham purchased as a burying-place. Egypt was no place for him; and although the fulfilment of God's promises was not to be realised during his life-time, he had no sort of doubt that a fulfilment would take place, and for this reason he wished to be buried in the Land of Promise. We can well believe, although it is not actually recorded, that his sons were just as ready as Joseph had shown himself to do according to their father's will.

II. The Closing Scene (chap. xlix. 33).

II. *The Closing Scene* (xlix. 33). — At length everything was accomplished. The last counsel had been given, the last blessing bestowed, the last charge laid upon his sons, and then the aged patriarch 'yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.' In these two phrases



## Light at Eventide

we have a simple but very significant idea of what death meant to the patriarch. To God he yielded up his spirit, and with his people he was reunited. A careful study of the various references to the close of life in Genesis reveals more about the early ideas of death than we are accustomed to credit to the patriarchs. Gen. xlix. 28—l. 14.

III. *The Filial Love* (l. 1-6).—The loss to Joseph was necessarily great. He had lived, we may almost say, for his father, and as we review all the circumstances from the earliest days of his life we fully realise the closeness of the tie between them. ‘Joseph fell upon his father’s face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.’ It is, perhaps, worth while observing that during those years of stress and hardship, with cruelty, disappointment and misunderstanding as his portion, we do not read of Joseph giving way to tears. We read of his tender feelings when he met his brothers after the lapse of years; but, so far as personal sorrow is concerned, this seems to be the first record of his feelings. There was nothing unmanly in these tears as he gazed upon the beloved form of the father who had been as devoted to him as he had been to his father. Henceforth life could not but be very different for Joseph. A blank had been made which could never be filled, and we cannot wonder at his sorrow. III. The Filial Love (chap. l. 1-6).

In view of Egyptian custom, and also because of the dying charge of Jacob, the body was embalmed. Embalming was something of a testimony to a belief in the resurrection. ‘It was believed that

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlix.** the soul would in time return to its body after death, and pains were therefore taken to preserve the body from dissolution in the grave' (Driver, *Genesis*, p. 395). It is true that the idea was associated with metempsychosis, but even so it is one of those 'broken lights' which bear their witness to the full Biblical truth of resurrection.

**Days of mourning.**

Seventy days altogether were devoted to mourning for Jacob; and as the usual time for mourning for a king was seventy-two days, we can readily see the respect that was shown to Joseph in this almost royal mourning for his father.

When the days of mourning were over Joseph approached Pharaoh through members of the royal household, asking permission to take the body of his father up to Canaan in order to fulfil the patriarch's dying charge. It is not quite clear why he did not go direct to Pharaoh. Probably it was because he was still in the habiliments of mourning with hair and beard uncut, or it may have been that he wished to associate himself for the moment with his brethren as the head of the family, rather than approach Pharaoh in his position as Prime Minister of Egypt. Pharaoh at once gave consent, and Joseph was free to carry out his solemn promise to his father.

**IV. The Complete Obedience** (chap. 1. 7-14).

**IV. *The Complete Obedience*** (l. 7-14). — The funeral cortège must have been a striking sight, for with Joseph 'went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,' besides the members of Jacob's family. Pharaoh clearly desired to pay

## Light at Eventide

the highest possible tokens of respect to Jacob in **Gen. xlix.** sending such a cavalcade with Joseph and his **28—1. 14.** brethren.

When they arrived at the threshing-floor of Atad **The mourning.** which is beyond Jordan, they remained seven days, according to the Hebrew time of mourning, and mourned 'with a great and very sore lamentation.' Even the Canaanites were impressed by this great sorrow and regarded it as of special import (ver. 11). Then 'his sons did unto him according as he commanded them.' The oath of Joseph (xlvi. 29, 30) was fulfilled, and Jacob was buried in the cave of the field of Machpelah. Just as Abraham had charged his servant not to obtain a wife for Isaac in the land of Canaan (xxiv. 2), so Jacob had charged his sons that they should not bury him out of the land of Canaan. This emphasis on Canaan shows beyond all question the deep impression made by the Divine promises, and the way in which those promises were cherished by succeeding generations.

Then came the sad return to Egypt. Joseph **The sad return.** and his brethren and all that went up with him turned their faces from the Land of Promise to go back to the land of their adoption. We may perhaps imagine their questioning among themselves why they were not to stay in Canaan; why, after God's promise, they were not to abide in the land that had been assured to them. But the time was not yet. There was much to be accomplished before they would be ready for the land or the land ready for them. We may also think of them turn-

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Gen. xlix.** ing round as they finally left Canaan, to take a  
**28—1. 14.** last look at some familiar scenes, perhaps with the thought that it was the last time they would ever have the opportunity of seeing the Land of Promise. Soon Joseph was engaged once more in his ordinary occupation in Egypt, with all its responsibilities ; and though his father would never be forgotten, yet time and work would, as always, lay their healing balm upon his heart and life.

**Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.**

Leaving for further and fuller consideration the story of Jacob's life as a whole, it may be worth while looking at this story as revealing to us some of the aspects of a believer's death. 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.' What marks the death of the righteous as suggested by the close of Jacob's life ?

**The Power  
of Faith.**

1. *The power of faith.*—We observe Jacob's mind and heart occupied with God, His promises, and His grace. The blessing that he bestowed upon his sons showed that he was concerned with very much more than temporal blessings. 'By faith Jacob, when he was a-dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.' Happy, thrice happy, is that deathbed where God is a reality, and where faith in God is the strength and support of the passing soul.

**The Glory  
of Love.**

2. *The glory of love.*—Death is the great reconciler.—There had been many a difficulty, many a conflict, many a sorrow in the relations of Jacob and his sons ; and even on his deathbed it was

## Light at Eventide

essential that the patriarch, with prophetic insight **Gen. xlix.**  
and foresight, should speak quite plainly of some **28—1. 14.**  
of the past events in their connection with the  
future. But even this did not affect his personal  
feeling for them, for he blessed them every one ;  
and as they gathered round his deathbed the spirit  
of love possessed him, and as we may believe  
possessed them all. Happy, thrice happy, is that  
deathbed where all alienations are at an end, and  
everything is peace and love.

3. *The expectation of reunion.*—The emphasis **The Expectation of Reunion.**  
placed several times upon being ‘gathered unto his  
people’ clearly shows that Jacob fully expected to  
be reunited with his loved ones. It is impossible  
to interpret a phrase like this to mean nothing  
more than being buried with them. It must mean  
that he looked forward to reunion and recognition  
as he and they were gathered together once again.  
This thought of a reunion thus hinted at, and more  
than hinted at, in the early pages of the Old  
Testament becomes fuller and clearer in the course  
of Divine revelation, until at length in the full  
revelation of the New Covenant it becomes one of  
the inspirations of life.

Our own are our own for ever, God taketh not back  
His gift ;  
They may pass beyond our vision, but our souls  
shall find them out,  
When the waiting is all accomplished, and the  
deathly shadows lift,  
And glory is given for grieving, and the surety of  
God for doubt.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. xlix. 4. *The inspiration of hope.*—Jacob while on his deathbed not only looked up to a present God of grace and blessing; he looked forward also to a time when the promises of God to his forefathers would be fulfilled. The intense concern about being buried in Canaan was associated with the fulfilment of those promises. That cave in the field of Machpelah, with the precious bodies of his loved ones, was as it were an outpost, a guarantee, and a pledge of the complete fulfilment of God's promises. Like Abraham and Isaac before him, Jacob looked for a city which had foundations whose maker and builder was God. The fathers did not look only for transitory promises, for they were occupied with the thought of Resurrection. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. All this is a thousand-fold clearer and more certain to-day. The Christian is inspired with the hope of the Resurrection. It is this that fills the horizon with light and joy. 'The sky, not the grave, is our goal,' and this hope of Resurrection transforms and transfigures death, and enables us to realise that it is only the gateway to the fuller life which is ours in Christ.

This is true dying. If God should call us through death to be with Him, happy will it be if we have the same faith, the same love, the same hope, the same expectation, for then will the words find their very literal fulfilment: 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.'

How beautiful it is to be with God,  
When earth is fading like a dream,

## Light at Eventide

And from this mist-encircled shore  
We launch upon the unknown stream !  
No doubt, no fear, no anxious care,  
But, comforted by staff and rod,  
In the faith-brightened hour of death  
How beautiful to be with God !

Gen. xlix.  
28—1. 14.

How sweet to lay the burden by,  
The task inwrought with toil and prayer,  
Assured that He Who calls will send  
One better still the yoke to bear !  
What peace, when we have done our best,  
To leave the pilgrim path, long trod,  
And in yon fields of asphodel  
Snow-white, be evermore with God !

Beyond the partings and the pains,  
Beyond the sighing and the tears,  
Oh, beautiful to be with God  
Through all the endless, blessed years ;  
To see His Face, to hear His Voice,  
To know Him better day by day,  
And love Him as the flow'rs love light,  
And serve Him as immortals may.

Then let it fade, this dream of earth  
When I have done my life-work here,  
Or long, or short, as seemeth best—  
What matters, so God's will appear ?  
I will not fear to launch my bark  
Upon the darkly rolling flood ;  
'Tis but to pierce the mist—and then  
How beautiful to be with God !

## XVI

# JOSEPH'S LATER LIFE

### GEN. l. 15-26

15. And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

16. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, thy father did command before he died, saying,

17. So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.

18. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we *be* thy servants.

19. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for *am* I in the place of God?

20. But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.

21. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

22. And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.

23. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third *generation*: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees.

24. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

25. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

26. So Joseph died, *being* an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.



## Joseph's Later Life

IT is inevitable that life should take on a different aspect after the death of one's parents. Gen. 1.  
15-26. Even a middle-aged man cannot help realising that he is only a son while his father is alive, but when his father has passed away there comes the full consciousness that henceforward he must stand in the front rank and take the lead. As long as Jacob was alive he was the head of the family, and everything connected with his household was necessarily influenced by his position, notwithstanding the fact of Joseph's high standing in the land of Egypt. It was only after Jacob's death that Joseph could really take the lead in matters affecting the life and welfare of his brethren. In the passage before us there are two distinct subjects connected with the people of Israel, in both of which Joseph is the central figure.

I. *Fear* (vers. 15-18).—It is with surprise that we find the old trouble between Joseph and his brethren brought up once more. It might have been thought at an end with the full reconciliation years before. But under the new conditions consequent upon the death of their father, Joseph's brethren conceived the idea that he would fully requite them all the evil they had done. This sense of guilt after so long a time is very striking. The men were now getting on in years, and yet remained fully conscious of those early sins and were in dread of their consequences. 'It may be that Joseph will hate us, and will fully requite us all the evil which we did unto him.' It is a characteristic of weak, base natures to find it difficult to believe in

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. 1.  
15-26.

the nobility of others. They measured Joseph by themselves, and thought that he was harbouring resentment and only biding his time. What a revelation of their own nature they thus gave! In our suspicions of other people we often reveal ourselves. It is so difficult to credit others with magnanimity and the spirit of forgiveness.

The Plea for  
Pardon.

They thereupon sent a message to Joseph, probably (so we may imagine) by Benjamin, saying that their father commanded them before he died to ask Joseph's forgiveness. It is thought by some that this use of their father's name was unwarranted, and was only for the purpose of gaining favour with Joseph. On the other hand, it seems quite likely that Jacob said this when he observed their fears that after his death a very great change would occur. May it not also show that some barrier was felt by them, and perhaps even by Jacob also, during those years in Egypt, in spite of all that Joseph had done for them?

Their two-fold plea in sending this message is worthy of note. They based it first on this appeal to their father's memory, and then they spoke of themselves as the 'servants of the God of thy father.' Following this message they went themselves and made full submission to their brother, saying, 'Behold, we be thy servants.'

II. Forgive-  
ness (vers.  
19-21).

II. *Forgiveness* (vers. 19-21).—No wonder that 'Joseph wept when they spake unto him.' It was not the first time they had misunderstood and mistrusted him, and he doubtless felt the deepest pity for them as well as sorrow that they should have

## Joseph's Later Life

thought him capable of such unworthy feelings and intentions after all the years that had elapsed since his restoration to them. There is scarcely anything more trying and searching in life than the experience of being misunderstood, with motives misconstrued and intentions distorted. Joseph was, however, utterly unspoiled and unsoured by the various experiences of misunderstanding which fell to his lot throughout his life. He bade them not to fear, and reminded them that he was not in the place of God, that it belonged to God, not to him, to deal with their sin. At the same time he took the opportunity of speaking to them quite plainly about what they had done and what God had done in overruling their sin. 'As for you, ye meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.' We cannot fail to see the true reserve and the equally true frankness which characterise these utterances. What a comparison and contrast are here made! 'Ye meant evil . . . but God meant it for good.' And then he assured them once again: 'Fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.' Distrust and misunderstanding are only too apt to embitter and deaden the nature. There are few things in life more hard to bear than ungrounded suspicion, but Joseph was superior to all these feelings, and instead of altering his attitude to them, he only assured them once again of his willingness to nourish them and their families, and to do all that he could for them. This is the true attitude to take up. When our good is evil spoken of, our

Gen. 1.  
15-26.

The Strong  
Assurance.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. 1.  
15-26.

best intentions misinterpreted, our loving actions suspected and even reviled, then is the opportunity for showing the true spirit of Christ and proving the reality of our profession. It is easy to write this, it is easy to conceive of it being done, but it is not by any means so easy to put it into practice. Yet God's grace is sufficient even for this, and it is in such ways that the genuineness of our religious profession is best proved.

III. Faith  
(vers. 23-26).

III. *Faith* (vers. 22-26).—This last paragraph of Genesis refers to events fifty-four years after the preceding verse. Joseph's life in Egypt was doubtless lived in the ordinary routine of daily responsibilities and duties, and although he was necessarily engrossed with the demands of his important post we can see from the sequel that his heart was still true to the faith of his fathers. That faith enabled him to do his work loyally day by day, while at the same time it prevented him from being so entirely immersed in it as to forget the calls of his father's house.

Earthly joys were equally unable to remove him from the steadfastness of his faith. He saw the great-grandchildren of his son Ephraim and the grandchildren of his son Manasseh, and although he was surrounded with everything that was happy, bright and joyous in his home, and although every personal and family interest seemed to be inextricably bound up with Egypt, his faith enabled him to cling to God and never to forget the supremacy of the covenant with his fathers.

And the faith which enabled him to do his duty

## Joseph's Later Life

and to keep true amidst all the attentions of earthly happiness did not fail him when he came to die. **Gen. 1. 15-26.**

He summoned his brethren, and in view of his approaching death gave them a solemn charge. 'I die: but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.' The faith of his childhood was still working powerfully in his life, and his dying words clearly show where his heart had been all through the years in Egypt. He was the simple, God-fearing Hebrew to the very end of his days, and was not affected in the least by his high position, great responsibilities, and the fascination of life in Egypt. Once again we can see how possible it is for a man to serve God humbly and faithfully in the highest walks of life. God was first, and everything else was dominated by that simple but all-embracing principle.

The Power  
of Childlike  
Trust.

Like his father before him, he took an oath of the children of Israel. 'God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.' Like Jacob, he was determined that Egypt should not be the final resting-place of his body. His heart was already in Canaan, and his body was to be there also. So at length he died, 'and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.' That coffin would be a constant reminder to the people of Israel of God's promise to their fathers. Joseph being dead would yet speak, and in the days that were not far ahead of them the coffin would remind them of the glorious future and inspire them with hope and courage amidst present difficulties.

The Great  
Hope.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. 1.  
15-26.

‘So Joseph died.’ Like the rest of us, even this noble man was called hence, withdrawn from the scene of his earthly labours, where his presence was so important and his life a constant benediction—a reminder that not even the best man on earth is indispensable. God will take care of His own work.

Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.

It is interesting and significant that the one event in Joseph’s life seized upon by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews was that which was associated with his closing days. ‘By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones’ (Heb. xi. 22). It was also an act of Jacob just as he was dying that is mentioned as the proof of his faith, in the same chapter (ver. 21). The comparisons and contrasts between the closing days of Jacob and Joseph give much food for thought.

The Faith of  
the Dying  
Patriarchs.

1. *The faith of Jacob and Joseph.*—Jacob as he was dying thought chiefly of the past in desiring to be buried in the cave of Machpelah. He had been in Canaan a long time, and it was only natural that he should wish to be taken back there on his death. On the other hand, Joseph’s thought was concerned with the future. ‘He made mention of the departure of the children of Israel,’ though that departure was not to take place for many a day. Joseph had grown up in Egypt, and to him Canaan was little more than a memory, so far as personal experience was concerned, but to him as well as to Jacob

## Joseph's Later Life

the place was the Promised Land; and thus Jacob's faith looked back as though to say, Do not forget the Canaan from which you have come, while Joseph's faith looked forward and said, Do not forget the Canaan to which you are going. Gen. 1.  
15-26.

2. *The oath of Jacob and Joseph.*—It has been very helpfully suggested (Candlish, *Genesis*, pp. 338 ff.) that Jacob took the oath from his sons when they were in the midst of Egyptian plenty, peace, and happiness, and that Joseph took the oath from the brethren when the time of the bondage was not far distant. The one oath meant, 'Rest not in Egyptian prosperity'; the other meant, 'Faint not in Egyptian adversity.' (See also Stock, *Lesson Studies in Genesis*.) The solemn promise elicited by Joseph that he should not be buried permanently in Egypt is a striking testimony to the power of his faith. It was a triumph over that sentiment which naturally thinks of resting in a hallowed burial-place. It was a triumph over the inevitable temptation to have that fine and magnificent funeral which was his due, and which would have been doubtless accorded him by the people of Egypt. Above all, it was a constant testimony to the supreme conviction which actuated him, and which he wished to perpetuate among his brethren, that God would surely visit them. While he was living his voice could speak, but afterwards that unburied body would make its silent yet all-powerful appeal. It kept before them the story of God's faithfulness, and was intended to inspire their hearts with The Solemn  
Oath.



## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. 1. undying hope as they waited for the day of  
15-26. deliverance.

The opening  
and close of  
Genesis.

3. *The first and last verses of the Book of Genesis.*  
—The contrast between i. 1 and l. 26 is surely more than an ordinary coincidence. The book opens with life, it ends with death—‘a coffin in Egypt,’ because in between had come sin which brings forth death. And yet that coffin spoke of life as well as of death. It was a symbol of hope, a message of patience, a guarantee of life everlasting. Joseph may not have known very much of the future life, but the fact that he pledged them to carry his body is a proof that in some measure at least he believed in immortality. Genesis, with its coffin in Egypt, was followed by Exodus, which means departure, deliverance; and Joseph spake of that exodus which they were to accomplish in God’s time. After nearly 200 years of watching and waiting that coffin was carried up out of Egypt: ‘And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you’ (Exod. xiii. 19). Then for forty years it accompanied the people of Israel wherever they went, and at length came the fulfilment of Joseph’s hopes and of the solemn promise of his brethren. In the days of Joshua ‘the bones of Joseph which the children brought up out of Egypt buried they in Shechem’ (Josh. xxiv. 32). At Shechem they now show the tomb of Joseph. Travellers are interested in a little enclosure wherein is a small mound by the side of



## Joseph's Later Life

which grows a vine. Not very far away is another spot equally associated with the story of Joseph, for it was there that the brethren cast their brother into the pit and plotted against his life. He little thought when suffering at the hands of his brethren that a larger number of mourning descendants would accompany his body 200 years afterwards to its burial at Shechem. Gen. 1. 15-26.

4. *The perpetual presence and persistent purpose of God.*—One lesson above all others is writ large in the story of Jacob and Joseph, as it is indeed in the entire narrative of Genesis. 'I die : but God shall be with you' (xlviii. 21). 'I die : but God will surely visit you' (1. 24). One Name abides all through these centuries, the Name of the everlasting God. Adam, Noah, Abraham come and go ; Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph live their lives and pass away ; but God remains, the Dwellingplace of His people in all generations, 'God from everlasting to everlasting.' 'God buries his workmen and carries on His work.' Well for us if we realise this simple but all-embracing truth. Amid all the changes and chances of this mortal life God abides, God reigns, God rules. His kingdom will be set up, His purposes shall be realised, His will must be done. Let us take heart of grace as servant after servant of God passes into the unseen. Let us take large views of the future, and not be tempted to concentrate attention solely upon our own narrow little life in the present. 'I die : but God will surely visit you.' It is this assurance of God's unchanging presence and undeviating purpose that alone can

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

Gen. 1.  
15-26.

keep the heart peaceful, restful, trustful, and hopeful amid all the vicissitudes of life. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is an everlasting rock.'

Why do we worry about the nest?  
We only stay for a day,  
Or a month, or a year, at the Lord's behest,  
In this habitat of clay.

Why do we worry about the road,  
With its hill or deep ravine?  
In a dismal path or a heavy load  
We are helped by hands unseen.

Why do we worry about the years  
That our feet have not yet trod?  
Who labours with courage and trust, nor fears,  
Has fellowship with God.

The best will come in the great 'To be,'  
It is ours to serve and wait;  
And the wonderful future we soon shall see,  
For death is but the gate.

## ‘THOU WORM JACOB’

THERE is perhaps no character recorded in Scripture about which there has been more controversy than that of Jacob. His very weaknesses seem to attract us because they make him more human, and bring him into closer contact with our own lives. There is an intense reality about the man from the first that impresses every reader, and gives rise to constant discussion as to his merits and demerits. In all ages of the Church people have been attracted and even fascinated with his history, and his individuality will doubtless continue to make him a prominent figure for ages to come.

‘Thou  
Worm  
Jacob.’

I. *Jacob's History*.—We need not do more than call attention to the seven periods of his life, during each of which he was being trained and disciplined. He is first seen at home under the influence of his strong-minded and strong-willed mother Rebekah. Then comes the crisis at Bethel, when he came into personal contact with God, perhaps for the first time in his life. This notable event was followed by the years in the service of Laban, that time of intense and prolonged discipline which had so much to do with his later life. Then came Peniel, another

I. Jacob's  
History.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

‘Thou  
Worm  
Jacob.’

turning point in his career, when he became conscious not only of the House of God (Beth-el), but also of the Face of God (El-beth-el), and surrendered to God the control of his life. Peniel was, however, followed by a period of backsliding at Shechem, with all that resulted of trial and sorrow to himself and his household. At length came the return to Bethel, and with it the restoration to Divine favour and fellowship, and an upward advance in the spiritual life from which he never afterward receded. Last of all came those quiet, restful fruitful years in Egypt, when, restored to his beloved son, he lived in happiness and at length died in peace.

In all this history we must not fail to see the importance of the first vision at Bethel, the mysterious struggle at Peniel, and the return to Bethel once more. At this last visit things took a permanent turn for the best. We see this in the usage of the two names, Jacob and Israel. From the moment of the restoration at Bethel (ch. xxxv.) it is deeply interesting to study carefully and closely the occurrence of these two names. In almost every case ‘Israel’ is used in connection with his spiritual life and experience as the Prince of God.

II. Jacob's  
Character.

II. *Jacob's Character.*—What puzzles most readers is the striking contrasts in this remarkable man. Almost all through his life there was a blend of two different and in themselves divergent qualities. There are men brought before us in Scripture like Moses, David, Isaiah, St Paul and St John, who were by no means without their faults and sins,

## ‘Thou Worm Jacob’

but all these are almost entirely forgotten in the glory of their character and devotion to Christ. It is somehow different with Jacob. There was on the one hand a remarkable quietness and gentleness of disposition, and on the other an intense ambition to be the head of the family and the inheritor of the promises. On the one hand there was a genuine devoutness, a clear perception and full appreciation of the Divine covenant with his fathers, while on the other hand there was an utter self-seeking disposition which stopped at nothing to gain its ends. On the one hand there was a love which centred itself first upon his mother, then upon his wife, and then upon his two boys, while on the other hand there was a caution, a hesitation, a suspiciousness that seemed to distrust everybody but himself. On the one hand he was a man of high aims working for high ends, while on the other he stooped to the meanest methods and the most contemptible ways of accomplishing his purposes. He was indeed a mixture, a glaring contrast of opposite qualities.

The slow development and progress of his character is also very noteworthy. It would have been far happier for him and for everybody connected with him if the transformation of Jacob into Israel had been made more quickly and more thoroughly, but the old nature was not only never wiped out, it seemed to be strong and vigorous almost to the last. Jacob was still there even though Israel was making his way. The ultimate victory of the Israel nature is very clearly seen. There was a

‘Thou  
Worm  
Jacob.’

Slowness  
of Develop-  
ment.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

‘Thou  
Worm  
Jacob.’

gradual victory of the higher over the lower in him. We cannot help noticing his steadfastness of purpose amidst all difficulties, trials, and opposition, his prudence and forethought as he faced the problems of his life, and, above all, a genuine appreciation of Divine realities and of everything that was best and truest in human life. Whatever appears on the surface, there can be very little doubt that from his earliest days Jacob had set his heart upon the possession of all that was possible in the Covenant of God with his fathers, and as he draws near to the end of his life we can see quite clearly the results of the discipline in the strength and even glory of his character and life.

III. Jacob's  
Training.

III. *Jacob's Training.*—The one thing of importance in life is the power of making permanent our passing ideas and impressions. Character is only built up gradually as our experiences become part of ourselves. Jacob was brought back to fellowship with God, and enabled to abide in fellowship by training in three schools.

The School  
of Sorrow.

The School of Personal Sorrow. Colours are painted upon earthenware, and then burnt in, in order to be made permanent. So it was with Jacob. Sorrow made and left its permanent mark upon him. The discipline in Haran, his disappointment over Rachel, Rachel's death, Reuben's sin, the hatred and loss of Joseph, the famine, the demand for Simeon and Benjamin, are some of the ways in which sorrow dealt with him and trained him for God.

## ‘Thou Worm Jacob’

The School of Divine Providence. In his youth ‘Thou Worm Jacob.’  
he was evidently full of indomitable hardness and self-reliance, and all through his career we find proof after proof of the native force and vigour of his character. He was ever a man of quick initiative, ready resource, and dauntless courage. Up to the end of his life he took the lead, and not even Joseph superseded him in the patriarchal position. It was therefore all the more necessary that he should be dealt with by the discipline of life. God’s providence is man’s inheritance, and it was the very best thing that could have happened to Jacob that the roughnesses of his nature were made smooth, and his weaknesses taken away in the hard, stern school of Providence. There is nothing like it to develop character. No chastening seems profitable at the time, but in the retrospect we see and acknowledge that it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

The School of Divine Grace. This was the greatest and best training-ground of Jacob’s life, and it enables us to understand the prolonged nature and even the severity of the discipline in the other two schools. From the vision at Bethel to the closing days in Egypt, God’s presence was with Jacob whether he knew it or not. That presence was assured to him, and he never really forgot the wonderful promise, ‘I am with thee, and I will not leave thee,’ which he received at Bethel. Thenceforward the promises of God were his strength and stay. He pleaded them, depended on them, and believed to see their fulfilment. Meanwhile God’s

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‘Thou  
Worm  
Jacob.’

IV. The  
God of  
Jacob.

power was at work in his soul, dealing with him now in severity, now in goodness, until at length he could say at last, ‘I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord.’

IV. *The God of Jacob.*—There is scarcely anything more striking in the whole of the Old Testament than the frequency of the title, ‘the God of Jacob,’ in the Psalms and in Isaiah. We could well understand God being the God of Israel, but to be called the God of Jacob is surely the crowning proof of Divine mercy and grace. What a remarkable point there is in the well-known words, ‘The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge’ (Ps. xlv. 7). ‘The Lord of Hosts’ is the God of Providence, protecting against foes, overcoming difficulties, and providing for all emergencies, but ‘the God of Jacob is our refuge’ is very much more than this. It tells of His mercy and grace. The God of Jacob is a God of unwearying love, of unerring wisdom, of unfailing grace. He is our Refuge in spite of our sins, in the face of our failures, in view of our fears. And because He is all this He asks for our unreserved surrender, our unquestioning faith, our unflinching loyalty, our unfailing hope, and whispers in our hearts, ‘Fear not thou worm Jacob . . . I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.’ It is because God is the God of Jacob that we have such unbounded confidence in His mercy and grace, in His love and longsuffering. It tells us what grace can do for even the very worst of us. As a man said to a clergyman not long ago, ‘I am



## ‘Thou Worm Jacob’

cheered when I read the life of Jacob; for if the grace of Almighty God was able to straighten up that man, there must be some hope for me’ (see a fine Sermon on Jacob, by the late Ian Maclaren. *Homiletic Review*, vol. liv. p. 49).

## XVIII

### ‘A FRUITFUL BOUGH’

‘A Fruitful Bough.’

THE character of Joseph is one of the choicest and most striking of all those in Holy Scripture. The fulness of detail which characterises the record of his life from beginning to end clearly shows the importance attached to him by the writer, both personally and as an instrument for the fulfilment of the Divine purposes concerning Israel. Not only in Genesis, but in other books of the Old Testament, Joseph is brought before us as a man upon whom the Divine blessing signally rested, and in whom God’s grace was very definitely manifested (Deut. xxxiii. 13-16; Ps. cv. 17-19; Acts vii. 9, 10).

I. His History.

I. *His History.*—The story of his life falls quite naturally into eight periods, each of which has its special interest and its direct bearing upon his life and character. He is seen first of all at home in the days of his youth as the companion of his father, and it is evident that he was a fit and willing pupil of the aged patriarch as he was told of God’s covenant with his fathers. Then the hatred and jealousy of his brethren had no effect in spoiling the beauty of that early promise. We find him next in slavery, and now the promise of the early

## ‘A Fruitful Bough’

days begins to be fulfilled. Integrity, purity, honour, and faithfulness characterise him and make him steadfast and true to his God. In prison, too, he maintains his position, and in faithful obedience to his daily round and common task, he glorifies God and is made a blessing to those around him. At Pharaoh’s court he next appears revealing the secrets of the monarch’s dream and declaring God’s will concerning Egypt. This led at once, as we have seen, to the remarkable transformation of the prison slave to the Prime Minister. His home and work in Egypt next come before us, and in spite of the remarkable change in his circumstances he is the same simple and true-hearted man as ever. His relations with his brethren serve to reveal other aspects of his life, while the meeting with his father was the crowning point after years of trial, sorrow and discipline. The last fifty years of his life in Egypt reveal him as still the same in his nobleness of mind and heart, and in his genuine confidence in and obedience to the Lord God of his fathers. Whether then we think of him as a youth, a young man, a middle-aged man, or an old man, there is a continuity in his life, amid all circumstances, which stands out as one of the noblest and most striking features of a remarkable career.

II. *His Character*.—We must however go further into detail, and seek to delineate more thoroughly the various points in his character that stand out from the narrative. He seems to have belonged to God from the very first. His father doubtless gave him his first impressions and ideas of the

‘A Fruitful Bough.’

II. His Character.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

‘A Fruitful Bough.’

Qualities of Character.

glories of their Covenant God, and the seed fell upon good ground, and led from the very outset to a life of true-hearted devotion. But what in particular are the points of his character that were evidently seen and written for our learning? They can only be mentioned, but it will be well worth while to turn to the particular parts of his life, where these features appear, and ponder them again in the light of his history. Here are some of those qualities that make up the truest, noblest, and best types of manhood: (1) Guilelessness, (2) frankness, (3) tactfulness, (4) sensitiveness to evil, (5) purity of heart and life, (6) humility of word and deed, (7) wisdom, (8) executive ability, (9) filial affection, (10) manly energy, (11) resolute adherence to duty, (12) prudence, (13) self-control, (14) sympathy, (15) hopefulness, (16) considerateness, (17) equanimity, (18) courage, (19) patience, (20) large-hearted generosity. These are perhaps the most important features, though there are doubtless others that can be found. Joseph was good without ever being ‘goody-goody.’ He was great and yet simple, true to God and yet attractive to man. He is a signal instance of the possibility of combining piety with success, manliness with true religion, intellectual force with spiritual fragrance. There are few men whose lives are more full-orbed and complete in moral beauty and glory.

III. His Secret.

III. *His Secret*.—What was the secret of all this power? The answer is that God was an ever-present reality. ‘I fear God.’ This was the keynote of his life. The name of God was often on his

## ‘A Fruitful Bough’

lips, but still better, the presence of God and the fear of God were always in his heart. It was as natural to him to refer everything to God as it was to breathe or to speak, and whether he thought of the danger of sinning against God (ch. xxxix. 9), or the blessing of God upon his own life (ch. xli. 51, 52), or the providence of God in allowing him to go into Egypt (ch. xlv. 5-9), or the assurance that God would not leave his brethren (ch. l. 24), God dominated Joseph's life, and this was the secret of all that he was and did.

How did he learn this secret? We cannot but believe that it began in those early days at home with his father. His devotion to his father was, we may well believe, not merely due to the human relationship, it was based upon spiritual kinship as well. It is hard to say which is the more beautiful, Jacob's devotion to his son or Joseph's devotion to his father. It is a testimony to both that God was so real in their lives. It is always well if the consciousness of God can come early in life. There is no need for a period of wandering, and of sowing wild oats to be a strong, vigorous, noble, manly Christian. They are the strongest and best who find God early, who live from the very first days in His presence, surrounded by a parental life and love which breathes the atmosphere of devotion and fellowship.

How was this secret developed? By simple loyalty and obedience to every day duty. Joseph always did his best. Faithfulness characterised everything about him, and God was the source,

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

'A Fruitful Bough.'

centre, and spring of every word and action of his life. This must ever be the supreme method of deepening religious impressions, and of realising in daily experience the lessons we have learned from our earliest days.

The Secret proved.

How was this secret proved? By its results. God justified His servant's trust and confidence by honouring him in slavery, in prison, at court, and in his home. No life lived for God is ever without its vindication. 'Them that honour Me I will honour,' and the man who sets out, as Joseph did, to put God first and make God real in life will always find it true that God sets His seal of favour and blessing upon him.

The Power of Faith.

How was this secret continually made effectual? The answer is in the simple but significant words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'By faith, Joseph.' It was simple trust in God that enabled him to be what he was and to do what he did. What is it in faith that makes it so powerful? What is there in trust which brings about such results? Faith *realises* God's presence and lives in it moment by moment. Faith *relies* on God's Word and believes that what He says shall be done. Faith *responds* to God's call, and obeys with readiness and loyalty. Faith *receives* God's grace, and finds it all-sufficient for daily needs. Faith *rests* in God's will, and believes to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Faith *rejoices* in God's protection, and knows that it shall not be put to shame. Thus faith is man's complete response to God's revelation. It links man's life to God, and provides

## ‘A Fruitful Bough’

him with the simple yet all-powerful secret of a ‘A Fruitful Bough.’  
life of power, purity and progress. Well may the Word of God lay stress upon faith. ‘Without faith it is impossible to please him.’ ‘This is the victory that overcometh, even our faith.’

## A TYPE OF CHRIST

A Type of Christ. **I**N addition to the lessons from Joseph as a historical person which are so clear that he who runs may read, there are other points of profound interest and importance in which his life has some very striking and remarkable points of comparison and contrast with that of our Lord. It is perhaps too much to say that we have in this the element of prediction, because there does not seem to be a single reference in the New Testament to the typical nature of Joseph's life, and yet it is impossible to avoid seeing the close, prolonged, and striking resemblances between Joseph and Christ. It is not mere ingenuity that endeavours to see in the story of the one some of the outstanding events in the life of the Other. While we are careful not to proceed to fanciful extremes, it is not only legitimate but in every way spiritually profitable to ponder the life of Joseph in the light of the history of our blessed Lord (see Candlish, *Genesis*, vol. ii. 138-146).

I. Joseph  
and His  
Father.

I. *Joseph and His Father*.—Joseph was the beloved son of his aged father Jacob, and those early dreams clearly indicate that he was the subject of high destinies. There was to be in



## A Type of Christ

some way or other a remarkable future for this beloved son. In like manner our Lord Jesus Christ was the Only Begotten of the Father. 'Thou art my Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.' He too was appointed heir of all things, and the destinies of the world were linked with Him.

II. *Joseph and His Brethren*.—We notice three points in the story in this connection. (1) He was sent to inquire after his brethren's well-being. (2) His brethren were envious of him, being altogether out of sympathy with their father's love and purposes concerning him. (3) Joseph, however, maintained his faithfulness, not abating his testimony, but speaking frankly and fully that which he believed to be right. He might have been spared the pit had he been willing to yield to his brothers' wishes. In all this we cannot help seeing the Lord Jesus and His brethren. (1) Was He not sent by His Father? (2) Were not His brethren envious of Him, being altogether opposed to the Divine purpose as expressed in Jesus Christ? (3) Did He not, however, abide faithful, bearing testimony with dauntless courage, telling both high and low of their sin in the sight of God? He might have spared Himself the Cross had He been willing to abate His testimony and keep silence in the face of opposition.

**A Type of Christ.**

**II. Joseph and His Brethren.**

III. *Joseph's Rejection*.—Once again we notice the story for its typical lessons. (1) His brethren conspired against him, 'Come let us kill him.' (2) He was betrayed by his brethren. (3) He was sold by his brethren for money. When we turn to the

**III. Joseph's Rejection**

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**A Type of Christ.** pages of the New Testament we are struck with the almost literal agreement with these events in the life of our Lord. 'When they saw him, they said, This is the heir, let us kill him.' 'He came unto His own and His own received Him not.' Our Lord, too, was betrayed and sold by His brethren into the hands of the Gentiles. Just as the sight of Joseph brought out all that was latent in the anger and animosity of the brethren, so Christ by His life and teaching brought out all that was evil in the human heart, so that they no longer had any cloak for their sins (John xv. 22).

### IV. Joseph's Humiliation.

IV. *Joseph's Humiliation.*—Once again let us trace the story of the Hebrew lad. (1) He became a servant and entered into the degradation of slavery. (2) He was sorely tempted and yet sinned not. (3) He was alone in the dungeon through no fault or sin of his own. (4) He won the respect of his jailer and was entrusted with responsible service. (5) He was the means of blessing to the butler and the messenger of judgment to the baker. Again we are impressed and even awed by the striking agreement point by point with our Lord's earthly history. He took upon Him the form of a servant. He was tempted in all points like as we are, without sin. He was alone, forsaken of God and man, and yet on the Cross He called forth the admiration of the centurion, was the means of blessing to the penitent robber, and the occasion of judgment to the impenitent one. Surely in all this we may find food for prayerful meditation and whole-hearted adoration.

## A Type of Christ

V. *Joseph's Exaltation.*—As Joseph stood before Pharaoh we notice that his exaltation accomplished three ends. (1) It revealed God's purposes for Egypt. (2) It manifested God's righteousness in bringing him out of prison. (3) It established Joseph's position as next to Pharaoh. When our Lord was raised from the dead He was exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour. God raised Him and gave Him glory. He was declared to be the Son of God with power. God set Him at His own right hand, exalted Him, and put all things under His feet until that day when the Son shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God the Father and God shall be all in all.

**A Type of Christ.**

V. Joseph's Exaltation.

VI. *Joseph's Marriage.*—We notice that this marriage was appointed by Pharaoh, and in the New Testament we read of a certain King that made a marriage for His Son. We are also told of the Church which is at once the Body and the Bride of Christ, the figure of the Body suggesting the union of life, the figure of the Bride the union of love. In the case of Joseph the bride was a stranger to him, and the Bride of Christ consists of those who were once estranged and alienated by wicked works, and are now reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Joseph's bride shared his glory; all the nearness and intimacy of true wedded life belonged to her. His position gave her her position; she was what she was because she was his wife. So is it with the Bride of Christ. As He is so are we in this world. The Church is to share His glory. Not only are we crucified together, we

VI. Joseph's Marriage.

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**A Type of Christ.** are raised together, and even now seated together, and by and by shall reign together with Him in glory.

**VII. Joseph's Office.** VII. *Joseph's Office.*—Why was Joseph exalted? What was the purpose of it? It was not for his own sake, but that he might become the channel of blessing to the whole world. So also our Lord was exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins (Acts v. 31).

**Joseph's Work.**

The work of Joseph's life was to provide food for the people. During the famine it was to him that they turned, and from him they received all that they needed. By some authorities his Egyptian name Zaphnath-paaneah is interpreted to mean the 'bread of life,' but whether this be the case or not he certainly was the bread of life to the people. Our Lord came as the Bread of Life. 'I am come that they might have life.' There is, however, one significant difference between the type and the ante-type. The people came to Joseph to buy bread, but we come to Christ 'without money and without price' (Isa. lv. 1).

The order of Joseph's work is very striking. He provided first for the Gentiles as represented by Egypt, then he provided for his brethren, and subsequently all nations came to Egypt to buy corn. May we not see in this some slight adumbration of the order of our Lord's spiritual work in the accomplishment of God's purposes? His Church to-day is mainly composed of Gentiles, those who are willing to receive Him, but the day is coming when He will reveal Himself to His brethren the

## A Type of Christ

Jews, and they will look upon Him Whom they pierced, and be reconciled to Him with tears of repentance. Then will come, and only then, the blessing to the whole world, and the reign and rule of Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. **A Type of Christ.**

(For the typical meaning of Joseph's revelation to, and reconciliation with his brethren, see page 116.)

There was one sole condition of blessing during the years of famine. That was unconditional submission to Joseph. He was their saviour because he was their master. They trusted him wholly, and their trust was justified by the marvellous and perfect provision that he made for all their needs. This is the one and only requirement in things spiritual. Unconditional surrender, unquestioning submission, unwavering trust. When this attitude is taken up and maintained our spiritual needs are all provided for, our wants met, our desires satisfied, our lives protected, our hopes realised. Christ is only truly our Saviour in proportion as He is our Lord. Whenever people came to Pharaoh he had one word and one word only for them: 'Go unto Joseph, and what he saith to you, do.' So is it to-day. In view of all our needs, sins, sorrows, weaknesses, failures, fears, one word suffices for them all: 'Whatever He saith unto you, do it.' **The one condition of blessing.**

## REVIEW

**Review.**

**I**N the light of all the details which have come before us in our meditations on the Book of Genesis it may be well worth while to review the entire book, and endeavour to gain an idea of its general purpose, plan, and meaning. In our first chapter we considered several points by way of introduction, and we may now add to these some further suggestions for general study. We must never lose sight of the wood in the trees, and while giving careful attention to details we must ever strive to obtain and keep a true idea of the book as a whole.

**Literary Structure.**

The literary structure of Genesis is, as we have seen, clear and simple. It consists of an introduction and ten sections, each with a virtually identical heading. But there is a religious unity in the book as well as a literary oneness, and for this reason it should be studied as a whole, and an impression formed of its general character. All authorities, whatever their critical views, agree in regarding the book in its present form as characterised by unity. The genealogies form a regular series, and even the apparent digressions are strictly in accordance with the fundamental principle of

## Review

the book as a book of beginnings. Still more, the religious aim is ever kept in view, showing how under the guidance of Divine providence the purpose of redemption was accomplished by separating a chosen man and a chosen race from all others. **Review.**

The early chapters (i.—xi.) show the descent of Abraham from Adam, and explain why a new commencement was necessary. They also reveal God's principle of selection in the choice of Seth, Noah, Shem and Abraham. The law of selection governs the entire narrative, and is a special sign of unity. First of all there is the selection of a special people as represented by Abraham, then the selection of a special land, then the preparation of the patriarchs by Divine discipline, and all this arising out of the prediction concerning the seed of the woman. **Early Chapters.**

We see therefore in these chapters the continuous development of the Divine purpose as it adjusts itself to the circumstances brought about by the sin of man. Everything in human life and civilisation, human sin, and human worship is made to subserve the Divine will and contribute to the accomplishment of the Divine purpose. Starting with the great fact and feature of the unity of all mankind as represented first by Adam, and then by Noah and his descendants, we are led on step by step until attention is concentrated on one branch of the human race as the special medium of the Divine revelation. **Continuous Development.**

Then comes the great section (chs. xii.—l.), in which we have the record of the providential training of the patriarchs for their part in the fulfilment of the Divine will. There is no hiatus or dislocation after **The Story of the Patriarchs.**



## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Review.** the early chapters (i.—xi.), but a very distinct order and progress. After three failures in the persons of Cain and Abel, the races of the Sethites and Canaanites, and the family of Noah, a new commencement was necessary, and instead of a covenant of works with the entire human race a covenant of grace is instituted with one individual. With Abraham's call a special series of Divine manifestations is brought before us which were evidently intended to teach him by delivering him from his own errors, revealing to him the one true God, and leading up to fellowship with God.

### The Divine Training.

The patriarchal narratives are the story of the way in which God trained and disciplined Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph to fulfil His purposes. The narrative is brought before us in three different sections or cycles associated with the names of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. God's covenant with Abraham is prepared for, made, and fully realised (ch. xi. 27—xxv. 18); then that covenant is maintained by means of the Divine revelation to Isaac as the head of the family after Abraham's death (ch. xxv. 19—xxxvii. 1); and finally the chosen family develops into a nation by the providential preparation for its departure into Egypt, the providential removal into Egypt, and the providential protection in Egypt (ch. xxxvii. 2—l. 26).

### The Divine Promise

The Divine promise was continually confirmed during the course of the history, and a gradually-developing idea of God's character and relation to the people was being formed. As we read the story we are conscious of growth, progress, con-



## Review

solidation, and an ever-widening movement until at length both Jacob and Joseph have the future clearly and steadily in view, and look forward with certainty to deliverance from Egypt and a settlement in Canaan. 'God will surely visit you,' is the last keynote of this memorable book as Genesis closes and leads on to the next stage of the development of the Divine purpose in Exodus. **Review.**

The value of this book is therefore evident. It is in some respects the foundation of the Biblical revelation of God. It is the germ and explanation of everything that follows in the history of Divine redemption through the seed of the woman. It may almost be said that there is no truth of the Bible that is not found here in germ. Thus the seven great doctrines which form the warp and woof of the Bible are all in this book. (1) The Doctrine of God as Creator, Preserver, Law-Giver, Judge, Redeemer. (2) The Doctrine of Creation as the act and process of the Divine will, wisdom, and power. (3) The Doctrine of Man in his contact both with earth and heaven, a union of flesh and spirit in a twofold nature. (4) The Doctrine of the World as the sphere of the human race in its unity, variety, and divisions. (5) The Doctrine of Human Life, first as individual, then as social and in the family, then as tribal, and at length gradually developing into national life. (6) The Doctrine of Sin as the assertion of man's independence of God, his unwillingness to remain loyal to the Divine will, with the results of evil both negative and positive in the loss of holiness and fellowship with **The value of the Book.**

## Genesis xxxvii.—1

**Review.** God, and the impossibility of rendering to God the obedience and glory due to His Name. (7) The Doctrine of Redemption, with the universe as its sphere, man as its subject, Divine grace as its source, the Covenant as its method, and the people of Israel as its repository and instrument. Redemption is found in promise and in symbol, and is prepared for by the onward march of Divine providence. When Genesis is carefully studied along these lines we readily see that it contains the promise and potency of that varied, prolonged, and complete development which we find elsewhere in the Bible.

**A Divine Record.**

We must therefore take care to study Genesis not merely as a book of history, or even as a record of human character, human sin, human discipline. It is much more than all these, for it is a record in some of the stages in God's gracious endeavour to lead man back to Himself. It is only in the light of its specific religious purpose that we can understand both what it omits and what it contains.

It is evident, therefore, that Genesis will never yield its true meaning unless it is considered in constant view of the presence of a supernatural element in it from first to last. God and Redemption are its keynotes, and in these are found the essential features of the book and the true explanation of its difference from all others, and its infinite superiority over all other works dealing with the early days of the human race.

Above all, Genesis must ever be studied as the first book of a volume which is called the Word of God. Its presence in this volume is the simple

## Review

fact that gives it whatever authority it possesses. **Review.** Unless we ever keep in mind its place as an integral part of a volume which we believe to be in some sense divinely inspired, we shall never enter into its meaning or really profit by its lessons.

If therefore the book is studied and pondered in the light of its clearly arranged contents, its varied lines of teaching, its definite religious purpose, its manifest principle of unity, and its evident marks of progress, it will be found to be one of absorbing interest, profound spiritual value, and perennial importance for mind and heart and life.

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